

# A Challenge Grant At Work

What's a guy in St. Petersburg, Florida, doing making a gift to the Community Crisis Fund in Rochester?

"I feel very connected in many, many ways to Rochester," says Ebrahim Busheri, director of investments for Manning & Napier, who lived here for 15 years while working on his MBA at University of Rochester and during his first stint with the investment and financial advising company.



Ebrahim Busheri

He would regularly come back for the Rochester International Jazz Festival in June and take advantage of other arts and cultural events during his visits.

Busheri was among 32 work colleagues who contributed directly to the Crisis Fund and several dozen more who made donations to the fund using payroll deduction, all to help meet urgent needs locally resulting from the pandemic.

But these co-workers had an incentive. The Perinton-based company, which is marking its 50th year in business, told employees it would match their contributions to the Crisis Fund, mobilized in March by United Way of Greater Rochester and the Community Foundation.

Collectively, employees raised \$52,322 to support neighbors in need in the Greater Rochester region.

Because Manning & Napier has offices in three other locations – St. Petersburg, Seattle, and Dublin, Ohio – employees were able to contribute to a local relief effort or organization and those donations also were matched. Across the company, 117 employees participated in the company-sponsored matching challenge and more than \$68,000 was raised.

“We wanted our employees to support the communities where they live,” explains Nicole Kingsley Brunner, chief marketing officer.



Nicole Kingsley Brunner

Like many other companies, the transition to working from home in March happened quickly. Within a few weeks, employees started hearing from nonprofit clients about their struggles to stay open and provide essential services.

“My heart was breaking. All of this just changed overnight for them. ... so many rely on their fundraising for cash flow,” Kingsley Brunner says.

She brought up what she was hearing at a daily Executive Committee meeting and asked if the company would consider matching employee donations. “It was a resounding ‘Absolutely, we need to do this.’ “

Originally, the company was going to host events and introduce lots of advertising to promote its 50th anniversary this year. But this grassroots effort to raise money during the crisis was more important.

“We are continuing to do what we need to do for our clients and what we need to do for our communities,” Kingsley Brunner says.