COVID-19: A Community Responds

Delivering hope to our neighbors and nonprofits during this pandemic.
COVID-19: A Community Responds

Response funds throughout our region help those who need it the most

Sil Ganzó, the founder and executive director of ourBRIDGE for KIDS, tells the story of a family her nonprofit recently helped via its meal delivery service. When COVID-19 hit and schools closed, a single mom of three elementary school kids was forced to quit her job as a housekeeper so that her children wouldn’t be at home during the day by themselves. The mother told Ganzó that the daily dinners ourBRIDGE delivered helped her family survive through the pandemic.

The fact that Ganzó tells the story is not surprising – the 2020 Nish Jamgotch Jr. Humanitarian Award winner (see sidebar) could share hundreds of stories of families her organization has helped through the years. What is surprising is that the story involves food delivery, a service that, just a few months ago, was not part of the mission of ourBRIDGE for KIDS, an afterschool program for Charlotte’s immigrant community changed its organizational focus to food delivery after the pandemic hit.

Grants from the fund have helped local nonprofits provide childcare, housing, food, emergency financial assistance, healthcare and support for remote learning, among other essential needs.

Sending Hope to the Homeless

Adrienne Threatt lives by a simple motto: “Do what we can with what we have until we can do more.” That optimism is one of the reasons she named her nonprofit Hope Vibes, which she co-founded alongside her husband, Emmanuel Threatt.

Hope Vibes develops creative exit strategies to end homelessness through direct relief, research, innovation, advocacy and systemic disruption. Recently, Hope Vibes debuted its “Hope Tank,” a box truck converted into a mobile shower center and laundromat to help the homeless community. The initial truck was bought in 2017 thanks to a $10,000 grant from FFTC’s African American Community Foundation, and the project was completed with a $50,000 grant from the COVID-19 Response Fund.

The debut of the Hope Tank was a bright spot in a tough year for a segment of the local population hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Because of the strong relational culture we’ve built with the people we serve, (when the coronavirus outbreak started) we began going out and just having conversations with our homeless neighbors,” Threatt said. “We wanted to hear from them directly concerning the impact and their need. We found that the outbreak affected our homeless neighbors very deeply on an emotional and social level. They felt overlooked, unvalued and forgotten.”

Helping Those Most Vulnerable

When the COVID-19 Response Fund launched on March 16, remembering the community’s most vulnerable was one of its key goals. In the early days of the pandemic, local agencies and nonprofits were among the first to feel the strain as the economy tightened, workers were asked to stay home and school cancellations caused disruptions.

“When we launched the fund, our approach was to look at the crisis from multiple angles, because the most important thing – especially in the early days of the pandemic – was to act quickly and get the money flowing,” said FFTC President and CEO Michael Marsicano. “We knew nonprofits were being hit hard with requests to help, and thankfully when we asked the community to donate, they responded. The generosity that was shown was a bright spot during an otherwise uncertain time.”

Lending Tree was the first to give, helping to start the fund with a $1 million gift. The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County followed, alongside donations from corporations, foundations and individuals. Gifts to the fund ranged from the millions to a $2 commitment from an anonymous online donor.

In addition to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg COVID-19 Response Fund, several of the Foundation’s regional affiliates helped launch relief efforts in their communities. More than $1.7 million has been distributed collectively in Cabarrus, Iredell, Lincoln, Stanly, Union and York Counties.

For more information: Rtc.org/COVID-19

Record Grantmaking

Although 2020 is not over, the Foundation is already setting record grantmaking numbers, thanks to the generosity of FFTC’s fundholders, robust COVID-19 response efforts and the extraordinary work of our subsidiary E+E Relief (see page 9).

In September, the Foundation passed the $100,000 mark for grants issued. To put that in perspective, the Foundation issued 20,000 grants in all of 2019. Our previous record high was nearly 29,000 grants in 2017.

The 2020 Nish Jamgotch Jr. Humanitarian Award was recently awarded to Sil Ganzó – the founder and executive director of ourBRIDGE for KIDS, an after-school program for Charlotte’s immigrant and refugee children. When the pandemic hit, Ganzó helped transition her organization from its after-school mission to helping distribute thousands of meals per week to the community.

“Receiving this award for the work done through a global pandemic brings me an incredible sense of reassurance,” Ganzó said. “I am thankful for our team’s selflessness, for their commitment to our work and for their trust in me to lead us through it.”

