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2020 Resiliency Fund: Helping with Immediate Critical Needs and Long-term Regional Recovery

For more than 33 years, West Central Initiative has responded to crises in our region and witnessed the resiliency of our communities. In fact, the McKnight Foundation first created the six Minnesota Initiative Foundations to respond to the 1980s agriculture crisis throughout the state and the mining crisis on the Iron Range. Since that time, we've been responding to and identifying solutions for ever-changing challenges, often related to economic development and human well-being.

The 2020 Resiliency Fund is designed to connect those who want to help with those who need it most during and after this crisis.

While we're grateful for these secured funds, we realize that the real impact of COVID-19 may not be realized for years to come and that philanthropic needs may continue to grow exponentially. That's why we'll continue our work to

secure funds from individuals, communities, businesses, and organizations. Your gift, of any amount, contributes to the economic and community health of west central Minnesota.

To ensure we distribute funds as quickly as reasonably possible, we've simplified our typical application. We'll review the completed applications as they come to us and fund as many as we can.

Our 2020 Resiliency Fund

The COVID-19 pandemic is dramatically affecting our world—and the impacts to our daily lives are changing weekly, daily, and even hourly. Because of this, flexibility was a priority as we established our 2020 Resiliency Fund to help all who call west central Minnesota home. Our goal is to assist with the immediate COVID-19 needs in our area and the long-term recovery of our region.

West Central Initiative has secured more than \$1 million in response to COVID-19 and is working to obtain additional funds. We've distributed or earmarked approximately \$300,000 for child-care providers caring for children of emergency and essential workers. The balance now is open to community organizations seeking to respond to other parts of our society impacted by the virus.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold, here's what you can do to help:

Donate online:
wcif.org/ResiliencyFund

Donate by mail:
WCI
PO Box 318
Fergus Falls, MN 56538-0318

How you can have an impact

The 2020 Resiliency Fund allows all of us to practice philanthropy at its best—both in giving and receiving. We're in a sensitive time and much is uncertain. But what we do know, is that we'll figure this out together—as we have in the past. We'll continue our tradition of resiliency because this is who we are.

Viewing our World Through an Even Larger Lens

Our 2020-2022 Strategic Plan adopts the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. We're a global economy—and we're feeling this now more than ever before.

When we developed this plan, we started with our landscape, articulating west central Minnesota in a global context, by stating that "profound changes have come to rural Minnesota." Now we see these changes through an even larger lens, the lens of a worldwide pandemic. Meanwhile, our strategic plan and initiatives couldn't be more relevant than they are today.

Governor Tim Walz recently stated in one of his many daily briefings, "We need to protect our food industry and our food resources because we will be doing more than feeding Minnesota. We'll need to help feed the rest of the world!"

Through our four core values of Neighborliness, Generosity, Empowerment, and Trend Testing, we'll continue to hold up our work in philanthropy and planning with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals at our core. You'll find them



in our Resiliency Fund, Changemaker Grants, work in Early Childhood, the loans we make, and other initiatives that we'll continue to develop as we climb out of the challenges we face.

Stories of Resiliency

In our recent publication, “Writing a New Story: A Vibrant, Inclusive and Sustainable World Starts Here in West Central Minnesota,” we highlight stories of resiliency in our region. As our current world is changing, we’ll continue to write new stories of resiliency as we adjust to new challenges ahead of us.

Invest in Local

Gilda White, a beneficiary of our first strategic priority, Invest in Local, launched her own business in late 2017. She saw a need for a bridge between the English and Spanish-speaking residents in the Morris area, and she decided it was time to put her business and communication skills to work. She offered tax preparation and translation services as well as selling insurance. However, she had one problem. Gilda recently had gone through a financially devastating divorce and wasn’t able to qualify for a traditional small business loan. Then she was referred to Greg Wagner at West Central Initiative. “They gave me the whole package,” says Gilda. “In addition to the loan, they connected me with a consultant who explained the basics of administration and operations.” Gilda White is truly a story of remarkable resiliency.



Reimagine Regional

Then there’s Verna Kragnes whose work in sustainable agriculture helps us Reimagine Regional—our second strategic priority. The New Roots Farm incubator launched in the spring of 2019 with help from West Central Initiative. We recognized how the incubator connects regional investment, global impact, and a commitment to diversity and inclusion. “We have immigrants coming now with a wish to meet their own basic needs and share with the broader community, but the situation is so different with industrial agriculture occupying the landscape so strongly,” says Verna. “A new approach is needed to establish local and regional food production and move back toward a more sane and stable regional economy.” In the months and years ahead, we’re even more aware that these efforts will be key to resiliency in our region. We’re already working with Verna and other partners on a victory garden project to help with fresh and sustainable food sources.



