THE FIRST CONFIRMED POSITIVE CASE OF CORONAVIRUS IN RHODE ISLAND IS IDENTIFIED.
The Rhode Island Foundation is a proactive community and philanthropic leader dedicated to meeting the needs of the people of Rhode Island.
September 1, 2020

Protective gear for health care workers, internet access for students, employment services for community members who have lost their jobs, adequate food for children, families, and elders. The list of needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic goes on, and keeps growing for so many in our community.

Fortunately, so does the generosity of Rhode Islanders.

In this special edition of our twice-yearly magazine, you’ll read stories of that generosity.

Thanks to the thousands of philanthropic Rhode Islanders, who’ve entrusted resources to the Rhode Island Foundation over the last century, we were prepared to step-up and step-in as the COVID-19 crisis began to impact our state earlier this year. In the pages that follow; you’ll read about some of our most significant COVID-19 response-related efforts. There’s a long list of other things that we’ve focused on over the last many months to ease the pandemic-related burden on our community, and to stay focused on meeting needs that were ever-present before the pandemic even reached Rhode Island.

For example, we’ve remained focused on the long-term planning efforts around health and education that we’ve led with experts from around the state for nearly two years. The work is even more important now as we see achievement gaps and disparities within communities of color exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19.

We’ve also stayed on course with our yearly grantmaking efforts, while incorporating new grantmaking opportunities that are specifically pandemic-related. And, our grants team has been incredibly responsive to the needs of the nonprofit organizations that we serve—providing flexibility in grant terms where needed, and being sure that nonprofits across all sectors are well-served as they adapt.

Significantly, in early March we launched the COVID-19 Response Fund at the Foundation—to meet emerging need, in real time for Rhode Island communities, as the pandemic unfolded. We seeded the Fund with $250,000 and incredibly generous donors began to come forward immediately. Approximately $7 million has been donated to the Fund by nearly 900 donors. Most importantly, that $7 million is circulating in the community—meeting basic needs for folks across our state. You’ll read more about COVID-19 Response Fund grantees and the donors to this Fund in the pages that follow.

Partnership has been of vital importance as we’ve worked our way through the current crisis as well. We’ve worked closely with colleagues in the public and private sectors to implement programs like the COVID-19 Behavioral Health Fund, making approximately $5 million in grants to organizations that are focused on the increasing mental health and substance use needs in the community. And to launch the weR1 Rhode Island Fund, aimed at providing direct cash assistance to Rhode Islanders who may not qualify for emergency relief support due to their immigration status, with a grant of $250,000 from the Foundation as well as support to raise nearly $3 million from generous donors. To view the list of donors, please visit rifoundation.org/weR1Donors. We’ve also worked with local and state officials, and organizations supporting local artists, musicians, actors, and creatives across the state to support the Artists Relief Fund for Rhode Island Arts & Culture Workers with a grant of $150,000. We’ve produced virtual capacity building workshops, easily accessible on our website, to aid the nonprofit community and to share best practices across the sector. We’ve awarded approximately 500 scholarships this year, and were happy to honor all of the scholarship recipients at a recent virtual event.

And through all of this we’ve maintained our focus on equity—in all of our programmatic work, in all of our grant making, within our own staff team, board of directors, and in our civic leadership efforts. For example, so far this year we’ve sponsored eight free racial equity trainings, open to all, in partnership with the Racial Equity Institute.

I want to note that, while we were all preoccupied with a pandemic, normal life was going on—there were births, and there were deaths. Sandy McCulloch, a decades-long friend of the Foundation who served on our board from 1994 until 2003—as chairman for three of those years—passed away in late July at the age of 94. We acknowledge him in this special edition.

I am proud to say that the team at your community foundation has worked each day to adapt and serve the community in new ways during this unprecedented time of need and uncertainty—and we will continue to do so.

We also recognize that there is so much more work ahead. In the midst of disruption and loss there is opportunity for positive change. There is absolutely no replacement for the loved ones, economic security, or time lost to the COVID-19 crisis. It has exposed our deepest fault lines. But our obligation is to do better, to be better. To honor those most affected, we will plan for and work toward a better future for each and every Rhode Islander. There is much discussion of the “new normal”, but the truth is that the “old normal” left too many people behind, especially in underserved communities and even in very good times. We must not settle for just a “new normal” but focus on a “better future” for all. Gratefully, we know you are with us in these efforts.