Named for the retired UNC Charlotte professor who established the program, the award is presented annually to an individual or group that demonstrates exceptional community service. It is facilitated by FFTC, which also holds the charitable fund that supports the award.

PHILANTHROPY FOCUS
Donor Advised Funds Support Community During Challenging Times

Even during times of uncertainty – whether the economic downturn of 2008 or today’s pandemic – giving from donor advised funds has historically remained strong. Donor advised funds are an effective tool for addressing urgent and unexpected challenges, ensuring critical support for local nonprofits as they see unprecedented demand for services.

As of October, FFTC fundholders distributed grants for COVID-19 support totaling more than $13 million.

As part of this grantmaking, fundholders contributed nearly $7 million to COVID-19 Response Funds throughout our region. The funds were launched and managed in partnership by FFTC and United Way of Central Carolinas. Through these efforts, local grantmaking boards awarded support to nonprofits responding to the pandemic.

Fundholders also directly supported hundreds of nonprofits working on the front lines by making grants from their FFTC funds. A few highlights:

- The Springsteen Foundation, an FFTC Donor Advised Fund, contributed $100,000 to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg COVID-19 Response Fund and also gave directly to nonprofits for pandemic relief. This included $400,000 awarded through their competitive grant process, as well as an additional $150,000 to Crisis Assistance Ministry to provide emergency aid to those in need.

In addition to its regular grantmaking cycle, the Longleaf Fund’s grantmaking committee elected to award $600,000 to support educational access during the pandemic. These grants spanned multiple counties in North and South Carolina.

The Alpha & Omega Foundation, another FFTC Donor Advised Fund, responded quickly at the beginning of the crisis to award $5,000 to the CMS Foundation to provide hotspots to students without internet access. As schools remained virtual this fall, the Foundation followed up with a second grant to help more students pivot to remote learning.

These are just a few examples of the generosity shown by the FFTC family of fundholders.

Learn more about Donor Advised Funds:
fttc.org/GivingFunds

Planning Today for Tomorrow’s Needs

Pandemic Spurs Interest in Estate Planning

Bill Williamson has been connected to Foundation For The Carolinas since the beginning. An original board member when FFTC launched in 1958, as he puts it, “I’ve seen the entire history of the Foundation.” Given his long affiliation as a volunteer leader and fundholder, it’s perhaps no surprise the successful investor is leaving an unrestricted planned gift to FFTC after his death – entrusting his community foundation to make meaningful charitable investments as needs in the community evolve.

“A community foundation is so much better for people who want to make a long-lasting gift to something, more so than any other entity I know about,” said Williamson about his choice.

He is not alone. Since the pandemic began, donors have shown an increased interest in planned giving and opportunities to help the community prepare for future crises.

One message has become clear: Many charitably minded individuals want to ensure the community has the resources to address unexpected hardships and opportunities, now and in the future.

Community Impact Funds

Like Williamson, some donors have accomplished this by giving a portion of their planned gifts to an FFTC Community Impact Fund. These endowed funds provide grantmaking assets that focus on broad interest areas – such as health and human services, animal welfare or evolving community needs – with the recognition that needs and organizations may change over time.

For example, a donor who is passionate about helping children reach their full potential might leave a portion of their estate to the Education and Youth Development Fund. After their lifetime, that donor’s gift will be used to permanently support nonprofits addressing the most pressing needs in this space.

By leveraging the Foundation’s grantmaking expertise and volunteer advisory committees, FFTC Community Impact Funds ensure future grantmaking will address timely issues to make the most impact.

“None of us can fully predict what future challenges our community will face – the pandemic is a great example,” said Catherine Warfield, senior vice president of Philanthropic Advancement. “By giving to a Community Impact Fund that aligns with their interests, donors can ensure that our community will be ready to respond to future, unexpected needs.”

Customizing a Planned Gift

Each donor is unique, with their own charitable vision. When retired media executive Bob Horner needed charitable giving advice, he came to Foundation For The Carolinas. He began his journey into philanthropy by opening a donor advised fund and supporting the Robinson Center for Civic Leadership, FFTC’s flagship program, to address critical community needs.

When the time came to consider his future legacy, he wanted to involve his son in grantmaking while also giving FFTC the flexibility to address unexpected needs. So he mixed-and-matched FFTC fund options to craft a custom plan using his retirement fund assets.

