



Family Services, Inc.

An affiliate of Sheppard & Enoch Pratt Foundation

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County and Community Providers Brings Emergency Food and Housing Services to Neighborhoods; Service Centers Now Open in Gaithersburg and Wheaton

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS), in partnership with local municipalities and community-based organizations, has opened Neighborhood Service Centers in Gaithersburg and Wheaton, bringing emergency food and housing stabilization services to areas hit hardest by the current economic crisis.

Working in partnership with Family Services, Inc., IMPACT Silver Spring, the City of Gaithersburg, Interfaith Works and the Community Foundation, the Gaithersburg Neighborhood Service Center (NSC) opened in March 2009 at the Family Services' offices at 602 East Diamond Avenue. It welcomes visitors Monday from 2:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m., Tuesday through Friday from 2:00 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. and serves families and individuals in the 20877 zip code. In addition to providing access to services at the Gaithersburg Center, the NSC is located within a complex of other non-profit providers, including HomeFree-USA, Manna Food, the Dwelling Place, Guide, Interfaith Upcounty Clothing Center, TAYA (Teen and Young Adult) Health Connection, Community Clinic, and WIC.

The Wheaton Neighborhood Service Center, with Catholic Charities as the lead non-profit partner agency, opened on April 29, 2009 at 12247 Georgia Avenue. It welcomes visitors Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and serves families and individuals in zip codes 20902 and 20906.

Montgomery County has not been immune from the economic downturn and many neighborhoods have been hit hard by rising unemployment, hunger, evictions and foreclosures. The County's Department of Health and Human Services' data shows higher rates of evictions and increased reports of child neglect, domestic abuse and requests for emergency assistance.

The centers are staffed by "community connectors" led by triage workers who have been trained by Health and Human Services to assist residents with filling out complicated applications for food stamps, utilities assistance and health services; collecting the various documentation required for such applications; and making referrals to other resources as needed. Services at the centers include applications for:

- Temporary Cash Assistance
- Food Stamps
- Medical Assistance
- Eviction Prevention & Utility Disconnections
- Home Energy Programs and Rental Assistance

In addition, residents are screened for a variety of other MCDHHS services.

In partnership with residents from targeted neighborhoods, IMPACT Silver Spring is leading grass roots campaigns with apartment and townhome complex to support this new kind of neighbor-based safety net program. Through door knocking and community outreach activities, IMPACT Silver Spring connects residents to community resources and other support groups.

For more information, contact the Gaithersburg Center at 301-840-4080 or the Wheaton Center at 301-942-1790.

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