

# FY20 Power of the Purse Fund Grantee Stories of Impact

United Way of Washtenaw County awards Power of the Purse fund grants annually to support existing and emerging programs and initiatives that increase the financial capability of people who identify as women. In FY20, UWWC invested \$35,000 through this fund. As part of our final reporting, we asked grantees to share a participant or organizational success story related to this grant.

## Washtenaw Intermediate School District

### Trusted Advisors

As the pandemic started and schools started to distribute food, a charter school, Global Tech loaded up a school bus with food and drove it to Forrest Knoll. The driver just parked the bus near the office and waited. No one was coming to get the food because no one knew why he was there or was comfortable leaving their homes. Nivean happened to be there that day. She spoke to the bus driver to find out who was eligible for the food and went door-to-door to let families know there was free food. Within an hour all the food was gone. More families knew that Nivean could be trusted and was there to help and the bus driver was relieved that he didn't have to go back to school with a bus full a food that no one came to get. Many families began to share other needs with Nivean. It was hard to find diapers and now that so many people were laid off there was little money for anything but rent. Nivean and her husband worked with OCED and WISD to translate a number of the flyers with information about resources for the pandemic into Arabic. Within several weeks, Nivean had identified organizations that were routinely handing out cleaning supplies and fresh food. The staff of those organizations got to know Nivean and would expect that she would drive up in her van and want to fill it with food and cleaning supplies to pass it out at Forest Knoll. When the Y received the grant to provide produce boxes through Farms to Families, Nivean talked with the Y staff and recommended that they make a distribution site at Forrest Knoll.

Starting in May, each week, a semi refrigerator truck, pulled up outside Forrest Knoll to unload 300, 25lb boxes of produce. Nivean organized the neighbors to bring their vans to distribute boxes to their neighbors. They have been distributing to Forest Knoll and the neighborhood behind. It's amazing she's gotten food to people (many of whom don't speak English) and she built a relationship with the Y staff.



United Way  
of Washtenaw County



For additional information about our Power of the Purse fund efforts,  
please visit [uwgive.org](http://uwgive.org) or contact Bridget Herrmann, [bherrmann@uwwashtenaw.org](mailto:bherrmann@uwwashtenaw.org)

# FY20 Power of the Purse Fund Grantee Stories of Impact

## Washtenaw Literacy

### Learning is a Family Thing (LIFT)

A young father from Syria lives Ypsilanti with his wife and their four young children. He grew up in the Syria where he completed high school and fulfilled his lifelong dream of opening a restaurant. However, in 2006, he was diagnosed with kidney disease and relied on dialysis for two years before receiving a kidney transplant. When the war started in Syria in 2011, he and his family moved throughout the country seven times to escape danger until finally deciding to leave Syria for Jordan in 2013. A year later, after learning of the destruction of their home in Syria, the couple-- now with a third child -- took the opportunity to move to the United States. They arrived in Michigan in December 2016 speaking little to no English. Three years later they are raising their four children here in Ypsilanti. The parents are driven to learn; they understand the importance of communicating in English, for their children and themselves. Childcare for their four children and management of the father's kidney condition make it difficult to attend regular English classes outside the home.

The father heard about Washtenaw Literacy and LIFT (Learning Is a Family Thing) through his child's teacher at Perry Early Learning Center. The family easily qualified for the program, and both parents were placed with tutors in February of this year. He has been attending personal tutoring sessions with his tutor every week, who describes him as very motivated. Together, they have been focusing on improving speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, and confidence in English as well as his understanding of U.S. culture. The tutor has also brought several children's books to tutoring sessions so that the parents can practice reading them first with the tutor and later with his children as bedtime stories. The father works on not only reading the books aloud fluently but also asking his children appropriate questions about the characters, actions, and feelings in the stories.

In the first three months of his tutoring, the father increased his vocabulary knowledge and comfort in speaking enough so that he can now interact confidently with his doctors and the educators at his children's schools. He reports a strengthened sense of independence, involvement in his community, and the ability to support his children in their educational attainment. More recently, these improvements have encouraged him to accept a part-time job with Jewish Family Services, where he now supports other community families as a cultural ambassador, interpreter, and occasional English teaching assistant. The father has also been considering how his story might be of inspiration and support to the community. He hopes he can share it with both other program participants as well as supporters of Washtenaw Literacy, but he is not sure if he is ready to share it with the greater community at this time.

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## Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley

### Women Build

Michelle and her daughter are our Women Build 2020 family. When Michelle had seen pictures of Habitat clients, she did not think she fit the mold because she needed a home that was Americans with Disabilities (ADA) compliant.

She talked to someone at church and a friend said “have you asked about ADA?” Michelle's rent had been continuously increasing and she'd also been involved in a car accident that had permanent physical consequences.

She reached out to us and had a conversation about a perfect house that we could renovate to meet her needs. We were able to match Michelle to a home that met her needs is why we do what we do. We renovated from studs, the garage is attached, and we embraced the fact that we had the right house and right property.



**For a full listing of Power of the Purse grantees with descriptions of their work, please [click here](#). For an overview of highlights of the investments made through our Power of the Purse fund, please [click here](#).**

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