Thank you, sincerely, for your support. The role of community foundations like ours is more important now than it has been at any other point in our lifetime as we work to address the effects of a global public health crisis, an economic recession, and significant social justice challenges.

All the best,

Neil O’Donovan
Governor Gina Raimondo declares a state of emergency.
The school year we didn’t anticipate
Keeping education open when the schools are closed

By Lisa DiMartino, strategic initiative officer for educational success
Rhode Island students, families, and teachers were rocked when schools closed suddenly in March with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. But school leaders were determined to find a way to carry on teaching. And we were all introduced to the idea of “distance learning”.

Statewide, local districts were able to quickly provide the technology and systems needed to enable the majority of students to access distance learning opportunities. However, early on it became apparent that many students, especially in urban areas, did not have the same kind of access. It was a stark reminder of the equity divide that had suddenly become much wider.

This is exactly the sort of issue the Foundation-led Long Term Education Planning Committee seeks to take on in service of its vision for a “world-class public education system (that) prepares all students to succeed in life and contribute productively to the community.” With escalating need and a surge of students at risk of being left behind, the Foundation and others looked to take action.

Talks with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) about the needs it saw in districts throughout the state resulted in the Foundation issuing a $100,000 challenge grant, urging community members to match the dollars earmarked for computers and Wi-Fi hotspots.

“The generosity of Rhode Islanders continues to amaze me,” Rhode Island Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Angélica Infante-Green said. “I am incredibly thankful for our community stepping up to help our students learn during this extraordinary time. Rhode Island is a national model for distance learning, and it is because Rhode Islanders have risen to the challenge to do whatever it takes to keep our students safe and learning.”

And step up you did!

The challenge was met, and then some. Just two weeks after it was issued, more than $400,000 had been contributed. Donations, from nearly 70 donors, ranged from $25 to six-figure contributions from CVS Health and Brown University.

The initiative funded the purchase of approximately 400 hotspots and 2,000 computers. The $150,000 donation from CVS Health allowed the Woonsocket Education Department to purchase 750 Chromebooks for students in grades three through five, while the $100,000 donation from Brown University’s Fund for the Education of the Children of Providence was earmarked to support internet access for Providence students through the Cox Connect 2 Compete Program and the purchase of hotspots.

The effort continues, with a goal of every student having his or her own device, so siblings do not need to share during instruction times.

Contributions in any amount to the Foundation’s Fund for Rhode Island Public Education will be accepted as long as the need continues. Gifts may be made at rifoundation.org/RIEducation.
“Boots on the ground.” That’s how we often refer to our nonprofit partners. That has never been truer than during the COVID-19 pandemic when they have been providing essential medical services, food, housing assistance, and so much more to thousands of Rhode Islanders.

Grants from the COVID-19 Response Fund at the Foundation have assisted hundreds of organizations in their critical work. In the six months since the pandemic began, just over $7 million has been donated to the fund. Combined with approximately $2 million in donations to United Way of Rhode Island for the same effort, $9 million is circulating in the community—meeting basic needs for folks across our state.

Here’s how three grant-supported organizations and their frontline workers have responded to the changing—and growing—needs of those they serve.
Governor Raimondo enacts a “stay at home” order for all Rhode Islanders who are not traveling to purchase food, household supplies, medicine, gasoline, or are going for a recreational walk.

03.28

Thundermist Health Services

“We really re-invented how we work. Everything changed in March when patient visits went from being in person to nearly all by phone, and at the same time, we inherited a whole other job,” states David Bourassa, MD, chief medical officer at Thundermist.

That “other job” was Thundermist’s new role in testing Rhode Islanders for COVID-19. Dr. Bourassa spearheaded the establishment of the organization’s respiratory clinics and worked in the clinics where all staff were in full PPE (personal protective equipment). “It can be very uncomfortable and, as the weather gets hotter, it becomes more uncomfortable, but you’re well protected,” he relates, noting that the face coverage alone includes an N95 mask, with a surgical mask over that, and a face shield over that.

“The people in the tents all volunteered to work there. It shows we’re taking the right kind of precautions, but it’s wearing on everybody.”

