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Feed St. Mary's: Why a food bank?

Lexington Park, MD: Over the past year, the Lexington Park Rotary Club formed a broad partnership with community and faith-based organizations to bring the first ever food bank to St. Mary's County. The resulting coalition, Feed St. Mary's, is looking to find space, staffing, volunteers, and donations to make adequate nutrition available for those who need it most in St. Mary's County.

In St. Mary's County, more than a third of families in some districts are eligible for some form of federal assistance. Nearly 32% of St. Mary's County Public School children receive free and reduced meals.

Food banks serve as bulk food way-stations where food pantries and soup kitchens may obtain food for direct distribution to those in need. Without a food bank in St. Mary's County, local pantries and kitchens must rely on food banks in other counties that do not deliver, private donations and grocery stores to fill their shelves—as a result, many struggle to meet growing nutrition needs for families in St. Mary's County. The Feed St. Mary's goal is to establish a sustainable food bank in partnership with Maryland Food Bank. The Maryland Food Bank is poised to deliver food to Feed St. Mary's as ordered by local pantries to better nourish food insecure children, seniors and families. In so doing, Feed St. Mary's hopes to encourage the creation of new food pantries to reach portions of the population where access to food is extremely difficult.

The Lexington Park Rotary Club has already committed \$50,000 to the development of a food bank in St. Mary's County and raised \$7,500 in a grant, but more help from the community is needed to establish Feed St. Mary's food bank operation. Feed St. Mary's is actively seeking a site of 2,500 square feet or more in the Bay District area to house a food bank, as well as equipment such as forklifts, pallet jacks, storage bins, refrigerators, and freezers. The project also needs volunteers to staff the food bank and move food from local farms to the centrally located food bank where pantries and soup kitchens can pick up bulk foods for distribution. Most importantly, Feed St. Mary's needs financial support for staffing and infrastructure.

Supporting Feed St. Mary's is an investment in the future of St. Mary's County and all of its residents. The Rotary Foundation of Lexington Park is accepting donations to support future space and equipment costs. You can give online via credit or debit card at www.feedstmarys.org. Checks may be sent to:

Feed St. Mary's
c/o the Lexington Park Rotary Foundation
P.O. Box 212
Lexington Park, Md. 20653

Please make check payable to: "Lexington Park Rotary Foundation," and put "Feed St. Mary's" on the note line. The Lexington Park Rotary Foundation is a 501c3 organization. All donations are tax deductible.

For more information, please visit us at www.feedstmarys.org.