

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



**SO WHAT ELSE**  
CAN WE DO TO HELP?

**SO WHAT ELSE, INC.**

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# LETTER FROM THE FOUNDERS

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Dear Friends,

**2025 pushed us.** And because of you, we pushed back harder, with love, urgency, and action.

This year, families across our region faced **historic need**. A prolonged government shutdown disrupted income, food access, and basic stability for thousands. Demand for emergency food surged. Youth and families in underserved neighborhoods struggled to regain their footing.

So What Else showed up because we are powered by our community of philanthropists and volunteers. Together, in 2025, we recovered almost **19 million pounds of food**. We stood up three emergency pantries in just **72 hours**. We expanded weekly food distributions in Baltimore and Prince George's County. We answered calls from agencies, schools, and neighborhoods that had nowhere else to turn.

We believe in showing up for people, not just when it's convenient, but especially when it's not. So What Else believes food is a **human right**, that youth deserve opportunities to lead, and that service is a powerful force for healing and change. And we believe in this community. You've proven, again and again, that compassion is contagious.

**Thank you for being a part of the "What can we do to help?" movement. If you've ever given a dollar, an hour, or a kind word to So What Else, thank you.**

You are part of a growing movement that says, **"We take care of each other."**

With deep gratitude,

Dave Silbert & Bob Schless  
Co-Founders, So What Else



# 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

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2025 was a remarkable year of growth for So What Else, marked by expanded program reach, strengthened community partnerships, and increased volunteer engagement. We served more youth, distributed more meals, and deepened our impact across the region, proving what's possible when compassion meets action.

In addition to our outward-facing growth, So What Else spent the year looking inward - focusing on how we measure our impact, establishing an appointment system, and improving our internal operations to better serve our community with efficiency, dignity, and care.

## PEOPLE SERVED

**314,211**

## VOLUNTEERS ENGAGED

**4,500**

## LBS. OF FOOD RESCUED

**18,770,734**

## VALUE OF RESCUED FOOD\*

**\$36 Million**

## DOLLARS RAISED

**\$4,296,495**

## YOUTH KEPT SAFE DURING OUT OF SCHOOL TIME HOURS

**1,695**



\*Feeding America has valued each pound of rescued food at \$1.92.

# HUNGER RELIEF

## SERVING MORE, REACHING FURTHER

So What Else's Hunger Relief Program continues to be the backbone of our work, evolving each year to meet growing demand while maintaining the flexibility that communities rely on. What began as a rapid response has become a deeply integrated, multi-channel food access system that reaches families through neighborhoods, homes, schools, and partner organizations across Montgomery County, Washington, DC, and Baltimore. So What Else ensures food reaches people consistently, efficiently, and with dignity, **regardless of circumstance.**

In the past year, the program expanded its reach and these numbers reflect more than scale, they represent **trust, reliability, and a commitment to meeting families where they are.** As community needs continue to shift, So What Else remains focused on strengthening infrastructure, reducing food waste, and building a resilient food system that can respond quickly while sustaining long-term impact.



# FEDERAL WORKER PROGRAM

## CRISIS RESPONSE AND RAPID ACTION



As the federal government shutdown dragged on, **the need grew fast**. We heard stories of workers driving long distances to food banks, only to find shelves empty, matching what we were seeing on the ground.

In response, we launched a dedicated **Federal Worker Relief Program** with weekday and weekend pantry hours exclusively for furloughed federal employees and contractors. Families could access fresh groceries, pantry staples, and diapers through an efficient, respectful process, including drive-up and contactless options.

- **6 special distributions**
- **4,040 federal workers served**



When the federal government shutdown abruptly halted paychecks, **we saw the impact almost immediately**. Federal employees and contractors across Montgomery County, many seeking help for the first time, were suddenly forced to choose between food, rent, and basic necessities.

When uncertainty deepened and SNAP benefits were at risk, **we expanded again**. We added distribution days and hosted large-scale special distributions at our Food Rescue Bank in North Bethesda, along with reliable weekly Wednesday distributions in Rockville.



The scale was undeniable: on some days, **more than 600 cars came through, supported by over 100 volunteers**. Even as donations fluctuated and demand increased, we stayed on the front lines. This was about more than food. It was about dignity, empathy, and showing up when the safety net frayed.



# SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

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## BENDER FOUNDATION

In 2025, So What Else was proud to receive continued support from the Bender Foundation to support our work advancing opportunities for **underserved youth** in the Greater Washington Metropolitan Area. This partnership played a critical role in advancing holistic, youth-centered programming that nurtures academic success, emotional well-being, and physical health for children and families across our community.

Through the Bender Foundation's continued multi-year investment, So What Else strengthened access to nutritious food and high-quality out-of-school time programming for students who historically lack access to these types of programs. Children participated in after-school and summer programs that combined academic enrichment with wellness activities, creative expression, and physical movement supporting both **healthy bodies and healthy minds** in environments grounded in consistency, safety, and care.

