



## 2021 ACS Humanitarian Awards

**John Fry**

*Volunteer of the Year*

Since retiring over a decade ago, John has made volunteering his full-time job. John is passionate about serving those experiencing poverty. What makes John a truly incredible volunteer is that he recognizes the limitations and gaps nonprofits face and strives to fill them. 16 non-profits across four counties benefit from John's time, ingenuity, resources, network and kind heart.

The Howard County Food Bank, a division of Community Action Council of Howard County, receives donations of all kinds. They have a vast network and open their doors to anyone with a heart to give. At times there are items received that do not coincide with their main direction of being a grocery store to those in need. John will directly fill the transportation gap by taking items from one non-profit to another. Clothing donated by retail partners is not distributed by the Howard County Food Bank but is distributed at the Grassroots Day Resource Center. The reciprocation is that the Day Resource Center has a very small kitchen and even smaller food storage capacity. John will transport fresh produce such as potatoes and apples to the Food Bank. John is constantly expanding his network and bringing items from one to another.

The time, effort and resourcefulness John dedicates cannot be measured as an impact on those the local agencies serve. A few statistics from the Food Bank/Grassroots partnership are staggering. In the past 6 months alone, John has brought over 6,000 pounds of food from Grassroots to the Howard County Food Bank. Items such as fresh produce and dairy that Grassroots cannot use fast enough are distributed to the families shopping at the Food Bank. In return, John has delivered over 8,000 pounds of food items to Grassroots from the Howard County Food Bank. Items like candy, soda, and industrial sized canned goods that the Food Bank cannot distribute to families John is able to deliver to Grassroots for their clients. These efforts between the Howard County Food Bank and Grassroots saves both agencies staff time and frees up our vehicles to collect donations from other sites.

This collective 14,000 pounds collected and delivered between the Howard County Food Bank and Grassroots is just the start for John. He also collects and delivers items to and on behalf of sixteen other nonprofits statewide.

John also works to inspire others to give and serve. In 2019 John reached out to his personal community to collect food for the Howard County Food Bank. From three food drives, John was able to collect over 1,300 pounds of food.

John is the epitome of a multi-tasker. On Friday afternoons John may stop by the Howard County Food Bank to volunteer and sort some recent food donations. At the same time, John is also volunteering for Neighbor Ride. How you may ask? On Friday afternoons, John drives a client of Neighbor Ride to her appointment. While the client is at her appointment for an hour or two, John will come by the Food Bank to volunteer. Most people may run personal errands, read a book or fill their time in other ways. But not John - he always thinks about how to serve others.

John is also very resourceful. In the winter of 2019, John was instrumental in securing a few of the State's excess pallets of MREs, meals ready to eat. Facing transportation issues, John knew of two non-profits that would benefit greatly in receiving pallets of MREs. John took it upon himself to rent a U-Haul truck and personally pick up and deliver the MREs to nonprofits who could use them. The Howard County Food Bank was then able to provide the MREs to those experiencing food insecurity. The Howard County Department of Community Resources' handed them out during their most recent Point in Time count.

John's ability to problem solve and multitask allow him to serve so many agencies which in turn allows those to serve more people in our community.

Others within the nonprofit community view John as an incredibly dedicated and irreplaceable volunteer. John's willingness to complete any job and to go above and beyond to fill in gaps to ensure goods are at the location is appreciated by all. It allows all involved to better serve the community.

The volunteer coordinator at the Grassroots Day Resource Center described John as a phenomenal volunteer. Not only willing to be a greeter at the front desk a couple times a week but is also responsible for a monthly meal group. John started volunteering with Grassroots Day Resource Center in 2015 and has since introduced many others to their mission by inviting them to assist with his meal group.

In addition to volunteering his time at nine nonprofits in Howard County. John also volunteers for two nonprofits in Anne Arundel County, three nonprofits in Baltimore City, two nonprofits in Baltimore County and one nonprofit in Carrol County. Of the seventeen organizations John volunteers for he collects and delivers goods to or on behalf of sixteen of them. Collecting and delivering goods across four counties is a huge job. Especially when John is using his personal car and visits the sites on his own.

John's efforts also reduce food waste. Roughly 30 percent of the US food supply is lost each year (USDA's Economic Research Service). By collecting unwanted food from grocery stores or pantries who cannot use the food before the expiration John is able to deliver it to nonprofits

who can use it. Instead of this food going into the garbage it is given a second life for those facing food insecurity.

The Community Action Council is grateful to have John as a dedicated volunteer and partner is serving those experiencing poverty.