

Thomas Jefferson Middle School
Arlington, Virginia

November 2, 2020

Dear Jefferson Neighbors and Friends:

As we approach the upcoming series of traditional fall and winter school breaks, we find ourselves in continued conditions of uncertainty. While we were used to having a couple areas of our lives that lacked predictability, we now see it extending to previously rock-solid certainties of our day-to-day existence. At this time last year, who among us could have fathomed that we would now be on the sixth month of not *going* to school? Could anyone have imagined that nearly the entire hospitality industry, a lynchpin of employment for so many of those in our midst and a major source of financial stability in our local economy, would virtually disappear overnight? The sun rises, the kids go to school, and parents go to work. These are factors that we took for granted less than a year ago. We now know just how fragile our daily routine was and how thankful we needed to be.

Certainly these tectonic life shifts have affected everyone, however, some of our neighbors and classmates have felt far more of a blow to their well-being than others. While there are those who have miraculously seen their financial positions improve over the past six months, so many of our families' livelihoods are dependent upon the areas of the economy mentioned previously that are in total collapse. This large group of students at Jefferson Middle School have primary family income earners that do not get paid if they do not go to work. They cannot telework or plan on a prefunded salary for relief. For a variety of reasons many of these people also do not qualify for unemployment relief. This drying up of wage-earner jobs combined with the requirement of having to now find a way to handle childcare everyday (since schools are closed) has pushed families to the brink. Additionally, for numerous students school was a daily means of escape from very rough conditions to a place where they were more in charge of their own destiny. For the time being even this has been taken away.

While Arlington does have social safety nets available, these programs require a level of enrollment and eligibility that render them less than ideal for providing immediate assistance to families. It is in this environment that we are turning to you, our community, to give us the opportunity to allow our students with the greatest financial hardships to have a holiday season slightly less plagued by the pangs of poverty and hunger. A tax-deductible donation to the Jefferson Charitable Fund will allow us to provide food cards and other gift cards to our families that are in need. Additionally, if you need holiday greenery items, buy them through us. All proceeds from the greenery sale will go to the same fund. Information on both ways to give is on the Jefferson website, www.apsva.us/jefferson

We are continually humbled by the levels of support we are given from our families and community. Thank you for your generosity.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact jeremy.siegel@apsva.us

Sincerely,

Your Jefferson Staff