Half of his charitable estate will fund an FFTC Donor Advised Fund from which his son will recommend grants. The other half is entrusted to two FFTC Community Impact Funds that will provide permanent discretionary dollars to support the community’s future needs, as well as ongoing Foundation operations.

“I know I can trust FFTC to make the right decisions with the resources I leave behind,” Horner said.

For information on planned giving:
fttc.org/PlannedGiving

Learn more about Community Impact Funds:
fttc.org/CommunityImpactFunds

Did You Know?

A planned gift can be established at FFTC with a variety of assets:
• Retirement plan assets
• Life insurance policies
• Charitable remainder trusts
• Charitable lead trusts
• Publicly traded securities
• Privately held stock
• Cash
• Real property

Longtime FFTC volunteer leader and fundholder Bill Williamson has entrusted the Foundation with a planned gift to address future needs in his community.
Helping Local Small Businesses Survive and Thrive

Giovy Buyers was raised in Ecuador by rose farmers, so it’s no surprise she became a successful florist as the owner of Southern Blossom in Charlotte. When the shelter-in-place order took effect in March, Giovy was forced to close her doors. Soon after, her supply chain broke down and all upcoming events canceled, resulting in the threat of permanent closure.

But thanks to a $10,000 grant from the City of Charlotte’s Access to Capital program, Giovy was able to keep her small business alive by paying rent as well as her vendors. Her story is just one of the 2,500 diverse small businesses that received financial help from the City’s Access to Capital program, Giovy was able to keep her small business alive by paying rent as well as her vendors. Her story is just one of the 2,500 diverse small businesses that received financial help from the City’s Charlotte Access to Capital program, which was administered by Foundation For The Carolinas, to distribute CARES Act funding. Local small businesses affected by the pandemic received grants totaling more than $30 million from the program. Launched in June to help Charlotte-based businesses with 25 or fewer employees, the Access to Capital Small Business Recovery Program provided grants of either $10,000 or $25,000, giving local small businesses a lifeline during this challenging time. While FFTC typically distributes grants to nonprofits, its grantmaking expertise was sought to design and administer this effort to distribute funding rapidly and equitably to the small business community.

Thanks to the success of the initial program, in the fall, FFTC administered Open for Business efforts to distribute more than $13 million to hundreds of restaurants, caterers, bars and food trucks, as well as local hotels. FFTC partnered with the YMCA of Greater Charlotte to provide staffing for the program, hiring YMCA employees that had been furloughed due to the pandemic. YMCA branches throughout Charlotte served as in-person assistance sites for businesses to get help with submitting their applications.

Nearly 3,000 Charlotte businesses were awarded grants through the City of Charlotte’s Access to Capital grants programs for small businesses, restaurants and hotels. Read more stories: fftc.org/grantees.
Racial Equity and Social Justice

Following the movement that arose this summer from the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other Black Americans, FFTC released a commitment statement to the community titled, “Racial Equity, Social Justice and Our Path Forward.” It read, in part, “We recognize the complexity of (systemic racism) and state what is clear: As an organization and as a team, we must hold ourselves accountable.” Commitments include:

- Publishing a list of nonprofits addressing racial equity for our fundholders to consider supporting, as well as sharing a curated list of educational resources and training, both available via our website.
- Providing educational programming for the community on race and equity issues. In October, FFTC held a Race Matters for Juvenile Justice workshop for fundholders.
- Partnering with community organizations whose missions are focused on racial equity and social justice.
- Reaffirming our commitment to diversity and inclusion in our governance practices and undergoing Foundation-wide diversity and inclusion training.
- Giving each FFTC full-time employee the opportunity to designate a financial contribution from FFTC to their choice of nonprofits that address racism, inequality or social justice.

A key step outlined in the statement is support of FFTC’s internal Equity & Inclusion Working Group, established last year for employees to examine institutional racism, inequality or social justice.

For more information, read the Racial Equity Statement at fftc.org/RacialEquityStatement.

Supporting Black Philanthropy

Local Charlotte artists came together in June to create a popular Black Lives Matter mural on South Tryon Street. View current grants and support the African American Community Foundation: fftc.org/AACF

African American Community Foundation

Enabling African Americans to contribute to the growth of their communities.

