

Martha's Table

EDUCATION • FOOD • OPPORTUNITY

April 2022

Dear Friend,

First and foremost, we wish to *thank you* for your enduring support of Martha's Table and our interim leadership team. Your continued partnership means the world to us as we resolutely pursue our mission to support strong children, strong families, and strong communities. Together, we will continue to deliver on the promises that we have made to our neighbors and pave the way toward a brighter and more equitable future for D.C. **Thank you for your shared commitment to this work.**

Last fall, we shared with you our five-year plan to double down on our mission and go *all in* for D.C. children and families. This strategic vision, which builds on our 42 years of service to the D.C. community, was developed in true partnership with our neighbors. Through more than 1,000 conversations, community members lent their voices to Martha's Table and identified the ways we could go all in to achieve our greatest impact in D.C.

What does it mean to go all in for our neighbors?

It means leveraging the *full breadth* of our resources to invest in programs that *comprehensively* support children and families. This involves building on the programs that you know and love, including our grocery distribution, downtown meal service, and provision of clothing and essential family items, while forging new partnerships that **expand access to opportunity from birth to adulthood.**

With your help, we are going ALL IN and **doubling the reach of our food and clothing access programs** offered through our centers in Northwest and Southeast D.C. We are deepening our investments in young children, launching **500 child savings accounts**. We are expanding access to culturally competent **mental and emotional wellness services** in Southeast D.C. We are laying the groundwork to support **older youth** as they make the difficult transition to adulthood. And we are promoting families' **economic mobility**, so that they have the opportunity to *stay and thrive* in their changing communities.



With this letter, we are thrilled to report back on the progress that your support has made possible during the first few months of 2022.

Promoting Family Stability

Building on our previous two years of innovative cash assistance efforts, Martha's Table announced in January with Mayor Muriel Bowser, **"Strong Families, Strong Futures DC,"** a brand-new cash assistance program, supported by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, that is investing in new and expecting mothers in Wards 5, 7, and 8. Through this initiative, Martha's Table will issue mothers \$10,800 via cash transfers (equal to \$900 a month for 12 months) for their families. This essential support will help stabilize families during the pivotal—and often financially difficult—first year of their child's life. Coupled with access to financial literacy classes, it will help families build a strong financial foundation that paves the way for lasting child and family success.

In February, we launched a month-long application period for Strong Families, Strong Futures DC that was intentionally designed to be easily accessible for eligible families. When the application portal closed on March 21, we had received *1,552 applications for 132 spots*. The number of applicants speaks volumes about the high need for supportive, stabilizing

programs during the joyous, but often stressful, first year of life. Earlier this month, we conducted a randomized selection process to identify 132 mothers to participate in Strong Families, Strong Futures DC.

Strong Families, Strong Futures DC represents the third cash assistance initiative of Martha's Table since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. It builds on our work through the THRIVE partnership—a collaboration among Martha's Table, 11th Street Bridge Park, Bread for the City, and the Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative—to extend financial support during periods of acute financial crisis. Recently, the Urban Institute released its final report on THRIVE. Overwhelmingly, the program **reduced stress** in participating households while **increasing food security**, helping to foster a supportive at-home environment for young children and their caregivers.



One mother who participated in our cash transfer programs shared, **"I didn't have to worry about basic necessities, especially when so many others were worried. I was able to give more attention to [my son], especially in terms of his education. I felt like the least I could do now is keep going and keep pouring support into him."**



Separately, Martha's Table will also support an additional 100 mothers over the next two years through our **Early Parenting Program**. Early Parenting Program participants build social networks with other parents, set goals for their growing families, are connected with essential perinatal resources, and learn skills for supporting their child's development. They will also receive \$300 a month in direct cash assistance for a full year. We are grateful for the generous support of the Colonel Harland Sanders Foundation, Inc., and Anthem, Inc., as founding contributors to this program.

Helping Families Thrive

While time-limited cash assistance has the power to stabilize families during periods of acute financial hardship, we know family leaders want to advance their careers, achieve their dreams, and earn a family-sustaining wage. In January, we were pleased to announce that Martha's Table and our partners in the Advancing Early Education Collaborative won a multi-year commitment from the JPMorgan Chase Foundation's nationwide Advancing Cities Competition.

