

NEWS RELEASE

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As Economic Hardships Rise for Community's Most Vulnerable, Donations Urged to Greater Houston COVID-19 Recovery Fund

Fund climbs to \$4.8 million with gifts from Enbridge, David and Bonnie Weekley, and Motiva Enterprises as Houston Endowment \$1 million challenge grant fuels giving

HOUSTON, TX (April 8, 2020) – As the first of the month bills arrived, calls to 211 Texas/United Way HELPLINE surged from callers seeking rental assistance, food, utility assistance and health care as many of the Greater Houston community's most vulnerable families and individuals struggle with the sudden loss of a job or wages needed to afford the basic necessities.

To help those facing the most severe hardships, the [Greater Houston COVID-19 Recovery Fund](#) has been established as a joint effort by United Way of Greater Houston and the Greater Houston Community Foundation, two organizations with a long history of establishing and administering funds in a disaster. Fund organizers are appealing to everyone who can donate to join the effort, which will help provide urgent basic needs and emergency assistance such as access to food, shelter and health care for those critically impacted by the pandemic.

Leading local foundations, corporations and individuals have responded by contributing \$4.8 million to the fund to date in support of the region's most vulnerable families and individuals.

The fund launched with two generous gifts from the Houston Endowment -- a lead gift of \$1 million and a challenge gift of \$1 million that adds \$1 for every \$4 raised. Recent fund gifts include: Enbridge - \$300,000; David and Bonnie Weekley - \$250,000; Motiva Enterprises - \$250,000; Deloitte - \$100,000; The Kroger Co. Foundation - \$100,000; Doug Foshee - \$100,000; and Ryan and Lisa Lance - \$100,000.

"The Houston Endowment is committed to supporting the well-being of our community through the [Greater Houston COVID-19 Recovery Fund](#). Through our \$1 million lead gift and additional \$1 million challenge grant, we hope to encourage others to join us to address the urgent needs in Greater Houston created by COVID-19," said Ann Stern, president and CEO of Houston Endowment.

Endorsed by Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner and Fort Bend County Judge KP George, the Greater Houston COVID-19 Recovery Fund is focused on helping families and individuals based on potential criteria such as unemployment, loss of income, senior or veteran status, and others as the fund adapts to address community needs. Funds will be invested in services provided by trusted nonprofit partners that have proven experience and systems in place to serve the community in times of disaster.

Led by a task force of well-known community leaders, fund administration will be overseen by United Way of Greater Houston and the Greater Houston Community Foundation and will serve the four-county area of Harris, Fort Bend, Montgomery and Waller counties. The first round of grants from the fund will be issued in mid-April.

“There is unprecedented need across our entire community that requires a fundamentally different level of support and funding than we have ever experienced,” said Stephen Maislin, president and CEO of Greater Houston Community Foundation. “We have been honored to be part of one of the most thoughtful and caring cities in the world. These are the moments that our giving community is at its best. We look forward to the support and collaboration that will most positively affect our neighbors in need. We’re all in this together.”

The fund is co-chaired by Jamey Rootes, board member, United Way of Greater Houston and president of the Houston Texans, and by Tony Chase, board member, Greater Houston Community Foundation, member, Houston Endowment Board of Directors, and chairman and CEO of ChaseSource, LP. United Way of Greater Houston and the Greater Houston Community Foundation have a history of working with many leading nonprofit organizations and giving corporations in the city and region.

“We have received donations of all sizes from individuals and companies and we thank everyone who has answered this urgent call for help in our community – every gift counts,” said Anna M. Babin, president and CEO of United Way of Greater Houston. “The swiftness and severity of this crisis means we must act with urgency to ensure the most vulnerable affected by COVID-19 have access to the basics they need to sustain themselves and their families through this difficult time.”

Those who need assistance are encouraged to call the 211 Texas/United Way HELPLINE, the community’s key 24/7 information source during times of disaster. United Way’s 211 provides callers with the most updated information on assistance with utilities, housing or rental assistance, crisis counseling, access to senior services, information on food pantries in the community and more.

To give to the Greater Houston COVID-19 Recovery Fund visit www.GreaterHoustonRecovery.org or Text “WEHELP” to 41444.

About United Way of Greater Houston

For nearly 100 years, United Way of Greater Houston has brought together diverse partners and approaches to address the complex challenges holding people back. We are a driving force for good that connects our neighbors with opportunities to thrive. We help our neighbors achieve financial stability. We provide services that support the physical and behavioral health of families and youth along with educational services that expand their skills and horizons. We provide a safety net that catches the most vulnerable. We manage every donation with care to make the greatest impact across the four-county region of Fort Bend, Harris, Montgomery and Waller counties. We connect neighbors with help 24/7 through our 211 Texas/United Way HELPLINE. For more information, please visit, www.unitedwayhouston.org.

About Greater Houston Community Foundation

Greater Houston Community Foundation, one of Houston’s largest grant makers and leaders in philanthropic impact, has served the greater Houston community for 25 years. The organization supports high profile community and donor initiatives with the most comprehensive philanthropic resources, expertise, and innovative platforms. Greater Houston Community Foundation is widely considered to be the go-to partner for high-profile philanthropic partnerships in the Greater Houston area, including major disaster relief initiatives, such as the Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund as well as Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund. Greater Houston Community Foundation leads collaborations that support the wellbeing and vitality of Houston, including Understanding Houston, in partnership with Rice Kinder Institute. The Foundation provides individuals, families, corporations, foundations, and advisors with the ability to expand their philanthropic impact. For more information, please visit, www.ghcf.org.