The Foundation awarded Thundermist a COVID-19 Response Fund grant to help cover emergency response and operational needs. “The additional support has been enormously helpful. This was just not something we knew to budget for,” Dr. Bourassa explains.
Rhode Island Center Assisting those in Need (RICAN)

With the onset of COVID-19, the food pantry at Charlestown-based RICAN closed. That closure revealed one of the cruelest ironies of the pandemic: the need for food assistance expanded greatly, but the ability to give it got much more difficult.

Dana Moriarty, administrative assistant at RICAN and the largely volunteer organization’s only full-time employee, explains that prior to the outbreak guests were able to come into the pantry and select their food. With concern about the virus and social distancing rules, RICAN converted to providing pre-bagged food, including dry goods, produce, meat, and dairy items, through a drive-up system.

“This allows for no contact. They just open the trunk or we open the back door, and put the food in. Sometimes you worry about an approaching car and the possible risk, but we wear face masks and practice social distancing.”

A COVID-19 Response Fund grant from the Foundation is helping RICAN purchase food—especially dry items and proteins—to help meet the increased need.
Higher Ground
International

“It’s been really challenging. We had to shut down our Sweetie Care Program very quickly, and then re-focus on how to still provide services,” Shemika Moore, program coordinator, says of the impact COVID-19 has had on the services Higher Ground provides to elders in the West African immigrant and refugee communities in Providence.

“The center (where the seniors had come three days per week) is their safe space, it’s their socialization. We’re now working to make sure their needs are met by staying in communication with them and delivering hot meals. There’s a real need for culturally-appropriate food and basic supplies like masks and cleaning supplies.”

Shemika continues, “My role has gone from programming to more of a social work role, re-assuring the elders that we’re still here for them. We’re making weekly calls to check on people’s mental health and to make sure they get their medications, and we’re trying to keep them engaged and active.”

Higher Ground received a COVID-19 Response Fund grant for increased staffing needs and for its work to ensure the behavioral and physical health of the vulnerable elders they serve.
When he established Rhode Island Charities Trust in 1937 to help maximize the value of gifts made to the United Way of Rhode Island, Royal Little couldn’t have imagined that his generosity would play such an important role in helping his state get through a pandemic nearly a century later.

That is the power of legacy gifts.

Perhaps best known as the founder and former chairman of Textron, Royal also was an innovator in philanthropy. To this day, the Trust helps offset the United Way’s fundraising and administrative costs—allowing donations to flow directly to the community.

This was evident earlier this year when we partnered with United Way for the COVID-19 Response Fund to raise—and distribute—funds to aid nonprofit organizations assisting vulnerable populations on the front line of COVID-19 response in our state.

In accordance with Royal’s wishes the assets of Rhode Island Charities Trust were donated, two years after his 1989 death, to create a fund at the Foundation. At the time, those assets totaled $34.2 million. This legacy investment remains the largest single gift to the Foundation in our 104 year history.

Grants from the Trust have benefitted the United Way of Rhode Island for more than 80 years and will continue to do so forever. Today, the Charities Trust’s assets total more than $71 million and it awarded more than $3.8 million to United Way of Rhode Island last year alone.

In a time of such frightening instability and need, we remain humbled by the vision of legacy donors like Royal Little whose generosity continues to provide invaluable assistance to people they never met dealing with issues they never imagined—decades after their gift.
Despite the pandemic, legacy lives on:
Norman E. “Sandy” McCulloch, Jr.

We were deeply saddened to learn of the death of our dear friend, Sandy McCulloch, this past July. Sandy was a true pillar of the community, an industrialist, philanthropist, public education champion, and civic leader.

He was a member of the Foundation Board of Directors from 1994 to 2003, serving as its chairman for the last three of those years. Sandy was instrumental in the Foundation’s many accomplishments during his years of service, including the purchase of our present home, One Union Station. Under his leadership, the Foundation became a more proactive force in the community, dedicated to improving the lives of all Rhode Islanders.

We will miss Sandy’s optimism, commitment, his sense of humor, and his steadfast dedication to the betterment of his native Rhode Island and the education of its youth. He, along with Dotty, was truly generous, not only through financial support of countless organizations, but also in sharing his time and wisdom.

We extend our deepest condolences to his wife, Dotty, their children, and their extended family.
In a crisis, there is one thing we know we can depend on: each other.

By Neil D. Steinberg, president & CEO
CVS opens ten drive-through COVID-19 testing sites around the state.

