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## **OUTPOURING OF SUPPORT FROM COMMUNITY FOR COVID-19 RESPONSE**

*ESL Charitable Foundation Announces \$1 Million Gift to Community Crisis Fund;  
Local Foundations, Individual Donors, and Volunteers Respond Within Hours;  
Needs Expected to Grow and Accelerate*

**ROCHESTER, N.Y.** – Within 24 hours of launching three key initiatives to support the community during the COVID-19 health crisis, United Way of Greater Rochester and Rochester Area Community Foundation have begun receiving and coordinating an outpouring of support from individuals, businesses and foundations across our region. More than \$1.7 million has been raised to-date, with additional donations, in-kind commitments and volunteer sign-ups every hour.

At a press conference yesterday, County Executive Adam Bello announced collaborations between multiple community organizations to respond to the community's needs related to COVID-19.

"In this time of great uncertainty and great need, our community is doing what it does best – coming together and working together to ensure the needs of families across our community are being met," said Bello. "I am proud to lead a community with this much compassion and willingness to help and with incredible organizations and foundations that are stepping up in the face of this challenge."

Today, the ESL Charitable Foundation committed \$1 million to support the Greater Rochester region through the Community Crisis Fund. The Fund – and the community initiatives it supports – aligns with ESL Foundation’s mission of being a catalyst to uplift the Greater Rochester area, supporting collaboration for community transformation, and addressing complex social challenges.

“The giving nature of Greater Rochester’s people truly shines in moments such as these,” said Faheem Masood, President & CEO, ESL Federal Credit Union. “At ESL, we were exploring ways in which we could help the community during these unfamiliar times, and the creation of the Community Crisis Fund became the ideal opportunity to ensure our donation would best be distributed among those who need it most. The team at ESL is committed to doing our part in lifting up those experiencing uncertainty at this time.”

Last week, local foundations came together to pool and disburse an initial \$260,000 to help Foodlink address the immediate food insecurity that resulted from school closures. The distribution was comprised of investments from Rochester Area Community Foundation, United Way, Wegmans, ESL Charitable Foundation, Greater Rochester Health Foundation, and the Farash Foundation.

“This community does amazing things when we work together,” said Jennifer Leonard, president and CEO, Rochester Area Community Foundation. “As each organization and individual does its part, we make a collective difference that impacts us all.”

In the past days, additional support from MVP Health and United Way has also been committed to the Community Crisis Fund in response to the COVID-19 crisis. These large-scale grants enable regular Fund distributions on a rolling basis and helps make it possible to move resources quickly and adapt to evolving needs.

Community members have also stepped up, donating thousands of dollars within the first 24 hours, via the Community Crisis Fund website and text-to-give number. Interested individuals can donate by texting CRISISFUND to 41444, or visiting [www.uwrochester.org/CrisisFundDonate](http://www.uwrochester.org/CrisisFundDonate). For more information on the Community Crisis Fund, visit [www.uwrochester.org/CrisisFund](http://www.uwrochester.org/CrisisFund).

In addition to funding, community members have begun responding to volunteer and in-kind needs of our community's nonprofits. Nearly 100 volunteers have signed up over the past 24 hours via the COVID-19-specific Volunteer United portal, [www.uwrochester.org/COVIDvolunteer](http://www.uwrochester.org/COVIDvolunteer). Nonprofits continue to add requests to the portal, and demand continues to grow. Drivers are especially needed for meal delivery with organizations like Meals on Wheels and other current and anticipated delivery functions.

"A moment of crisis says a lot about a person and a community," said Jaime Saunders, president and CEO, United Way of Greater Rochester. "We have witnessed a meaningful response over the last several days, but we know need will only continue to grow. Our community's ability to manage and recover from these uncertain times hinges on our commitment to each other."

#### **About United Way of Greater Rochester**

*United Way harnesses the power of collective giving to unite community members, businesses and local leaders in doing good as they raise their hands, open their hearts, and share resources to build a thriving region for all. Through this collective giving, United Way supports a broad network of human service organizations, community initiatives and innovative strategies that address our most pressing local challenges with real, impactful solutions. Please visit [www.uwrochester.org](http://www.uwrochester.org) to learn more.*

#### **About Rochester Area Community Foundation**

*Rochester Area Community Foundation empowers donors and community partners to strengthen our region through philanthropy. As the leading grantmaking foundation in our region, the Foundation focuses on two broad goals – creating an equitable community and strengthening our region's vitality. The Community Foundation has distributed more than \$500 million in grants and scholarships since its founding in 1972. For more, visit [www.racf.org](http://www.racf.org).*