

# Coronavirus Emergency Relief Fund (CERF)

May 17, 2020 – Weekly Update



## REASONS TO H.O.P.E. (Help One Person Everyday)

We receive a lot of questions about how we were able to so quickly launch the **CERF** and why **Princeton Children's Fund** was suited to lead a multi-organization volunteer relief effort during a pandemic so we thought it would be helpful to share the origin story. It's pretty much a tale of "HOPE-ers" choosing to come together to serve their community at a time of crisis and we'll start with HOPE this week.

For those of you who knew Princeton Children's Fund before the pandemic, you know that our mission is to provide access to enrichment and extracurricular opportunities for Princeton Public School students whose families would otherwise be unable to afford them. Our goal is to promote an equivalent experience for all students in the Princeton Public School community. We are striving for equity in the K-12 education experience.



We offer summer programs and after school clubs to address equity as well as fill in some opportunity gaps and work to combat the achievement gap. We did this in partnership with the Princeton Public Schools and Princeton Charter School and organizations like the Princeton Public Library, the Princeton Recreation Department, Princeton Human Services, the Princeton Family YMCA, and the Arts Council of Princeton. Over the years, we partner organizations have pooled resources to support as many students as possible. We have worked to ensure that our efforts on behalf of eligible students were complementary and that we collectively served as many students as possible.



PCF offered our own programs too and last summer with coordination support from **Princeton Education Foundation**, we ran several middle and high school programs: **The Book U Get** (summer reading book club), **Mission to Mars** (summer science camp) **Up & Out** (post-graduation planning course) and **Test Prep** (ACT/SAT preparation course). In typical PCF fashion, we collaborated and offered these programs with our partners. The **Princeton Public Library** hosted *The Book U Get* and *Test Prep*, Mr. Burr at **John Witherspoon Middle School** hosted *Mission to Mars*, and Ms. Baxter of **Princeton High School** hosted *Up & Out*. We had just launched an afterschool club, **Crazy Universe**, in partnership with Dr. Lia Medeiros of the **Institute for Advanced Study** and the **Princeton Public Library** when COVID-19 came to town.



In addition to canceling **Crazy Universe** and moving **Test Prep** to a virtual format, we faced some new challenges. Mainly, how do we continue working to advance equity in Princeton in a time of coronavirus? Well, we went back to basics and thought about what we do best. And then we reached out to our partners and had a few conversations.

In speaking with our partners at **Send Hunger Packing Princeton**, we realized that we were simultaneously thinking about the same problem. We knew that any support the government would provide would not help everyone equally, so we identified the equity opportunity. We could catch the people and families that fall through government safety nets and help them weather this difficult time.



We identified two 2 main areas of concern: shelter and food. We reached out to other community partners to see who would be interested and able to help. By March 16<sup>th</sup>, PCF had organized a team and we launched the **Coronavirus Emergency Relief Fund** to address the shelter concern. Our plan enabled each organization to participate as needed and as wanted with one another. **Send Hunger Packing Princeton** went on to address the food concern with a whole other team of partner organizations.

We organized **CERF** like any other PCF program – it had to be applicant-focused, first and foremost. We identified what each organization did well and then designed a system that leveraged the best from us all. **Princeton Human Services** offered their privacy compliant online application system to support the intake process and provided a sample application from a prior initiative that was used as the basis of the **CERF** application. They, the Princeton Recreation Department, and Corner House, additionally contribute staff to answer the phones, assist with application submission, and serve as a central source for document collection. Their amazing Director, Melissa Urias, in partnership with PCF's President, Felicia Spitz, oversee the Steering Committee's twice weekly determination calls and present cases to the Housing Stability Coalition once weekly.



