County Providing Financial Resources for Programs to Assist Those in Need

PITTSBURGH – County Executive Rich Fitzgerald announced at yesterday’s weekly COVID-19 briefing that Allegheny County has committed an additional $2 million to programs through the United Way that support those who have been most impacted by the pandemic. The funding for the Students and Families Food Relief Fund (SFFRF) and the Emergency Basic Needs Network (EBNN) will supplement existing resources in the county.

“We fully recognize that the pandemic has had an impact on the health of our community, as well as the economic health of our residents. We know that many in our community are struggling with both,” said Fitzgerald. “We have worked to flex funds and provide additional resources to the United Way that will support their programs that provide food to those in need, and for other basic needs of county residents. We are grateful to the United Way for this partnership and for working with us to ensure that people’s needs are met during this difficult time.”

With the community spread of COVID and with an expectation that additional mitigation measures will be put in place in the near future, there will also be additional need. Network partners leverage a wide variety of other funds, programs, and resources to assist in lieu of, or in addition to, direct financial assistance. Supplemental resources accessed include federal and state housing assistance programs, food pantries, long term benefits such as WIC and SNAP, career development programs, and others. Throughout this pandemic, the top requests have been for rental assistance, utility assistance, and access to food.

"With COVID-19 on the rise again, our community is going to need more help," said Bobbi Watt Geer, President and CEO of United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania. "Every day, United Way and our partners are seeing how our neighbors are hurting. We are incredibly grateful for this additional funding from Allegheny County. It is critical to ensuring we can work with our network to continue to feed the community and work to keep families financially stable."

To support those additional needs, Allegheny County has committed an additional $1 million to the United Way for its Students and Families Food Relief Fund (SFFRF). These additional funds are estimated to provide an additional 125,000 ready-to-heat nutritious meals to families. These meals supplement existing resources in the county including those programs offered by school districts, summer food programs, the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, and other food pantries and programs.

Additionally, another $1 million has been committed to the United Way Emergency Basic Needs (EBN) Network. Since March, 2,220 referrals were made to the EBN Network, resulting in more than $476,000 in direct financial assistance with an average grant size of $564 going to more than 800 people in the community. As the pandemic continues, there is an increase in the number of applicants, as well as an increase in the amounts requested.

For assistance, residents can call 2-1-1 or go to covid.pa211sw.org and complete the online application.

Access to other services and programs administered by Human Services is also provided through 2-1-1. The 2-1-1 gateway can also be used for people seeking food assistance from the Greater Pittsburgh
Community Food Bank. In addition to calling 2-1-1, individuals can contact the Food Bank directly using the organization’s call line at 412.460.3663.

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