

As I See It

Community collaborative supports COVID-19 emergency relief campaign

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Mar 24, 2020

Life has taken a drastic, unexpected turn. Our world has been altered, our daily routines have been abruptly changed, and our local communities are reeling from extraordinary times that include daily updates and disruptions resulting from the rapid spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

It's difficult to wrap our brains around what is happening, and the speed at which it is happening is mind-boggling. In the past two weeks, we went from a booming economy nationally to a recession accompanied by mandatory closings, shutdowns, cutbacks, layoffs, and more unknowns than knowns. The economic fallout locally is resulting in substantial hardship for many Frederick County families and individuals. And all of that is on top of the 39 percent of households in Frederick County already struggling to afford basic household needs. Now, with the added uncertainties of the coronavirus impact, the future looks even more unsure. Nothing in the economy is predictable right now.

And yet, in the midst of all the unpredictability remains a steadfast truth that is completely predictable. Frederick County cares for its own and through our care for one another, we find practical, substantive ways of providing hope in an otherwise ominous if not overwhelming public health crisis. The need for hope is best recognized in times of crisis and an unprecedented crisis such as this amplifies our need for help, hope and healing. Frederick County is a haven for hope. Its leadership and citizens embody hope. The opportunities to experience it are as close to us as we are to our neighbors even when the crisis demands social distancing.

In the past week we have witnessed many examples of Frederick County and the city of Frederick at its best as government and health leaders, nonprofit organizations and community business and civic leaders have collaborated on how best to assess and meet ever-increasing needs — needs that are changing almost by the minute. One of the best examples of this has been spearheaded by United Way of Frederick County CEO Ken Oldham and his team in the launch of the [COVID-19 Emergency Relief Campaign](#), a campaign in which money raised will be used to support nonprofits that directly help those affected by this unprecedented crisis.

In order to ensure maximum impact for those who are being affected and to get out in front of the fallout, the philanthropic funding community has joined together in collaboration with the United Way and others to provide financial support to ensure that dollars are distributed to meet the need throughout the community. Philanthropic partners in this collaboration with the United Way of Frederick County include Ausherman Family Foundation, Community Foundation of Frederick County, Delaplaine Foundation Inc., Helen J. Serini Foundation, the Women's Giving Circle of Frederick County and others. This group of philanthropic partners recognizes it has the *"response—ability"* to help make a positive difference for those in need. In addition to contributing dollars to the campaign, they are also assessing availability of resources and supplies to help connect need with supply, similar to other initiatives underway by leadership in Frederick County, the city of Frederick, and the nonprofit community.

The collaborative philanthropic funders have developed through The Community Foundation of Frederick County a common grant application to streamline the ease of applying for emergency funding by nonprofit organizations to cover needs such as, but not limited to, emergency shelter, prescriptions and medical supplies, food and food supplies for seniors, transportation needs, financial stability assistance, and mental health services. This collaborative is committed to issuing grant funds in the next few weeks. The initial campaign goal is \$100,000, with the expectation that the need will exceed that amount. The campaign is off to an encouraging start including the extreme generosity of the Laughlin Family Foundation, Betsy and Michael Day, the Ken and Lynne Burdette Donor-Advised Fund, the Mark and Susan Butt Saturday Mornings Fund, the Jean Ellis and Florence Guss Memorial Fund, the Halleman Family Fund and the Robert G. Hooper Family Fund, which have collectively donated in excess of \$60,000 in challenge grant funds to be used as a dollar-for-dollar match for community contributions. The COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund will remain fluid, welcoming other groups to join the campaign, which will continue until the crisis is abated.

When united in purpose, the power and spirit of the Frederick area community knows no bounds. Any grave challenge presents the opportunity to rise. The time is now. Please help us support those in our community who face the greatest need during this uncertain time and as we are all trying to do our part to help contain, mitigate and prevent further spread of coronavirus COVID-19, please consider donating what you can by visiting www.unitedwayfrederick.org/COVIDRelief.

Together we will persevere in compassionate courage as we work toward a restored sense of normalcy and in time, achieve a renewed spirit, stability and strength.