



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACTS:

Lori Latham, Director of Communication & Government Relations, Kent County
616.401.1743 · lori.latham@kentcounty.mi.gov

Maribeth Groen, Marketing Manager, Heart of West Michigan United Way
616.446.8077 · mgroen@hwmuw.org

Kent County Announces First Round Awardees in Non-Profit Grant Program

102 non-profits qualify for funding in initial round

(Grand Rapids, Mich. – September 8, 2020) – Kent County and Heart of West Michigan United Way (HWMUW) announced today the first round of recipients of the [Kent County Non-Profit Organization Covid-19 Grant Fund](#). To date, the program has received 194 applications and 112 non-profits have qualified for short-term economic relief grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$150,000.

The Kent County Board of Commissioners recently allocated \$9.5 million in federal CARES Act dollars to create the Kent County Non-Profit Organization COVID-19 Grant Fund. This funding is intended to assist local 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), or 501(c)(6) nonprofit health and human service organizations located within Kent County serving individuals and communities that have been directly affected by COVID-19, and continued to provide services throughout the pandemic.

“The pandemic has changed the level of need in our community, with many finding themselves suddenly requiring assistance for the first time,” said Kent County Board of Commissioners Chair Mandy Bolter. “We remain committed to helping our non-profit partners address critical needs such as food assistance, mental and physical health services, and other programs to help people get back on their feet.”

To date, 71 grant checks totaling more than \$2.3 million have been mailed to non-profit organizations throughout Kent County. Another \$1.4 million will be distributed to approximately 19 organizations as soon as the required paperwork is complete. A full list of grant recipients is available on the HWMUW [website](#) and will be updated on a regular basis.

Overall, the list of awardees will assist diverse communities throughout the County. The awardees report that those who benefit from their programs are 20.9 percent African American/Black, 20.3 percent Hispanic/Latino, 16.9 percent White/Caucasian, 12.2 percent Multi-Racial or Other Race, 9.5 percent Asian, 7.4 percent Native American and 1.4 percent Pacific Islander. Additionally, 11.5 percent was left Unspecified, labeled “County-Wide”, or Not Reported.

“Prior to the pandemic, many families and individuals struggled to meet their basic needs. COVID-19 has worsened the strain on those who were already struggling and caused others to experience difficulties for the first time in their lives,” said Michelle Van Dyke, President/CEO Heart of West Michigan United Way. These dollars provide critical relief to nonprofits who are working tirelessly to serve the growing needs of so many in our community.”

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Applications will be accepted until the funds available are allocated or until Oct. 1, 2020, whichever occurs first. For complete details and a link to the application, visit Heart of West Michigan's [website](#).

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About Kent County

The County of Kent government serves a diverse population of more than 650,000 residents, making it the fourth largest county in Michigan. The County provides a wide range of essential services in the following areas: law enforcement, correctional facility, three court systems, elections, social services, public health, park system and vital records. Additionally, it has operating agreements for the maintenance of County drains, solid waste and road, mental health services, and with the Gerald R. Ford International Airport and John Ball Zoo. To learn more about Kent County services, visit www.accesskent.com.

About Heart of West Michigan United Way

Heart of West Michigan United Way unites community resources to reduce poverty in Kent County. Founded in 1917 and locally operated, Heart of West Michigan United Way has been an integral part of Kent County for over 100 years and plays a unique role in connecting community resources to pressing community needs through direct programming, community engagement, and partnerships with local nonprofit agencies, companies, donors, and volunteers.