



CENTER FOR FOOD SYSTEMS
AND COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

The Beauty of Relationships and Shared Values in a Storm

A coalition of regional partners working collaboratively and cooperatively to keep communities fed, farmers engaged, and local businesses and organizations operating. This short vignette is part of our “Virginia Food Systems and COVID-19 Story Collection Project” that aims to highlight, collect, and share stories of hope and resilience in our food system amidst the pandemic. Find out more about this project and view our entire series on [our website](#).

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For people caught in the middle of a storm, the situation can be fraught with tumult, uncertainty, and anxiety. The importance of relationships and values takes on new meaning and urgency in a rocky, harrowing time. The COVID-19 pandemic has been deeply unsettling to individuals and households, but the effects are particularly hard and devastating for low-wealth and vulnerable communities.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in speaking and working for the creation of a ‘beloved community’ in the 1950s and 1960s, encouraged people to lean into relationships and the values of courage, compassion, and care to address and overcome adversity. The Mid-Atlantic Food Resilience and Access Coalition (MAFRAC) is an example of such a caring response to the current adversity facing communities in the region. MAFRAC was established as an early response to COVID-19 in an effort to keep communities fed with nutrient-dense, locally produced foods; farmers engaged in planting and harvesting; local businesses and organizations operational; and to cooperate to strengthen farm and food relationships throughout the region’s food system.

Since MAFRAC was established, relationships and values have been integral to the Coalition’s work. This vignette highlights an ongoing collaboration that was coordinated to meet the need to expand the supplies of protein available to community organizations working to serve and feed low-wealth and vulnerable communities who are struggling with food security as a result of homelessness, unemployment, and financial distress.

Tom McDougall of 4P Foods and co-founder of MAFRAC reached out to Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) to make Extension professionals aware of the need for additional meat and

protein sources in the region. In response to the initial outreach, Extension personnel contacted Hobey Bauhan of the Virginia Poultry Federation and let him and his member organizations know of this emerging regional food security need.

John King of Virginia Poultry Growers Cooperative (VPGC), a 100% grower owned cooperative located in the central Shenandoah Valley, replied to the email request to let VCE and MAFRAC know the cooperative would have forty-pound cases of frozen turkey tenderloin and ground turkey available for sale at a reduced cost.

Virginia Cooperative Extension worked closely with MAFRAC to let the Coalition's partner organizations know of the availability of the turkey tenderloin and ground turkey. Amy Bachman of DC Central Kitchen (DCCK) and Chris Bradshaw and Nadine Bailey-Joyner of Dreaming Out Loud (DOL) expressed immediate interest in learning about the turkey tenderloin and how the product might meet their meal serving and menu needs.

After an initial conference call to talk about the specifications of the turkey, pricing, and logistics, John King of VPGC generously arranged for twenty pounds of turkey tenderloin and ground turkey to be shipped overnight to DC Central Kitchen and Dreaming Out Loud so their chefs and kitchen managers could prepare a meal with the turkey as a pilot test. Amy Bachman of DC Central Kitchen shared, "DC Central Kitchen's chefs really liked the turkey and how the turkey fit with their menu."

As the relationship developed, Virginia Poultry Growers Cooperative provided DC Central Kitchen and Dreaming Out Loud 2,050 pounds of frozen turkey tenderloin and ground turkey to help address the food security issues facing people and communities in the DC area. 4P Foods, a partner and founding organization of MAFRAC based in Warrenton and Charlottesville, backhauled the 51 cases of frozen turkey from Hinton, VA, and delivered the turkey to DC Central Kitchen and Dreaming Out Loud in downtown Washington, DC. Virginia Poultry Growers Cooperative also graciously secured \$5,000 from a private donor to help defray the cost of transportation.



The Dreaming Out Loud team preparing community meals. Photo courtesy of Natalie Bailey-Joyner.



*A ready to go meal prepared by DC Central Kitchen.
Photo courtesy of Amy Bachman.*

DC Central Kitchen and Dreaming Out Loud are currently working with VPGC and 4P Foods to coordinate a second shipment and delivery of an additional 50 cases of frozen turkey tenderloin and ground turkey, which will provide 8,000 four-ounce servings of turkey to the people and communities in DC Central Kitchen and Dreaming Out Loud serve.

Relationships and shared values are especially critical when supply chains are disrupted and a storm's end is not known. Courage, compassion and care are enduring human values to lean into during this tumultuous time of COVID-19. Pitching in and working together to overcome adversities and weather unforeseen storms is a tangible way to demonstrate the beauty of caring relationships and a deep appreciation of our own vulnerability and shared humanity.

Additional Information and Websites:

DC Central Kitchen (DCK) fights hunger differently. DC Central Kitchen develops and operates social ventures that break the cycle of hunger and poverty. Their educational and social ventures include culinary job training, a full-service café and catering business, healthy school food, health corners, community meals, and a speaker's bureau. <https://dckcentralkitchen.org/>

Dreaming Out Loud (DOL) is a non-profit organization that coordinates and provides meals for community members of all ages in the DC Metropolitan Area, with specific interest in the nutritional needs of young children and vulnerable high-risk people. <https://dreamingoutloud.org/>

4P Foods -- Purpose, People, Planet, Profit are the four Ps of 4P Foods. 4P Foods' purpose is to create a just and equitable food system in the United States. This can be done by ensuring that all people have access to farm-fresh, healthy food, grown using sustainable and humane practices and that the people who produce that food are able to earn a fair and dignified living doing so. <https://4pfoods.com/>

The Mid-Atlantic Food Resilience and Access Coalition (MAFRAC) is a diverse group of more than 25 partners across the Mid-Atlantic region that is mobilizing farmers, schools, food hubs, food banks, commercial kitchens, rideshare services, food service workers and others to form a supply chain that brings nutrient-dense, locally sourced food to those in need while simultaneously keeping those people involved in the supply chain meaningfully employed. The Coalition's website is: <https://mafrac.com/who-we-are/>

Virginia Poultry Federation is a nonprofit, statewide trade association established in 1925 that represents all sectors of the poultry industry from farmers, to processors, and affiliated poultry businesses. <https://www.vapoultry.com/index.cfm>

Virginia Poultry Growers Cooperative (VPGC) is a 100% grower owned cooperative located in the central Shenandoah Valley and has been in the turkey business for over 15 years. The Cooperative's turkey processing facility is one of the most state-of-the-art in the industry. The Cooperative's website is: www.vapgc.com.