AACF Grant Helps Students Gain Employment Opportunities

Thierry Washington, a recent graduate of Appalachian State University, dreams of a career in architecture — a field in which Black professionals, like himself, are historically underrepresented. Thierry majored in Building Sciences and Architectural Technology and Design, but he needed an internship to graduate. GardHouse, a Charlotte-based nonprofit, helped Thierry land two internships with minority-owned local businesses — F&D Integra and Renz Collaborative — where he is gaining hands-on experience in the field.

While only a year old, GardHouse has already created a pipeline to employment for more than 170 college students of color. The nonprofit has partnered with about 50 local, minority-owned businesses to provide internships and jobs opportunities for these students. GardHouse also supports students through professional development workshops and real-world coaching on practical topics, like how to make business connections via LinkedIn.

To support this work, GardHouse was recently awarded a grant from the African American Community Foundation, a grantmaking program and affiliate of FFTC. Thanks to two endowments and generous donors, the AACF board awards grants each year to support nonprofits — like GardHouse — that promote economic inclusion and opportunity. A key goal is to help eliminate the pipeline of employment for college students of color. For more information about GardHouse: gardhouse.org

Learn more about the African American Community Foundation: fftc.org/AACF

Brave of Heart Fund Supports Families of Fallen Healthcare Workers

For four decades, Barbara Holmes was a certified nursing assistant at St. Cabrini Nursing Home in New York state. A mother, grandmother and wife of 47 years, Barbara was known for being a passionate advocate for her patients and coworkers.

Tragically, Barbara became ill in May and succumbed to COVID-19. Twelve coworkers at the nursing home also lost their lives during the pandemic.

To honor fallen healthcare heroes like Barbara, the Brave of Heart Fund was established at E4E Relief, FFTC’s subsidiary that provides employee disaster and hardship relief programs to more than 100 companies with 5 million employees globally.

The Brave of Heart Fund provides charitable grants nationwide to surviving families of healthcare workers and volunteers who lost their lives while caring for others during the pandemic. Grants range from $15,000 to $60,000 help pay for short-term expenses such as funeral costs, as well as longer-term needs such as medical bills and education costs for dependents.

The New York Life and Cigna Foundations started the fund with initial contributions of $25 million each. New York Life will provide up to another $25 million in a dollar-for-dollar match for donations from individuals, and Cigna is providing free emotional and behavioral health services for surviving family members. Other companies and more than 1,500 individuals have donated as well. The fund currently stands at $65 million in donations.

Barbara Holmes’ family received a grant from the Brave of Heart Fund to help pay for memorial expenses and childcare costs. “The Brave of Heart Fund helped my family memorialize my mother and carry on without her income,” Barbara’s son Eric said.

Fittingly, St. Cabrini Nursing Home has also named its monthly Values in Action employee award in Barbara’s honor.

For more information and to donate: BraveofHeartFund.com

Learn more about employee disaster and hardship relief funds: E4ERelief.org

Disaster and Hardship Subsidary E4E Relief Sees Record Grantmaking, Growth in 2020

FFTC began administering employee relief programs for companies during another season of great uncertainty — following the tragic events of 9/11. In 2015, E4E Relief spun off as a wholly owned subsidiary of FFTC and has emerged as the nation’s leading provider of employee relief funds.

Beyond the Brave of Heart Fund, E4E Relief has seen unprecedented activity in 2020 as the pandemic has created daunting financial hardships for families in many industries across the globe. As of Oct. 1, more than 110,000 employees across the globe have applied for assistance, and emergency relief grants totaling $87 million have been disbursed so far this year — a 700 percent increase over the entire year of 2019, which was also a robust year of grantmaking.

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Professional Advisor Spotlight
Q&A with Jonathan Dry

Jonathan Dry, Managing Director with MBL Advisors in Charlotte, is a valuable FFTC partner. As a professional advisor, he works with high net worth families, business owners and corporate executives. His wealth management practice includes focusing on charitable giving in their current and long-term planning.

Q: Describe your relationship with Foundation For The Carolinas.
I’ve worked with FFTC for several years and joined the cabinet of professional advisors in 2020. I am an advisor to entrepreneurs and business owners, and several of my clients have established donor advised funds and have assessed giving strategies for private business interests through the assistance of FFTC.

Q: What value does your partnership with FFTC bring to your clients?
The professionals at FFTC are always accessible to discuss any needs our clients or even potential clients may have. They take a long-term view of relationships, which allows us to make introductions and discuss creative strategies that will help complete her legacy. We have also found value through the Investment Alliance relationship, which allows us to advise our clients in coordination with FFTC. This brings continuity when advising multi-generational clients.

