



OUR 2021-2022 CAMPAIGN: BACK TO SCHOOL, STILL IN NEED

Baltimore County boasts a high-ranking public school system, prosperous businesses, and many beautiful, safe neighborhoods. Yet this wealth and opportunity exist side-by-side with extreme poverty in many parts of the county. Those of us fortunate enough to have ample resources are adapting to life with COVID-19 as kids go back to school, but many students and their families struggle or find it impossible to return to “normal.”

Many children are still in need – right in our own backyards. The trauma caused by hunger, food insecurity, and the lack of basic necessities to succeed in school are major threats to the long-term prospects of our school system and to the economic prosperity of Baltimore County.

Consider these facts:

- ✓ Of the more than 111,000 students attending 175 Baltimore County Public Schools, more than 59,000 or 53% qualify for the Free and Reduced Meals Program, a measure of poverty (a family of four can have a household income of no more than \$49,000 to qualify).
- ✓ In Student Support Network’s 13 partner schools alone, more than 6,000 students are eligible for the Free and Reduced Meals Program.
- ✓ A measure of extreme poverty, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) requires that a family of four have a household income of \$34,000 or less to qualify for assistance. **Nearly 35,000 BCPS students live in extreme poverty, including 3,000 in Network schools alone.**
- ✓ With Maryland’s high cost of living, a basic “survival budget” for a family of four requires a household income of about \$87,000. Many families earn too much to qualify for food assistance under federal government guidelines, but not enough to make ends meet. **The true levels of poverty are much higher than the numbers of students qualifying for free meals or SNAP.**



The statistics are staggering, and the problem is clear: more than half of the children attending schools right in our neighborhoods live in a state of great and urgent need. And, it's only getting worse as the pandemic continues to disproportionately impact the poor.

How does living in a consistent state of need affect children?

At home, when school's free breakfast and lunch are not available, many experience food insecurity. This means **they lack access to healthy foods** to nourish their growing bodies, and often **wonder when they'll have their next meal**. Many families living in poverty frequently move, whether they choose to seek a lower rent payment or eviction forces them to. **Constant change can wreak havoc on the mental well-being of children and teens.**

Children bring their hunger and uneasiness to school with them. A rumbling tummy and worried mind distract even the sharpest kids from learning. Coupled with an inability to afford school supplies, clothes that help kids feel confident and fit in with their peers, and even period products for girls, **children living with need are at an extreme disadvantage the moment they enter the classroom.**

More than 53% of Baltimore County Public School children are not equipped to maximize the opportunities their schools offer as they go back to school this fall. *Together, we can help them.*

The Student Support Network has been providing assistance to children living in poverty since 2015. Our in-school support room model makes it easy for kids to access what they need, and to feel a sense of belonging at their own school. From its beginnings as a small holiday gift drive, to its incorporation as a nonprofit, and its pivot to meet the urgent need of hunger during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Student Support Network has become a reliable, trustworthy, and forward-thinking organization.



2015

A HOLIDAY
GIFT DRIVE
EXCEEDS
EXPECTATIONS
AND THE NEED IS
NOTICED

2016

A SUPPORT ROOM
IS CREATED AND A
NEW NONPROFIT
IS FORMED

2017

THE MISSION
EXPANDS TO 3
SCHOOLS
AND DEMAND
INCREASES ACROSS
THE COUNTY

2018-2019

THE NETWORK
GROWS TO 5,
THEN 8, THEN
10 SCHOOLS

2020-2021

COVID-19 FORCES
SCHOOLS TO CLOSE;
THE NETWORK
DISTRIBUTES A LOT
OF FOOD AND
SUPPLIES!

2021-2022

STUDENTS ARE
BACK TO SCHOOL
BUT STILL IN
NEED; TIME TO
GROW AND
SUSTAIN SUPPORT



As of the beginning of the 2021-22 school year, the Network is 13 schools strong.

By the end of this year, we aim to serve children through an expanded Network of twenty schools. And we don't want our support to stop anytime soon.

As the COVID-19 virus mutates and the pandemic threatens to affect our world for years to come, the Student Support Network is determined to match its persistence! **We will positively impact our community well into the future by ensuring that Baltimore County schoolchildren have access to the basics they need to succeed, no matter their caregivers' ability to provide them.**

In the current 2021-2022 fiscal year, the Student Support Network aims to raise \$500,000.



Here's what it will accomplish.

- ✓ LAUNCH SUPPORT ROOMS AT 7 NEW SCHOOLS
- ✓ CREATE A NEW PROGRAM COORDINATOR POSITION
- ✓ INVEST IN THE NETWORK'S FUTURE: START OUR ENDOWMENT
- ✓ MAKE STUDENT SUPPORT NETWORK'S SERVICES AVAILABLE TO MORE THAN 10,000 KIDS IN NEED



"HOW CAN I HELP?" THANKS FOR ASKING.

We can't do this alone. **You** can give children living in need, right in our backyards, the tools they require to succeed at school, and the hope that could propel them to eventually break the cycle of poverty in their family.

Here's how.

KINDNESS IS CONTAGIOUS!

A NOTE FROM A STUDENT SUPPORT NETWORK VOLUNTEER

"I was in the support room yesterday organizing some things and the counselor brought in a student while I was there. He was very shy at first...maybe a little uncomfortable because I was there. But after I helped them find some items that he needed, he spoke up and enthusiastically asked where he could sign up to help. I found this so heartwarming because not many middle school students think that way, and also because he was so shy. I think he genuinely felt like he really wanted to help because he was so grateful that he was able to get the items that he needed."

We seek support at every level from our existing community and new friends. We have learned to dream big - major contributions allow us to grow more quickly and create sustainability for the future!



And, we appreciate and maximize each and every donation. From \$15 to purchase a phys ed uniform to \$2,000 to launch a new Network school, your gift of any amount will help a child do, and be, their best.



In addition to giving directly, you can help in other ways! Visit our website for information on peer-to-peer fundraising, volunteering, and more.