"Your contribution to the Coalition ensures that shelters are safe and clean, that individuals and families are well-fed, and renters have a place to call home without fear of eviction. Thank you for your support during these turbulent times. Together we can realize our vision of a Rhode Island where no one experiences homelessness." — Caitlin Frumerie, LCSW, executive director, Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless

"This grant will provide invaluable support to our work of combatting substance abuse disorders in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic by helping us to keep our patients safe and ensuring the health of our heroic staff." — Peter Mumma, president & CEO, Phoenix House of New England

"Clinic operations have been severely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, placing the care of our vulnerable uninsured patients at risk. We are especially grateful for your support during these unprecedented times." — Marie Ghazal, DNP, MSN, RN, chief executive officer, and Derek Johns, director of donor relations, Rhode Island Free Clinic

"Thank you for caring for our seniors and adding your voice to our mission especially as we come together to provide for those who need us most in the midst of uncertainty. Your donation provided 6,000 additional meals to seniors as part of our COVID-19 response. Thank you!" — Meghan Grady, executive director, Meals on Wheels of Rhode Island

Like many young high school and college students throughout the state, Kaicle Boeglin held her graduation ceremony in her living room, with her mother and her best friend attending. At promptly 4 o’clock on a Saturday afternoon in late May, Kaicle clicked on the link she had been sent to participate—virtually—in Community College of Rhode Island’s 55th Commencement.

Kaicle, who plans to attend URI to study journalism—after getting hooked on the major at CCRI Radio and the student-run newspaper—was also the commencement speaker for the class of 2020. “The class of 2020 are the writers, artists, musicians, nurses, doctors…that this nation will need to rely on to prosper once again. The class of 2020 will have survived a pandemic that has changed so many of our lives… Our lives are our stories, and the way we tell them is up to us.”
“The big things for nonprofits now (amidst the COVID-19 pandemic) are to be resilient, to minimize risk, and to make certain their employees are safe,” says Elizabeth “Liz” Manchester, Esq., counsel at Partridge Snow & Hahn where she is chair of the Nonprofit and Charitable Organizations Group.

“There’s a lot of concern about how they’re going to come out of it,” says Liz, whose work with nonprofit organizations usually centers on such things as compliance, charitable gift planning, and estate giving strategies.

“Since the onset of COVID-19, there have been questions about the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act, PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) loans, and employment issues, such as furloughing. Nonprofits are trying to plan for the future in the best way possible. They’re looking at different ways to diversify their fundraising and many are looking at endowments as a way to better support their organizations.”

Liz brings a unique perspective to her work, having both legal expertise and experience working in the nonprofit sector. “I’ve been in their shoes and sat on their side of the desk. I know the unique issues of working at nonprofits and understand the complexities,” Liz shares.

A graduate of Providence College where she earned both an undergraduate degree and a Master of Business Administration, Liz earned her law degree at Northeastern University School of Law. She practiced law locally for five years before transitioning to higher education, first at Brown University, then Providence College. At PC, she served as director of planned giving, while also opening and managing her own law practice, Manchester Law. She has been with Partridge Snow & Hahn since 2018.

“There are not many lawyers locally who have both the legal expertise and the experience of working internally at nonprofits. It gives me a unique perspective, a real niche, and it lets me do what I love to do most — advise nonprofits about charitable giving and planned giving.”

Liz joined the Foundation’s Professional Advisory Council (PAC) last December. She also is president of the Partnership for Philanthropic Planning of Rhode Island and chair of the board of Rhode Island Communities for Addiction Recovery Efforts.

Lifespan discharges its 1,000th COVID-19 patient.
CNN reports Rhode Island and Connecticut are the only two states in which COVID-19 cases are decreasing. The remaining 48 states either have increased cases or are tracking steady.

**KNOCK IT OFF!**

*Governor Gina Raimondo, March 23, 2020*

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**06.28**

How three words turned into a movement

*By Arianne Corrente, vice president of communications & marketing*
That impromptu exclamation during a daily briefing as she pleaded with Rhode Islanders to stay home during the pandemic hit a nerve.

“It was a maternal voice, and it was serious business, but also kind of funny,” says Asher Schofield about his reaction to the Governor’s mandate. Within minutes, he received a Twitter DM from a friend, Stephanie Mandeville: “This is great — you have to put it on a t-shirt.” She encouraged him to partner with the Rhode Island Foundation, and donate proceeds to our COVID-19 Response Fund.