This funding also helped ensure families had reliable access to fresh produce and essential groceries, reducing food insecurity, and creating the stability children need to learn and thrive. By addressing both basic needs and educational enrichment, the partnership reflected a shared understanding that student success is deeply connected to overall well-being.

The Bender Foundation's commitment to **Excellent Education, Healthy Minds, and Healthy Bodies** aligns seamlessly with So What Else's mission and approach. We are deeply grateful for their partnership and leadership in supporting programs that empower young people, strengthen families, and **build healthier communities**.

BENDER  
FOUNDATION  
INC.

# SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

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## MORNINGSTAR FOUNDATION

In 2025, So What Else was proud to partner with the Morningstar Foundation through its **Cold Storage Infrastructure Grant Program** to address one of the most critical barriers facing hunger relief organizations today: the lack of adequate cold chain and storage capacity.

As demand for food assistance continued to grow, So What Else frequently faced limitations in safely accepting and storing large in-kind donations of fresh and shelf-stable food. The Morningstar Foundation's investment directly addressed these challenges by **strengthening the infrastructure** needed to recover, store, and distribute food efficiently and safely.

Through this partnership, So What Else expanded its cold chain capacity with the addition of a **26-foot refrigerated box truck**, allowing staff to accept larger volumes of perishable donations, pick up food during off-peak hours, and deliver fresh items more consistently to underserved communities. In addition, the grant supported the installation of **dedicated on-site storage capacity** for shelf-stable food, significantly improving inventory management and enabling the organization to store culturally preferred staples and plan for seasonal demand.

These infrastructure upgrades have already resulted in measurable impact. So What Else is now able to reduce food waste, strengthen food safety compliance, and provide a wider variety of nutritious food to the **10,500+ households served weekly**. Most importantly, the investment allows So What Else to serve families more consistently and equitably while creating capacity for future growth.

The Morningstar Foundation's leadership in supporting infrastructure solutions reflects a deep understanding that **strong systems are essential to effective hunger relief**. We are deeply grateful for this partnership and for its lasting impact.



***THE MORNINGSTAR FOUNDATION***

# DELIVERING IMPACT



## ONE HOME AT A TIME

In Baltimore, So What Else knows food is more than fuel. It's essential to managing chronic illness and improving quality of life. Each year, we serve more than **35,000 individuals**, distributing millions of meals through pop-up distributions, partner organizations, and our South Pulaski Street Resource Center. Our work spans **13 Baltimore City ZIP codes**, many facing food deserts, high poverty, and limited access to healthy options.

Within this broader effort, our partnership with **Maryland Physicians Care** shows what's possible when food access and health care work together. Through this program, we provide **150 monthly home food deliveries** to households managing diet-related conditions like diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and obesity. Consistent, nutritious food is critical to treatment and long-term health.



By delivering directly to people's doors, we remove barriers like transportation, mobility challenges, and complex medical needs. So What Else and Maryland Physicians Care bridge the gap between clinical guidance and what families can realistically do at home.

Together, our Baltimore programs and this partnership in particular demonstrate how hunger relief can also be a public health solution, supporting healthier futures across the city.

“My children’s health insurance provider referred us to So What Else, which has been a tremendous blessing to my family. The monthly delivery of food has been immensely helpful, alleviating the financial burden on my family. The items are fresh and nutritious, and the children eagerly anticipate opening the boxes. We are deeply grateful for the consistent delivery service.”

The Kaur Family

# YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS



In 2025, So What Else delivered out-of-school time programs grounded in the **Positive Youth Development** approach, helping young people build the **5 C's**: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring. We provided consistent programming at **74** community-based sites, reaching **1,695 students** by reducing barriers and meeting them where they are: schools, housing communities, and neighborhood spaces.

To strengthen quality, youth providers completed training in child development, conscious discipline, mental health first aid, safety protocols, curriculum planning, evaluation, and nutrition education, with ongoing refreshers throughout the year.

Nutrition remained essential to our work: we served **18,780 meals** and **37,194 snacks** through after-school programs and summer camps, supporting student engagement and helping families during times of need.

Youth leadership also grew, with **20 teen mentors** supporting younger students while building leadership and job readiness skills. So What Else created daily moments of connection, belonging, and growth to support long-term success.

37K

SNACKS SERVED

18K

MEALS SERVED

1.7K

STUDENTS SUPPORTED

74

COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS

20

TEEN MENTORS

# KPC BUDDHIST RELIEF:

## PARTNERING TO SERVE RURAL COMMUNITIES

So What Else is proud to partner with KPC Buddhist Relief, an organization whose mission is to relieve suffering in all its forms—from providing humanitarian aid in times of crisis, to addressing food insecurity, inspiring compassion for animals, and healing the earth for the benefit of countless beings. Guided by the Buddhist principle of interdependence, KPC Buddhist Relief approaches its work with the understanding that the well-being of individuals, communities, and the planet are deeply interconnected.

