

April 3, 2020

**A \$1 million gift from John M. Belk Endowment
pushes COVID-19 Response Fund to \$15 million in total donations**
*Fund launched by Foundation For The Carolinas and United Way of Central Carolinas
has already granted nearly \$3 million to local nonprofits aiding those most in need*

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CHARLOTTE – The John M. Belk Endowment announced it is donating \$1 million to the COVID-19 Response Fund, a community-wide effort to assist Mecklenburg County residents affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The gift pushed the fund to the \$15 million mark.

“Our team is honored to support the community at a time when the need is so vast,” said MC Belk Pilon, president and board chair of the John M. Belk Endowment. “Now more than ever, our community must come together to rise above these trying times.”

Foundation For The Carolinas and United Way of Central Carolinas launched the effort on March 16 to support a range of nonprofit organizations meeting the basic needs of those affected by the crisis, such as food, shelter, housing and emergency financial assistance. Individuals are urged to donate at HelpCharMeck.org.

The fund recently announced its first round of direct grants: \$3 million to 14 nonprofits assisting those affected by the crisis. Local agencies and nonprofits are experiencing increased needs as local unemployment rates increase, school cancellations and stay-at-home orders cause disruptions, the economy tightens and those without health insurance face additional challenges getting the care they need.

“With this commitment to our community, MC Belk Pilon carries forward the John M. Belk Endowment’s critical work to provide opportunities that transform lives,” said Foundation For The Carolinas President and CEO Michael Marsicano. “Thanks to the John M. Belk Endowment and a host of community leaders and organizations, we’ve now raised more than \$15 million in just over two weeks. While there’s more to do, I cannot thank enough all who have given so far.”

Donations have ranged from a two-dollar commitment from an anonymous online donor to \$1.3 million from Mecklenburg County. Other gifts include \$250,000 gifts from the Charlotte Mecklenburg Community Foundation, the Weisiger Fleming Family Fund and EY; \$500,000 each from Ally Financial, the Duke Energy Foundation and the Knight Foundation; and \$1 million gifts from LendingTree, the City of Charlotte, the Howard R. Levine Foundation, Truist Financial Corporation, Bank of America, the David A. Tepper Charitable Foundation, Lowe’s, the C.D. Spangler Foundation and Coca-Cola Consolidated.

A competitive grant cycle is now open for future grant awards. Mecklenburg County 501(c)3 nonprofits that meet eligibility requirements may apply. Grants are awarded by an advisory group of community members. Visit uwcentralcarolinas.org/grants/COVID for eligibility requirements and to apply.

“Generous donors like the John M. Belk Endowment ensure we can try to help all those who desperately need help,” said United Way of Central Carolinas President and CEO Laura Yates Clark. “The needs of our community are quickly escalating as our friends and neighbors lose their jobs or are forced to stay at home. Local nonprofits are besieged with requests to help, and it’s up to us to be there for them.”

The fund is administered through a partnership between Foundation For The Carolinas and United Way of Central Carolinas, in close coordination with the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

To contribute to the COVID-19 Response Fund, visit [HelpCharMeck.org](https://www.helpcharmeck.org). Corporations and foundations that wish to make a donation may contact either Catherine Warfield, Senior Vice President of Philanthropic Advancement at FFTC, at 704.973.4515 or cwarfield@fftc.org; or Clint Hill, Chief Development Officer at United Way of Central Carolinas, at 704.371.6359 or chill@uwcentralcarolinas.org.

About Foundation For The Carolinas

Founded in 1958, Foundation For The Carolinas is the sixth-largest nonprofit community foundation in the country, serving donors and a broad range of charitable purposes in North and South Carolina. With assets of \$2.6 billion, FFTC’s mission is to inspire philanthropy and empower individuals to create a better community. Visit www.fftc.org.

About United Way of Central Carolinas

United Way fights for the education, health and financial stability of every person in our region, improving lives by mobilizing the caring power of local communities in Charlotte/Mecklenburg, Mooresville/Lake Norman, and Anson, Cabarrus and Union counties. For more information, please visit [uwcentralcarolinas.org](https://www.uwcentralcarolinas.org).

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