Educate, Activate, Celebrate

Child-care providers and educators are challenged every day but resiliency is their motto—especially now. Teachers are teaching from their homes and our Early Childhood Initiative continues to stay connected from a distance. The Early Childhood Coalition coordinators are meeting much more frequently, if not daily. When we educate, we give people and organizations the tools they need to serve the region. When we activate, we encourage them to embrace their potential and maximize their impact, whether by sharing ideas and successes with each other or engaging with city and state governments. When we celebrate, we foster a sense of joyful community in which successes are praised and recognized. These three ideas work together to help young learners, and their communities, thrive. Which is why educate, activate, and celebrate combine as our third strategic priority.



Philanthropy During Crisis

Philanthropy is an engaged interest in the well-being of others. It’s natural for us, as humans, to have an interest in the well-being of those close to us. The basics of philanthropy are built into all of us. But, with busy lives, trying to make a philanthropic impact can feel overwhelming. Being charitable can take on many different forms: visiting a friend or family member, helping a neighbor, volunteering in your community, or donating money or goods to a nonprofit.

Barnesville Community Fund, a partner fund of West Central Initiative, collaborates with their local school district to teach kids in the sixth grade about philanthropy in a program called Trojans Give Back. Teachers partner with local volunteers to deliver a curriculum to students about community support and giving. The Barnesville Community Fund gives seed money to each class. Nonprofits are invited to apply for grants from the classes. The nonprofits visit with the sixth graders to share the story of their work. After the presentations, the classes vote on which nonprofit they will support with their grant money. This program teaches the students and the Barnesville community how to practice philanthropy.

Like Trojans Give Back, some groups leverage their resources to have a greater impact on a shared mission through Giving Circles. Service organizations, such as Rotary and Kiwanis, are common examples of Giving Circles as members work together to support a cause through volunteer hours, fundraising, and grant making. Some Giving Circles are groups of friends that get together, each contributing to a fund then deciding as a group where to give the collective donation. Remember, small gifts combine to make a big difference. As the Latin expression goes, *Mulum in parvo*, meaning much in a little.

A note from Director of Development Rebecca Lynn Petersen

Some people in our region are considering ways they can help others with their stimulus checks.

Let me be clear: some families in our region desperately need financial assistance. That is undeniable. An influx of stimulus cash will help many people in need. Thank goodness many of our regional institutions, including West Central Initiative, are continuing to provide services for those who need it in these difficult times.

If, however, you feel that financial support from Uncle Sam isn’t vital, you’re not alone. The Fergus Falls Daily Journal recently printed a letter from a man lamenting the fact that for him personally, receiving an influx of cash wasn’t necessary.

Last month, West Central Initiative received word that a group of senior citizens from Alexandria would be donating their stimulus checks collectively. Generosity abounds in this region!

Timing couldn’t be better. Your community’s nonprofit organizations and small businesses need help. It’s not business as usual. The demand for services or products today is so different than just a month ago.

So, if you are so inclined, consider earmarking a portion of your relief check to a local or regional cause. Support small businesses and restaurants. Explore new options such as West Central Initiative’s new Resiliency Fund, designed to help not just today—but with future recovery needs.



Estate Planning: Giving to have an Impact Now and in the Future

You have boundless ways to give of your time, talent, and treasure (three Ts) to support the causes you care about most. During COVID-19 and other crises, these opportunities become more apparent as needs become more obvious. Gifts of the three Ts support the resiliency of our communities, friends, and neighbors.

West Central Initiative can help you have the greatest impact in your philanthropic mission. You have many ways to give to and through our organization to ensure that west central Minnesota continues to thrive. We offer education funds, tribute funds, and partner with community funds. You can even easily start your own family foundation with a Donor Advised Fund, allowing you to direct gifts to your favorite charities. We’ll handle the legal paperwork, so you can focus on your charitable giving goals. You’ll immediately receive the tax deduction benefit when you set up your fund. You and your family or loved ones can make gifts to your favorite charities over time. Learn more about Donor Advised Funds and other giving options at wcif.org/give/ways-to-give.

Gifts of the three Ts support the things we love most in our communities like the arts, education, and community initiatives. Gifts of treasure can be given during your lifetime and after. Legacy gifts are designed for everyone with many variations including bequests, IRA rollovers, beneficiary designations, and annuities. You can support loved ones and your favorite causes while reducing the taxes your loved ones pay on your estate with trusts. To learn more about estate planning and legacy giving visit wcif.giftlegacy.com. We can help you work with your legal and financial advisors to make a gift to West Central Initiative’s endowment or to any of our partner funds. Contact Rebecca at rebecca@wcif.org or 800-735-2239.

View the full publication at:
wcif.org/news_resources