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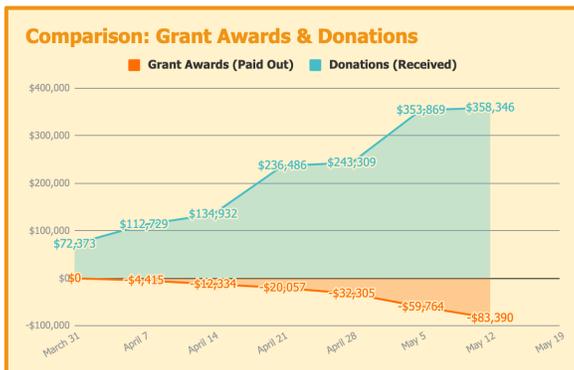
**Princeton Community Housing** and **Princeton Senior Resource Center** have social service professionals who volunteer on the Steering Committee and process applications. They have also provided outreach support and distributed flyers to residents. On March 31<sup>st</sup>, **Housing Initiatives of Princeton** joined the effort and they process applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria for **CERF** support.

**Princeton Children's Fund** is the financial agent and in that capacity is responsible for fundraising, donor acknowledgements, grant request applications, landlord negotiations and payments, and utility service payments on behalf of approved applicants. Several members of the Steering Committee are trustees or friends of PCF. In addition, PCF has created the outreach materials (website, flyers, templates for applicant communication, etc.), translations of same, and provides community updates through this newsletter.

We hope to hold an **Information Session** in the very near future, so stayed tuned if you still have questions!

## CERF ETHOS

Our goal is for residents to be able to **stay in their homes** and to maintain access to utility service that enables **students to be connected to school** to participate in distance learning and enables **all residents to be connected to food resources** and other necessities during this crisis.



## FUNDRAISING – \$363,416 as of May 17<sup>th</sup>

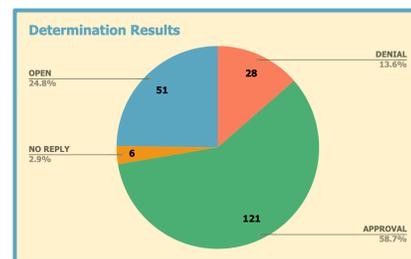
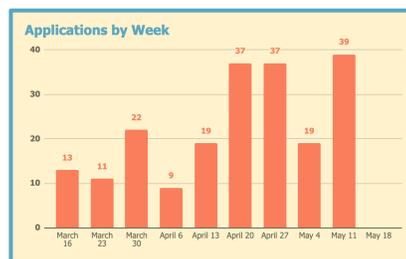
The CERF is supported in part with grants from the **Princeton University Relief Fund** and the **Covid-19 Relief & Recovery Fund** of **Princeton Area Community Foundation**. We are grateful to the University, to PACF, and to the almost **750 donors** who have contributed.

**The Housing Stability Coalition has contributed over \$16,000 in addition to the \$83,390 awarded by CERF.** Our reach would be significantly reduced without the ongoing support from the HSC.



## APPLICATIONS – 206 as of May 17<sup>th</sup>

We have been able to help **121 households** stay sheltered and connected. Of the 206 applications received, 56 are renewals. The current average award rose again this week to **\$856.86**. At this award level and with our current funding, we will be able to help approximately 420 people or times.



## CERF TEAM

### Steering Committee

- Emily Becker\* – friend of PCF
- Zoe D'Eugenio-Pinel\* – Princeton Family YMCA
- Andrea Dinan\* – Princeton High School & PCF
- Jordan Goodwin – Princeton Community Village
- Sharon Hurley – PSRC
- Diane Paulsell\* – Solidaridad Princeton
- Nicole Paulucci – Princeton Recreation Department

- Trinidad Rodriguez\* – JW Middle School & PCF
- Angie Vargas\*/Cecilia Avila\* – Arm in Arm

### Intake Coordinators

- Katherine Cardona\* – Princeton Recreation Department
- Kimberly Figueroa-Martinez\* – Human Services
- Sindy Sandoval\* – Corner House



\* = dual-language speaker

