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Community Response Relief Fund Distributes over $1.1 Million to Aid Local Organization

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, June 19, 2020 – United Way has been a key convener and coordinator of our community’s response to meet human needs for decades, so it was no surprise that they took the lead in establishing the COVID-19 Community Response Fund. In partnership with Bank of America, Florida Power and Light, Grand Harbor Community Outreach Program, Inc., Head, Heart and Hands of Indian River Club, Indian River Community Foundation, John’s Island Community Service League, John’s Island Foundation, M&T Bank, Wilmington Trust, Professional Advisory Services, Inc., Truist Foundation, the Rotary Club of Vero Beach, and hundreds of individual donors.

The response fund is the unified community relief initiative. Because of United Way’s reach and relationships with local government, donors, other local and national funders, and nonprofits across our county, they hold a unique position in the community that is necessary for a successful collaborative effort like this. As an experienced convener and grant maker, UWIRC assembled the right Unmet Needs Committee to make funding decisions and we were able to rapidly deploy dollars when our neighbors were suffering most.

To date, the COVID-19 Community Response Fund has raised $1.44 million and $1,127,000 in grants have been distributed to aid local organizations. These funds have been strategically deployed to 35 programs across the county to help residents with food, rental and utility assistance, health care, and veteran services. This additional support allows nonprofits to continue to meet the emerging and unprecedented volume of needs for residents hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic. Through these partnerships, over 16,500 households have benefited by receiving financial assistance and 1.7 million pounds of food have been distributed.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the economic hardships for many Indian River County households that live just above the federal poverty line, but still struggle to get by,” said Meredith Egan, COO, United Way of Indian River County. “According to 211, since the beginning of March, calls inquiring about housing has doubled, utility assistance has tripled, and food and health care have seen a nearly 500% increase. These issues must be addressed immediately.”

The Unmet Needs Committee has built a comprehensive plan for expending all remaining funds in the coming months. While the fund will continue to focus on rent and utility assistance, future waves will also include childhood care scholarships in an effort to assist working families. These scholarships are intended for child care and preschool for children in low-moderate income families who have been impacted by this pandemic, and are not eligible for other child care subsidies.
“We are happy for the opportunity to administer the Community Child Care Scholarships funded by the COVID-19 Community Response Fund. We look forward to helping families secure quality child care for their children while they return to work without an additional cost burden,” said Michael Kint, CEO, UWIRC. “United Way is strongly positioned to help our partners and their clients navigate the immediate impacts of COVID-19, but this tremendous work is only made possible because of the incredible support of our community.”

For a complete list of COVID-19 Community Response Fund partners and recipients, please visit UnitedWayIRC.org/ResponseFund.

About United Way of Indian River County

United Way of Indian River County (UWIRC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that fights for the health, education, and financial stability of every community member. United Way works with local programs to provide resources to individuals and families in crisis today, while working year-round to improve community conditions and create lasting solutions. We are effectively building a strong foundation and improving lives by mobilizing the caring power of our community. For more information about your local United Way, please call (772) 567-8900 or visit our website, UnitedWayIRC.org.

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