Asher and Erin Schofield, who live in Warren with their children, own the Frog and Toad gift shops on Hope and Westminster streets in Providence. “For 19 years, we have been on the same block on Hope St. — it’s a novelty store where you buy frivolous things.” On March 16, the couple found themselves heartbroken when they had to close their two stores and lay off their 10 employees.

But as soon as the t-shirt was announced via social media, Asher started receiving hundreds of pre-orders. He called Maret Bondorew, a graphic artist who had been laid off with the rest of the staff, and asked her to design a shirt around those three little words.

The shirt and its charitable purpose rapidly exploded, morphing into a Knock It Off IPA from Proclamation Ale Company; the Knock It Off Stay at Home Brew from White Electric Coffee; a Knock It Off hand sanitizer from The Industrious Spirit Company; Knock It Off BBQ sauce with Stay at Home honey from Palm’s Mojo Sauce, as well as Knock It Off facemasks.

And of course, a Knock It Off wooden spoon — just like Grandma wielded to ensure that you knocked it off.

“It simply grew into more collaborations, more people lending a hand,” says Asher. “A small community broadened. We saw what the Rhode Island Foundation was doing, and we wanted to do what little we could.”

To date, Rhode Islanders have bought more than 9,500 t-shirts, Asher shared, resulting in $43,000 for the response fund. “It’s not me, it’s Rhode Islanders,” he said. “People have been looking for something to feel good about. They’ve been looking for a way to help out and we just provided a way to do it.”

“It’s like the COVID-19 mutual aid groups. It’s that sense of belonging and identity and the idea that we’re all in this together that makes Rhode Island really special.”

The weR1 Rhode Island Fund is established at Rhode Island Foundation to support Rhode Islanders whose immigration status makes them unable to benefit from most public programs and relief efforts.

Photo by: Rupert Whiteley
Rhode Island enters phase three of the state reopening plan.

@GovRaimondo: If you don't start getting more serious, I am going to shut it all down. I will go around in my truck all over the state today to check on things, and you will not want to be in that group if I see you. It's on every one of us. #KnockItOff

Rhode Island Department of Health
@Rhstate

"@GovRaimondo: If you don't start getting more serious, I am going to shut it all down. I will go around in my truck all over the state today to check on things, and you will not want to be in that group if I see you. It's on every one of us. #KnockItOff"

The Boston Globe

Frog & Toad, in Providence, is donating a portion of proceeds from the sale of its first T-shirts to the Rhode Island Foundation's COVID-19 Response Fund. The T-shirts feature the logo of the fund's grants to community projects, such as the Pawtucket Soup Kitchen and Meals on Wheels.

"Rhode Islanders continue to amaze me," Frog & Toad co-owner Anhe Schield said Tuesday. "The biggest heroes are definitely here in the smallest state.

Rhode Island Foundation
@Rhstate

For the Rhode Island Italian kids, here's a @GovRaimondo translation for today: "Shut it down and knock it off or else I get the wooden spoon!"

(*not proven, but a solid hypothesis nonetheless)

Edward Fitzpatrick @FitzProv · Mar 31

"Knock it off" T-shirts selling like clam cakes: In three days, sales by @Rhstate have provided $12,000 to the @RhFoundation COVID-19 Response Fund.

bostonlobe.com/2020/04/01/m... via @BostonGlobe
In April, we helped establish the Rhode Island Artist Relief Fund with $150,000 in seed money to help artists in financial distress. “Individual artists tend not to be covered under the standard safety net programs available to others, and they are having trouble paying rent, feeding themselves and their family, and paying for basic necessities as their work is canceled over the next few weeks or months,” says President & CEO Neil D. Steinberg.

Ceramicist and printmaker David Allyn received one of these grants. Using photo decals and silkscreen printing on porcelain, David creates one-of-a-kind handmade porcelain objects in his studio at the Nicholson File Building in Providence.

Lead. We have earned the trust of our donors, community leaders, and Rhode Islanders through a century of effective investments, strategic grants, and responsible decisions.

Transform. We align our fundraising, grantmaking, and leadership to inspire and engage Rhode Islanders to address today’s challenges and create lasting improvements in our community.

Inspire. We challenge and encourage Rhode Islanders to become active and involved in the community, to form meaningful partnerships, and to work together for the good of Rhode Island.
While we don’t know what the future holds, we’re very grateful to get through this with all of you.