This workforce development program is designed to support women pursuing a career in early education. Participating women receive access to scholarships, stipends for child care and transportation, and the full suite of Martha's Table programming while furthering their education. They also have the opportunity to complete hands-on practicum hours in our classrooms, participate in financial coaching with LIFT-DC, and receive academic and exam tutoring.

This program removes barriers and forges new pathways for current and aspiring early education professionals to earn their credentials and advance their careers. We are grateful to American University, Trinity Washington University, LIFT-DC, Venture Philanthropy Partners+RaiseDC, JPMorgan Chase, and the Urban Institute for their partnership on this initiative, which will graduate 300 women over the next three years.



The impact that this cross-sector collaborative promises can be seen among the talented teachers already working in our early education classrooms. A number of years ago, we piloted a partnership with Trinity Washington University that

offered our educators the opportunity to earn additional academic credentials, such as an associate degree in early childhood education, while working full-time with Martha's Table.



One such teacher, Ms. Shernice, recently shared, “I am proud to say that I’m living my passion, and it’s exciting to know that other mothers will have the opportunity to pursue their passion for early childhood education through this amazing partnership.

“This deep passion in me was inspired by my adoptive mother. She was the director of an after-school program in the District, and you could always feel the love she had for her job and her students... I re-enrolled at Trinity Washington University with the help of Martha’s Table. The program I was enrolled in allowed me to get on-the-job educational credit, which removed a big barrier for me. I had a support system that

ensured I was set up every step of the way.”

Supporting Emotional Wellness

In addition to the need for stabilizing and mobilizing resources, our neighbors also consistently spoke about the damaging effects of the lack of access to emotional wellness services in Southeast D.C.

One neighbor shared that when they were seeking help, “They told me I had to go to x, y, z. There were so many different places and people kept sending me everywhere... I didn’t know what to do. *Why does it take me having a nervous breakdown to get resources?*”

Our neighbors challenged us to partner with a trusted, culturally competent mental health provider to bring these services to their community. We are proud to be working with Community Wellness Ventures to do just that.

For many of our neighbors, this may be the first time they have accessed professional services for their mental and emotional wellness. To reduce the stigma associated with seeking help, we are offering low-barrier, hour-long group workshops that provide helpful tips and tools that can be applied in everyday life. From there, we are able to connect those who desire increased support directly to one-on-one counseling sessions. It’s working. This year, dozens of neighbors have participated in our workshops, and nearly 100 have already been referred to counseling services.



Directly Investing Dollars in the Community

We are truly humbled to be a part of the Ward 8 community in Southeast D.C. and recognize that, since opening our headquarters in 2018, we are still new to our neighborhood. There are countless community leaders and grassroots organizations that have been advocating on behalf of Ward 8 far longer than us. And too often, these organizations have been excluded from institutional philanthropy.



Community members asked Martha’s Table to use our networks to connect outstanding grassroots organizations with the resources they need to thrive. We are doing just that.

Just this month, we launched the **Community Impact Fund** in partnership with the Greater Washington Community Foundation. Through the fund, grants will provide up to \$10,000 of general operating support for a range of capacity-building activities or targeted initiatives for Ward 8 nonprofits. Our goal is to help strengthen grassroots

organizations in Ward 8 whose leadership and staff reflect the demographic composition and lived experiences of the communities they serve.

In alignment with our belief that our neighbors are the experts in their own lives—and therefore know best how to effectively deploy resources in their communities—applications to the Community Impact Fund will be reviewed by a committee of local residents. This committee is empowered to develop grant eligibility and evaluation criteria, as well as to determine final grant award decisions. Reviewers will bring to the selection process the benefits of their lived experience, diverse outlook, and deep local knowledge.

Staying the Course

Thank you again for your unwavering commitment to the Martha’s Table mission. As the interim leadership team, we feel your support deeply and see its impact every day. We and the Martha’s Table team remain steadfastly determined to deliver on the promises that we have made to our neighbors through our strategic plan and look forward to keeping you abreast of our shared progress.

Thank you for your continued partnership in these efforts.

Yours in Service,



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