

Community fund Created to Combat Effects of Economic Crisis

Neighbor-Aid will benefit families and individuals facing hardship

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PITTSBURGH — A community-wide campaign was unveiled today by The Pittsburgh Foundation to support nonprofit organizations that are struggling to meet the surge in demand from families and individuals as the result of the economic crisis.

A special fund to help strengthen the region's safety net for families and individuals in hardship has been launched with more than \$700,000, which includes a grant of \$350,000 from The Pittsburgh Foundation and another of \$250,000 awarded anonymously by another local foundation.

The fund – Neighbor-Aid – has been established with a specifically designed satellite web site to The Pittsburgh Foundation at Neighbor-Aid.org that underscores the increasingly urgent human services needs in the Pittsburgh regional community and urges individuals, organizations and businesses to contribute. The web site will also provide guidance for those who are seeking help.

Donations may be made on-line via credit card or by check payable to The Pittsburgh Foundation – Neighbor-Aid and sent to the Foundation's offices at Five PPG Place, Pittsburgh, PA 15222. The Foundation has waived its usual administrative fees, and all money raised will go towards funding relief programs.

“The stark reality for us is that tonight some of our neighbors will go to bed hungry and cold, others are being evicted from their homes, and families risk having their children taken into social services care if their utilities are cut off,” said Grant Oliphant, The Pittsburgh Foundation's President and CEO. “Nonprofit organizations on the front lines are being overwhelmed by escalating demand for essential human services, and as a community we must respond as quickly and as effectively as we can.”

The Neighbor-Aid campaign is a collaborative initiative between The Pittsburgh Foundation, civic leader, Elsie Hillman, the United Way of Allegheny County and other local foundations working in liaison with Allegheny County Department of Human Services.

“Initially we are aiming to raise as much money as possible to meet immediate needs,” said Elsie Hillman, a co-founder of the Neighbor-Aid fund. “Our community has a rich and celebrated tradition of working together as neighbors helping neighbors, especially in times of crisis. This is another of those times when Pittsburghers need to reach out to help those facing hardship, and I am confident that they will respond.”

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United Way also plans to establish an emergency relief fund which together with Neighbor-Aid will provide pooled resources for awarding grants to nonprofits by a single distribution committee. Members of the committee will comprise representatives from all funding organizations.

“This is a time of great need when our neighbors are hurting badly,” said Robert Nelkin, President and Chief Professional Officer of the United Way of Allegheny County. “It is a wonderful tribute to the Pittsburgh community that we can come together to help meet basic human needs, such as housing, food and clothing.”

At a meeting of nearly 20 nonprofit organizations, convened by The Pittsburgh Foundation last month, front line human service providers voiced their deep concern about depleting resources and rising demand, with organizations reporting dramatic increases in the numbers of families and individuals seeking assistance.

Additionally, The Forbes Funds, a Supporting Organization of the Foundation, conducted a detailed study to evaluate the impact of the sharp economic downturn among the coalition of 300 local nonprofit members of the Greater Pittsburgh Nonprofit Partnership.

The survey, which also included additional human service agencies in the region, found that more than 73 percent of agencies are experiencing increases in the number of requests for help over the past six months from first time clients, families and individuals who had not sought charitable support in the past. Over 53 percent of agencies reported an upturn in unemployed clients, and nearly 47 percent an increase in uninsured clients.

Neighbor-Aid’s objectives will be to help nonprofits meet rising demands in four primary areas of need: food, shelter, utilities and transportation.

Contributions to Neighbor-Aid as well as the grant from The Pittsburgh Foundation and the anonymous foundation award currently also include donations from McAuley Ministries and Pittsburgh Child Guidance Foundation. In addition more than \$80,000 has been contributed to the fund by individual donors at The Pittsburgh Foundation.

“It is critical that we begin a flow of financial support as quickly as possible,” said Grant Oliphant. But this is only the beginning. We have yet to experience the full impact of the economic crisis and this fund has been established with our focus also on the long-term. We have to be prepared to build and maintain a broad and vigorous community response.”