

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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United Way of Indian River County announces an Indian River County COVID-19 Community Response Fund.

Funds will support human service needs during economic distress associated with the virus.

Indian River County, March 17, 2020 – United Way of Indian River County announced today a \$50,000 COVID-19 Community Response Fund for local programs that are serving our most vulnerable populations during this pandemic. Community needs don't disappear in times like these. Due to the impact of COVID-19, our community has an ever growing population experiencing financial hardship.

We know that 51 percent of Indian River County residents live below poverty or are considered ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). These households are critically affected as businesses close, and one missed paycheck forces ALICE to make difficult decisions, like putting food on the table or paying their utility bill.

Community leaders recognize the potential for economic impact, particularly affecting hospitality and service industry workers, is high. The organizations that serve populations in need every day will find themselves under-resourced and facing growing demand. Additionally, the community will be encouraged to work together to find new and innovative ways to provide essential services. United Way and our partners are working to identify those critical needs and resource gaps to best determine an appropriate response.

This fund will support local organizations and the individuals and families they serve who are affected by this crisis. The Indian River County COVID-19 Community Response Fund has been launched with a board designation from our Disaster Response fund. United Way will seek donations from other organizations and individuals in the weeks ahead. Funding will be distributed to organizations across the county best positioned to meet the emerging needs resulting from this crisis.

The launch of this fund builds on the experience of the Hurricane Relief Funds managed by United Way over the past 16 years. Those funds provided similar support for organizations and individuals during the economic recovery.

"This coronavirus is not just a health crisis. It is also an economic one – the depth and magnitude of which is uncertain," said Meredith Egan, COO, United Way of Indian River County. "The speed with which the virus has spread and the measures necessary to flatten the curve and protect our wellbeing continue to significantly disrupt our way of life. This requires us to act swiftly and strategically as we prepare for the short-term and long-term impact on our community."

"We cannot begin to fathom all of the challenges and implications the virus will have on our neighbors and our economy," said Jeff Smith, Chairman of the United Way of Indian River Board

of Directors. “We believe there certainly could be a significant impact on families that may suffer a loss of income due to unpaid absence, illness, increased child care needs due to school and child care closures, job loss and the potential risk of not being able to pay housing, utility and food bills due. These are daunting challenges, but we are fortunate to be part of a generous community where people come together in common cause to make a positive difference.”

Given the evolving nature of this situation, the fund will be designed to be flexible and to get proceeds to organizations serving those in need in the weeks ahead with minimal bureaucracy. “As distressing as this time may be, our community is committed to ensuring that our most vulnerable residents aren’t facing these challenges alone,” said Michael Kint, CEO, United Way of Indian River County. “We are blessed with a philanthropic community that continually demonstrates an incredible commitment to our residents.”

Individuals can dial 2-1-1 for comprehensive information and referrals related to the virus, including information on where they can access support.

Inquiries about the fund:

For interested philanthropic and business partners, please contact Meredith Egan, Meredith.Egan@UnitedWayIRC.org

For media inquiries about United Way’s response to the COVID-19 epidemic, please contact Sarah Tucci, Sarah.Tucci@UnitedWayIRC.org

To make a contribution, please donate on our website at UnitedWayIRC.org/Fund.

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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