



UMB News

CURE Organizes Donation Drive-By

November 23, 2020 | By [Jena Frick](#)

As Thanksgiving approaches, volunteers from the [University of Maryland, Baltimore](#) (UMB) have been hard at work stuffing more than 100 boxes with food donations for all of the families involved with the [UMB CURE Scholars Program](#).

"I think it's really special that we got volunteers who are available and willing to help make this a great holiday for our families," said **Stephanie Alphee**, operations manager for UMB CURE and the point person for the program's Thanksgiving food drive. "I think this year is special because given everything that's happening in the world, we still got people to rally around this, and that really means a lot to us and our families."



Stephanie Alphee, the operations manager for the UMB CURE Scholars Program, sorts the food donations for their annual Thanksgiving food drive.

The donations were purchased with money from the [UMB Staff Senate's Thanksgiving food drive](#). Normally, the Staff Senate would collect food donations, but this year, due to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), the group only accepted monetary donations to purchase food for community members in the West Baltimore area.

From Nov. 17-19, volunteers came in small shifts to UMB's new

[Community Engagement Center \(CEC\)](#) to

sort the food donations and distribute them into individual boxes. Each donation box included canned vegetables, cream of mushroom soup, boxed mashed potatoes, mac and cheese, pasta noodles, chicken stock, corn bread mix, and pumpkin puree.

“Each family will get a box so they have all the essentials for a Thanksgiving meal,” Alpee said. “We’re basically giving them everything they need but the turkey.

Every volunteer was equipped with a face mask and gloves while handling the donations. They also were required to get COVID tested before signing up for a volunteer shift. The volunteers consisted of UMB employees, CURE staff members, and CURE mentors.

“Volunteering for this food drive is really important to me because I used to be on the other side of this,” says **Jeff Inen**, a CURE mentor who is studying neuroscience in UMB’s [Science Training for Advancing Biomedical Research Postbaccalaureate Program](#) (STAR-PREP). “I was born and raised here in Baltimore and grew up living in poverty, so I know what it means and how important it is to give back.”

In addition to the boxes being assembled at the CEC, Rev. Al Hathaway organized an additional 25 food baskets from Union Baptist Church that included gift cards for families to purchase additional food for the holiday.

To distribute the donations safely, the CURE team set up a drive-by pickup system at the CEC on Nov. 20-22. Families drove up to the CEC and a volunteer put the box of donations into the trunk of their vehicles.

“We had our social work interns reach out to every CURE family individually to make sure they would be able to come and pick up the donations,” said **Gia Grier McGinnis, DrPH, MS**, executive director of the CURE Scholars Program. “Any families that have mobility issues or are unable to drive will have their boxes delivered to them.”

To accommodate all of the families involved with the CURE program, several volunteers, including Inen, signed up as “drivers” to deliver the donations directly to their doorsteps. The deliveries were contactless to maintain safe COVID-19 protocols.

In addition to the Thanksgiving food drive, the CURE Scholars Program has organized an emergency fund to assist families that may need assistance with rent, grocery bills, and electric bills during the COVID-19 pandemic. Anyone can donate to the [CURE Scholars Emergency Support Fund](#)  at any time on the CURE website.

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