

United Way of Washtenaw County
FY21 COVID-19 Community Recovery Fund
Stories of Impact
March 22, 2021

Bottles-N-Backpacks

Ensuring adequate virtual learning support to children and youth in care

In an attempt to maintain normalcy, during a critical time in our young one's life, one of our virtual learning teachers, came up with unique/creative ways to proactively elevate stress and depression, in the absence of traditional face-to-face learning. With her own resources, the teacher purchased extra toys for the kids to play with during recess, so kids would feel like they had more of a break. Using her own creativity to design she organized virtual field trips, socially distanced activities, and parties for the children. The organization was able to keep the children from experiencing stressful effects of the pandemic, because of the ability to incorporate normalcy and stability into their routines. The teacher used her passion for helping children and her creative spirit to come up with ways to protect the children from something nobody could have prepared them for. It has been so beneficial for both the teacher and the children!

Children's Literacy Network

CLN COVID-19 Crisis Support

CLN's Literacy Pack Project was conceived of and designed in the first weeks of the pandemic. As the pandemic raged, and emergency food was provided for those in desperate need, CLN was immediately concerned about the literacy needs of the children in the Washtenaw County areas hardest hit by the pandemic. CLN staff and volunteers assembled and delivered the packs, and families picked them up at churches and community centers when they picked up emergency food supplies.

A child came in this past week to pick up his pack. It was his third time to receive the literacy packs in five weeks. He was so excited that he brought me a gift - he had drawn me a picture to "thank" CLN. When I asked him what he called it, he said, "Can't you see? It's people building bridges."

CLN has this beautiful picture – under a bright shining sun, people are standing holding hands on a bridge. We also have a photo of the child and his friend sharing a book together. This story shows the community impact of the Literacy Pack Program. This past summer and entire year, our communities have been reeling from so many hardships and harsh realities. Through a simple picture, the child sent a message of the strength that we have in Washtenaw County – our strong and dedicated community who is willing to stand together and “build bridges.”

The impact for each family was immediate, especially in providing books to their children last spring and summer. Families also received activities and skill building exercises which are differentiated to reach students at various levels. These packets provided parents with a

month's worth of easy-to-use materials and empowered them to support their children's reading progress.

CLN is also moved and inspired by the extraordinary yet at the same time ordinary comments of this child - and the resilience of all the students and families we have worked with this year!

David Gruner/Career Directions

Professional coaching and leadership development for cohort of new human service CEOs

I worked with one leader who struggled with their board and the roles they play. The board was focused on strategy, fundraising, and clarifying its mission. This leader had to set boundaries with the board. This person often had to give really hard feedback—making requests for them to step up and do more external work, change in leadership of committees, and inviting new people onto the board. Because of their participation in professional coaching and leadership development, this leader was able to successfully have these hard conversations and rebalance their board.

Girls on the Run of Southeastern Michigan

COVID-19 Support for Girls on the Run Families

With the help of United Way of Washtenaw County, and some other key supporters, we have created a whole new way of offering programming. This was key for being able to serve girls during the pandemic but it will also improve our programming model moving forward. We've become much more flexible and adaptive. This gives us the ability to serve our community in ways that weren't possible before.

NEW: Solutions for Nonprofits

Centering Justice Series

The Centering Justice program has brought NEW closer to the community in a way they haven't before. We have seen people across the entire county tune into the sessions and listen to leaders of color in Washtenaw County. We have also been able to secure much more individual donors, which in turn will help us expand the program.

NEW: Solutions for Nonprofits

Community Conversation on the 21 Day Equity Challenge

I was in a breakout room with three white women and they were at different stages in their journey. One had been doing the work for decades and had even taught courses in racial justice and similar topics. A moment came up where someone almost was retreating back into a closed minded space and rather than calling someone out, I witnessed these people call each other in and work to help unpack what was going on there. They unpacked what was harmful in the thought process and it was really cool to see community being built as they hold each other accountable and lovingly to change.

You can't yell and scream at people and expect them to understand. She didn't let the other person off the hook but in a way that opened the door.

