

From Response to Resilience



Dear Bread for the City Family,

As the nation turns its attention to Washington, DC, we are reminded that behind the headlines, very real people live and work in our city and many of them are struggling.

Federal policies threaten food assistance and Medicaid. DC's budget shifts are pulling resources away from essential services. For our neighbors, these aren't policy debates. They mean longer lines for services, harder choices at the grocery store, and the fear that life-saving support could disappear.

At Bread for the City, we meet these challenges head-on. Every day, our team provides groceries, medical care, legal help, clothing, and counseling. These coordinated services bring immediate relief and lasting stability. But our work doesn't stop there. True progress requires deeper change. That's why we stand with clients as they lead, not just participate in the work.

The majority of Bread for the City board members are current clients. Their lived experience guides our decisions on programming, from food access to healthcare. This model of shared power is at the heart of who we are, and you'll see it reflected throughout this newsletter.

In this issue, you'll read about:

- **How a simple bench** in our Southeast Center is transforming lives.
- **Our behavioral health program**, reshaping mental health care through trauma-informed care, trust, and healing.
- **Our Digital Equity Initiative**, helping clients access virtual medical care, public benefits, and online tools many of us take for granted.
- **This year's Juneteenth for the City celebration**. Amid the current challenges, our community continues to gather in joy. The streets came alive with music, dance, and pride. It was more than a celebration. It was community. Restoration. And a glimpse of what equitable liberation can feel like.

None of this is possible without you. Thanks to your support, we're meeting urgent needs while also investing in services that create lasting change.

Together, we are moving from response to resilience —building a future rooted in care, dignity, and community leadership.

Thank you for standing with us.

With gratitude,



George A. Jones
Chief Executive Officer



Scan to help
DC neighbors get
the food, care, and
support they need.

A Bench, a Conversation, a First Step Toward Healing



It looks like a simple bench. But for many Bread for the City visitors, it's the first place they've ever felt truly heard.

Inside our Southeast Center, the Friendship Bench offers something rare: free, community-rooted mental health support that starts with a conversation. People take a seat and are welcomed by trained "Grandparents": volunteers from the neighborhood who offer empathy, listening, and guidance without judgment.

The program is built on a model that began in Zimbabwe and has since spread globally. Here in DC, it's managed by HelpAge USA and made possible by community organizations like ours, that believe healing should be accessible to everyone, not just those with insurance or a diagnosis.

Each Grandparent completes a ten-week training in problem-solving therapy and emotional support. Their

goal isn't to diagnose or treat. It's to hold space. To listen. To remind each visitor that they're not alone.

And it's working.

Local data shows that 9 in 10 people who visit the bench leave feeling like they have someone to talk to—up from just 4 in 10 before.

For many, that single conversation becomes a turning point. Some are connected with deeper care through our Behavioral Health program. Others just return the next week to talk again.

Because sometimes, healing doesn't begin in a clinic. It begins on a bench, with someone who cares enough to ask, *"How are you, really?"* This is what building community looks like.

Bread for the City is proud to be one of the first Friendship Bench sites in DC. The bench is simple. The impact is profound.

A Wellness Model, Redefined

Mental health care should feel like a lifeline, not a locked door.

For many of our clients, past experiences with the mental health system have been anything but safe. They faced judgment, cultural barriers, and endless red tape. Some were misdiagnosed. Others were dismissed. Too many learned to keep their pain hidden because asking for help felt risky.

Our **Behavioral Health program** was created to change that.

Every day, our team offers individual and group therapy rooted in trauma-informed, culturally responsive care. We meet people where they are, speak their languages, and take time to understand

the deeper stories behind each struggle.

That means acknowledging the stress of housing insecurity, structural racism, and community violence. It means centering trust, dignity, and consistent care. And it means working with clients to design services that reflect their lived experiences, not just clinical checklists.

The result is a model that goes beyond treating symptoms. It supports healing.

One client described it best: *"I used to feel like I had to hide parts of myself just to be heard. Here, I feel like I can show up fully. And I'm still seen."*

This kind of care should not be rare. It should be the standard. That's why we also advocate for a public benefits system that removes digital and bureaucratic barriers instead of reinforcing them.

Healing is possible. When care is built on trust, people don't just cope. They grow.



Freedom is Joy: Juneteenth for the City 2025

It began with the beat of drums.

Then came the laughter, the aroma of grilled food, and a rhythm that drew everyone toward the heart of the block.

Juneteenth for the City 2025 was more than a celebration. It was a declaration. Neighbors, artists, vendors, and families filled the streets to honor Black liberation with music, dance, and pride. Step teams, go-go bands, and pop-up stands selling handmade jewelry and local treats turned the day into a living canvas of creativity and community spirit.

“Joy is resistance,” one attendee said. *“It’s how we hold space for ourselves, even when the world tries to shrink us.”*

Our community believes that healing comes not only through services, but through connection and cultural affirmation. That commitment is what powers this event each year. 2025 marked the 4th annual Juneteenth for the City, planned and organized by our Client Advisory Council to honor the community with intentionality and leadership.

Children played freely, elders shared stories, and Black-owned businesses stood at the center.

CEO George Jones reflected on the moment. *“Juneteenth reminds us that freedom is not something given. It’s something fought for, protected, and celebrated together.”*

In a time when communities of color continue to face systemic racism and injustice, gatherings like this are more than festive. They are vital. They affirm our shared strength and point to the future we’re building together.

We are proud to uplift Black joy, culture, and leadership, not just on Juneteenth, but every day.



Connected to Thrive

When access to care moved online, many of our clients were left behind. Some lacked reliable internet. Others had no devices, or the know-how to navigate the systems required to manage their health and benefits.

That's why Bread for the City launched the **Digital Equity Initiative**.

The program helps clients connect to virtual medical and behavioral health appointments, navigate online benefits platforms, and build confidence in using technology for everyday needs. Whether it's helping a senior log into a telehealth visit, assisting a parent to recertify their SNAP benefits, or supporting vulnerable neighbors too afraid to leave their homes, the goal is simple: make access equitable, dignified, and consistent.

This work also fuels our advocacy. We continue to push for a public benefits system designed to support people, not shut them out.

In a world where so much happens online, digital access is not a luxury. It's a path to health, stability, and opportunity.



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