Through this partnership, So What Else supports KPC Buddhist Relief in serving **1,056 households** each month with consistent access to nutritious, culturally responsive food, helping families meet their basic needs with dignity and care. Together, the organizations also provide bi-weekly support to the Poolesville Little Free Pantry, ensuring this **vital community resource** remains stocked and accessible for residents facing food insecurity.

This collaboration is supported through funding from the Montgomery County Office of Food Systems Resilience **Community Food Assistance (CFA) program**, which enables a reliable supply of both rescued and purchased food to reach households who need it most.

Together, So What Else and KPC Buddhist Relief demonstrate how shared values, strong community relationships, and strategic public investment can strengthen Montgomery County's food system expanding food access, supporting neighborhood-based resources, and reinforcing a shared commitment to compassion, equity, and long-term community resilience.



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT



**KPC BUDDHIST RELIEF**  
PROVIDING HUMANITARIAN AID FOR THOSE IN NEED

# FINANCIALS

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2025 was a record-breaking fundraising year for So What Else. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, the organization surpassed the \$4 million revenue mark for the first time, with over a \$1 million increase from last year.

**Revenues: \$4,296,495**

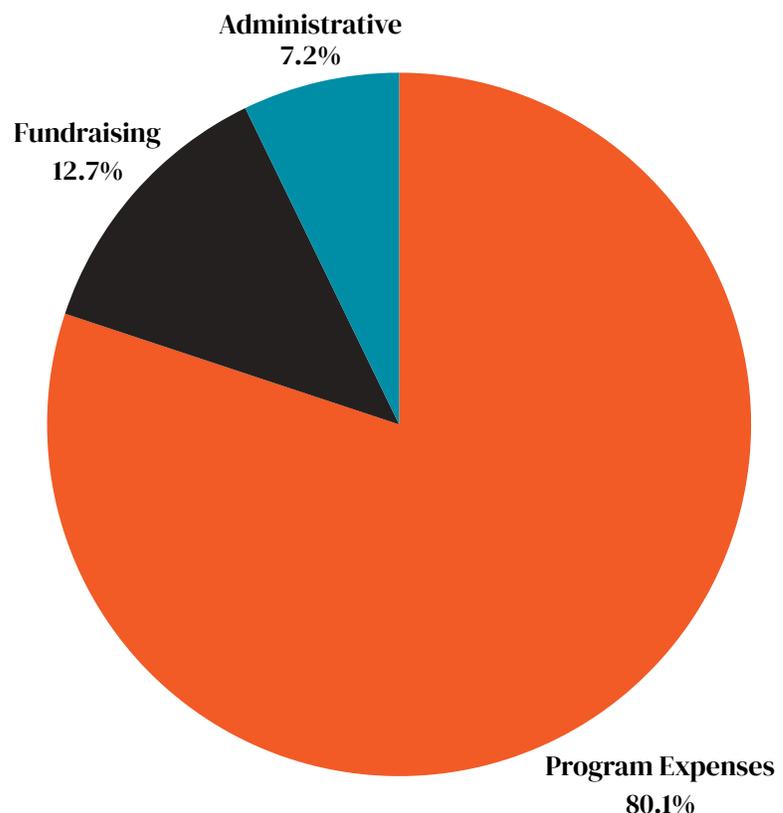
**Expenses: \$3,712,643**

**Net: \$583,852**

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## ALLOCATION OF EXPENSES

So What Else is committed to being a good steward of donor funds and is proud to have spent more than 80% of revenues on program expenses. This far exceeds the “best practice” metrics set by Charity Navigator.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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So What Else is deeply grateful for our dedicated Board of Directors, whose leadership, vision, and unwavering support make our mission possible every day.

**Brian Abramson**  
**Amy Embrey**  
**Brett Bernstein**  
**Bradley Blanken**  
**Nicolle Davis**  
**Tosha Dyson**  
**Jimmy Fragoyannis**  
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**Robert Schless**  
**Kevin Smith**  
**Jennifer Snyder**  
**Emily Stephenson**  
**Barrett Ware**  
**Suzy Wilson**



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# WAYS TO GIVE

Your generosity helps So What Else provide essential food, educational programs, and emergency services to children and families in need. Explore the many ways you can give and be a part of building stronger, more resilient communities.



## GIVE ONLINE

[SOWHATELSE.ORG/DONATE](https://sowhatelse.org/donate)



## GIVE BY PHONE

240-602-0486



## VOLUNTEER

[SOWHATELSE.ORG/VOLUNTEER](https://sowhatelse.org/volunteer)



# OTHER WAYS TO GIVE

Please email **Allie Bonney, Director of Development**, for more information on other ways to give: [abonney@sowhatelse.org](mailto:abonney@sowhatelse.org)

## DONOR-ADVISED FUNDS (DAF)



## REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTIONS (RMD)



## STOCK TRANSFERS



 So What Else

 @sowhatelsehelps

 @sowhatelsefoodrescuebank

 So What Else

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CAN WE DO TO HELP?  
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