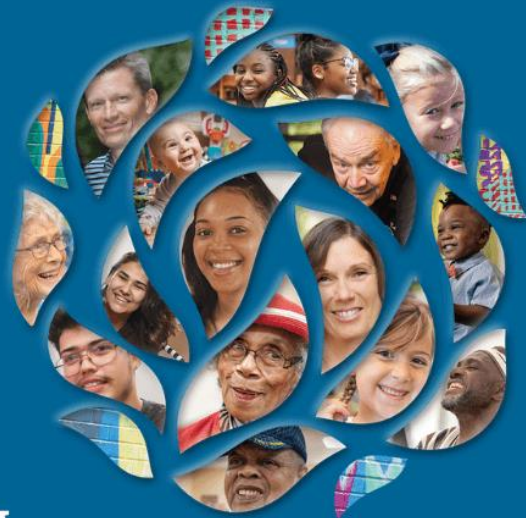


Pandemic Highlights The Foundation for Delaware County's Vital Role in Emergencies

**The Foundation for
Delaware County**

**Delaware County
COVID-19 Response Fund**

**Learn more and donate
www.delcofoundation.org**



Posted By: David Bjorkgren Posted date: May 29, 2020

It's good to know in these uncertain times that someone's got your back.

The [Foundation for Delaware County](#) was created more than three years ago to "create a vibrant future for Delaware County" by "improving the well-being of our residents."

That's true every day and especially true now during emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This is exactly the purpose The Foundation for Delaware County was created for, to provide financial support, to...build the nonprofit community in Delaware County, but also to respond to emergencies, whether they are manmade or natural," said the Foundation's first president, Frances Sheehan.

COVID-19 Response Fund

Back in March, the Foundation had just released more than \$1 million in impact grants to help 50 local nonprofits in their work. It was the second year they had done so.

Then came the COVID-19 shutdown and suddenly there was economic need everywhere.

The largest public charity in Delaware County quickly shifted gears and created the [COVID-19 Response Fund](#). It got the fund started with its own \$100,000 donation.

It also redirected how some of its impact grants could be used by the nonprofit recipients to help them cope with the crisis.

"Literally, on Friday, March 13, as we were packing up to go virtual with our operation, we were creating a fund, putting it up on our website, engaging with social media and beginning to frame the kinds of needs we would be addressing [through the Fund]", Sheehan said.

Aggressive fundraising has been ongoing since then. The fund now stands at more than \$650,000, with \$400,000 distributed so far to nonprofits engaged in helping people get through the COVID-19 emergency.

What's Needed?

The bulk of the help has been to families and individuals suffering food insecurity and needing basic staples, like diapers and other household items, in the wake of massive unemployment.

That massive need continues three months into the pandemic with new requests coming in every week.

"I do think that there will be a need for food assistance for a long time," Sheehan said.

Nonprofits Also Struggling

The nonprofits themselves are struggling financially and need help to survive the economic downturn and the changes brought about by this emergency, like the economic cost of making an office or facility compliant with emerging public health standards.

That may shift the kind of grants the Foundation will provide, requiring more flexibility in the grant process so they can be as responsive as possible.

The Foundation will look at its grant making priorities next year in light of COVID-19 and could change the timeline when those grants are released.

"We're keeping an eye out for that and thinking through what our grant making approach needs to be in the coming year," Sheehan said.

From the Donor Side

Donations continue to come in and are directed to the nonprofits that are in the best position to help.

"We've got a rolling grant making process. Every single week we're making new grants," she said.

A volunteer advisory committee monitors the fund, led by chairman Mike Magnavita, president of the Franklin Mint Federal Credit Union.

Donors to the Response Fund include businesses and foundations, from large corporations like PECO, which donated \$60,000, to individuals who have made contributions as small as \$10.

One local artist designed Mother's Day cards and sold them, donating \$1,000 to the Fund, Sheehan said, and another donated the proceeds of a virtual yoga class.

To date, the Fund has 460 donors.

The Foundation for Delaware County is not taking a fee from the funds raised and sees its investment of staff time for fundraising and grant management experience to make the Response Fund possible as integral to its role as a community foundation.

Sheehan encourages people, likewise, to step forward if they are able to help. Information about the COVID-19 Delaware County Response Fund can be found [here](#).

Foundation mission

The core mission of the Foundation for Delaware County is to invest in nonprofits to create programs for people in need.

Some accomplishments so far:

- In addition to the COVID-19 Response Fund, the Foundation has released to date more than \$2.6 million in grants to nonprofits for programs that reach those in need across the county.
- The Foundation has moved its Chester service site to a larger facility in Eddystone, with three of its programs now on one floor, encouraging integration.
- They hired more staff, including a social worker, to expand Healthy Start and Nurse Family Partnership.
- There's a new partnership with the Chester Housing Authority and five area investors that sets aside housing units for clients in need.
- WIC clients are now using electronic funds instead of showing up for a check at WIC sites to make nutritional food purchases easier.

U.S. Census

The Foundation continues to take the lead on getting the word out on the 2020 U.S. Census.

An accurate Census count means the correct amount of funding can reach traditionally under-counted communities.

"We encouraged the county to set up a Complete Count Committee, which they did. We are actively participating in that committee," Sheehan said.

The Foundation is distributing \$100,000 to nonprofits that demonstrate the greatest effectiveness in getting people to fill out Census forms.

Because of COVID-19, a third round of Census grants are being delayed until things reopen in late summer or early fall.

"We'll deploy that last round to do a big blitz because the Census deadline has been extended to Oct. 31," Sheehan said.

Public health department

A big agenda item for the Foundation has been the creation of a public health department in Delaware County. It's currently offering support and advice to Delaware County Council when requested.

The coronavirus crisis has shed light on how important it is to have a health department for a county as large and diverse as Delaware County, Sheehan said.

"We're one of the only counties in the country, of our population size and density, without a public health department," she said.

Closing thought

Beyond COVID-19, there is still more to be done; fighting poverty, creating decent housing and ending a crippling disparity in school funding.

The Foundation for Delaware County will continue to fulfill its mission, so that "all of our people can lead healthy lives, thrive and fulfill their potential, contribute to their communities and our county, and make this an even better place to live."

To learn more about the Foundation for Delaware County, click [here](#).