Stand with Trans

Stand with Trans Cares

It is always important for Stand with Trans (SWT) to reach and engage with trans youth. During the pandemic it became even more critical since none of the direct support or social programming could be implemented in person. From experience, we knew that youth are not on FaceBook, they are not consistent with answering emails, they barely answer their phones and are rather elusive when it comes to communication. We discovered that TikTok and Discord are places that LGBTQ youth frequent. As a result, we set up a Discord server for games and social connection that met all summer. We used TikTok to provide conversation, event info, and shout outs to affirm the youth we serve.

In a very short time we had a community of 17,000 followers on TikTok. We found an effective way to engage with our target youth population in a fun and impactful way. We could not have done this without the UWWC grant support. The Discord server was difficult to maintain as we felt it required adult modification at all times. We didn't have the resources to keep this going. However, TikTok was a huge success. We also promoted our Ally Parent program on this social platform and in one month's time, we had over 400 youth send texts to connect with an Ally Parent for support and a loving ear. We are currently evaluating social media strategy and will be determining the best way to continue to use TikTok moving forward. The virtual format allowed them to deliver services in a broader sense and gather data about the families we serve. Delivering programming virtually means that we serve a wider audience. Anyone with wifi can access support, education, resources and find community. These components are even more critical during the pandemic where isolation is the norm. Studies show teen mental health has declined during the pandemic and that for LGBTQ youth, it's even worse.

SWT is proud to share that they have reached nearly 20,000 followers on social media.

Washtenaw Area Council For Children

WACC Child Abuse Prevention Amid COVID-19

As a result of the Body Safety Training, a local therapist reached out to WACC staff requesting resources for parents who brought their child into their clinic for therapy as the child reported sexual abuse by the older brother. Need resources for mom and dad because they don't know what to do after hearing this was happening in their home. As a result from providing body safety at her school, the daughter said, " I didn't know anything was wrong until we did BST and I realized nobody should be touching my body in that way". BST is taught to children 3 years old through 2nd grade. The child participated in Body Safety Training through her school. We realized that in person training is most valuable. We are in the process of training an administrative staff at child care centers to administer BST so we can increase the number of trainers available to administer the information across the county. The child was able to realize what her brother was doing was wrong.

Parkridge Community Center

Bringing building back into compliance to support operations during COVID

There were several children amazed by the indoor improvements and some of the new technology at Parkridge Community Center. When you walk in to check in with the front desk there's now a camera you line your face up with that takes your temperature. For many, including myself frankly, this is not a way we are used to having our temperatures read. You periodically see kids walking over to catch a glimpse of themselves in the camera and make

funny faces. It's incredibly encouraging and heartwarming to see kids and adults alike adapt and have fun in this new yet familiar environment safely.

Barrier Busters

Direct assistance to people with low incomes

An 82 year old man living in Sycamore Meadows was not home when we distributed the Visa cards on the first distribution day. The team went back the following Monday, and the man passed over the weekend. The family still in need of support, now for burial needs, were able to receive the Visa card and support. The need is great and doesn't end. Staff went above and beyond to make sure that the family was supported.

The Women's Center of Southeastern Michigan

Workforce development - Job and Career Counseling for women

A client met with The Women's Center job coach for six appointments during the pandemic. Like many others, she found herself at a career crossroads during COVID, and found she wanted to explore work options—a trend identified across the U.S. since the pandemic took hold. With a background in owning her own business as well as in patient care, and with a decision to return to Michigan to be closer to family, Samantha wished to determine which kind of customer service work to pursue. She polished her career materials — resume, cover letters, LinkedIn profile—as well as her interviewing skills, with the counsel and support of our job coach. With the reality of hiring freezes, furloughs and layoffs and slow-to-recover job markets in the pandemic, Samantha interviewed for and took a job as a much-needed contact tracer. While she knows such work will not be her ultimate career, she found that it offered immediate employment for an acceptable wage and gave her a chance to give back to society (she had been thinking about doing volunteer work). The job bought her more time to consider exactly how she would like to use her transferable skills as her life progresses.

For a full listing of Community Recovery Fund grantees with descriptions of their work,
please click [here](#).

For Community Recovery Fund final report Overview and Highlights,
please click [here](#).

For additional information about Community Recovery Fund efforts, please visit uwgive.org