Q: How do you encourage clients to consider giving as part of their estate plans?
The joy of advising entrepreneurs is that they are constantly wanting to create impact. As they build value in their company and community, the conversation eventually shifts to how this plan can be carried out and how their family can get engaged. Conversations around donor advised funds and private business interests help clients realize how their legacy can continue to be supported.

Q: How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your clients’ giving?
COVID-19 has prompted numerous giving conversations. Many clients, particularly those in smaller communities, have wanted to increase their giving knowing that many small businesses and other charitable organizations are in need. Leveraging resources at FFTC is one way our clients can find opportunities to ensure funds get to where they are needed the most.

Scholarships Support Local Students
This year has been unlike any other when it comes to schooling. In-person instruction has been limited and graduations were canceled. But that hasn’t stopped local students from pursuing their academic goals, thanks in part to scholarships managed by Foundation For The Carolinas.

FFTC manages nearly 150 scholarship funds on behalf of donors. This year, $2.4 million in scholarships was awarded to 943 students. Established by generous fundholders, these scholarships provide support for students ranging from kindergarten to graduate school.

Zy'lice Land was recently awarded a scholarship from the African American Network – Carolinas to pursue a biology degree at UNC Charlotte. She has dreamed of being a doctor since she was young, and this scholarship will help her take the next step.

Drew Grantham, a graduate student at North Carolina State University, is another recent beneficiary. She received a Carolina Panthers graduate scholarship that will help her complete her master’s degree in athletic administration loan-free.

Support a student’s educational journey by opening an FFTC Scholarship Fund. Learn more: Qiana Austin at qaustin@fftc.org

Foundation Team News
New Executive Director
Education and nonprofit strategist Sherri Chisholm has joined Leading on Opportunity as Executive Director, leading its mission to improve economic mobility in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

FFTC Staff Updates
Emily Kennedy recently joined as Vice President, Center for Personal Philanthropy, helping FFTC’s personal and family fundholders achieve their philanthropic goals.

Rhonda Dean recently joined as Vice President, Board Management, serving as the relationship manager and board lead for nine of FFTC’s 13 affiliate county boards.

Kindl Detar now serves as Vice President, Planned Giving, stewarding FFTC’s current planned giving donors and helping new donors plan their giving legacies.

Employees Honored
Catherine Warfield (Senior Vice President, Philanthropic Advancement) was named by The Mecklenburg Times as one of the area’s 50 Most Influential Women. Warfield leads FFTC’s philanthropic advancement team, overseeing business development and relationship management.

Davida Rivers (E4E Relief National Sales Director and VP Customer Experience) was named to Charlotte Business Journal’s 40 Under 40 list. She leads the Sales and Customer Experience team for E4E Relief, a subsidiary and the leading national provider of employee disaster relief programs.

Stay Connected with FFTC Programming
FFTC regularly offers complimentary webinars on a variety of giving topics relevant for philanthropic individuals, families and companies, as well as for nonprofits. We also offer Continuing Legal Education opportunities for estate planners and other professional advisors.

View upcoming events or watch past webinars: fftc.org/UpcomingEvents
Community groups helped get the word out by distributing Reading Checkup flyers, including at a drive-through back to school event.

Families Benefit From Reading Tool

This past summer, Read Charlotte, an initiative housed under the FFTC umbrella, launched the Reading Checkup program. This innovative tool helped families evaluate their children’s reading level and provided activities to target individualized learning needs.

By the end of the program, more than 2,500 Charlotte-Mecklenburg children used this tool to prevent summer learning loss – which was even more important during the uncertainty of the pandemic.

Learn more about the Reading Checkup tool: ReadingCheckup.org

New Report Updates Local Economic Mobility Data and Policy Strategies

Starting in 2014, the Robinson Center for Civic Leadership – the flagship program of FFTC – led a community-wide effort to analyze the state of the “American Dream” in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Harvard University Professor Raj Chetty’s “Land of Opportunity” research, which measured the likelihood of a child moving up the income ladder – and ranked Charlotte last among large U.S. cities in terms of mobility – provided momentum. The effort culminated in 2017 with the release of the Leading on Opportunity Task Force Report.

Although the original research effort concluded with the task force report, Chetty’s new initiative, Opportunity Insights, chose Charlotte as its first location to further explore the data and work with local partners to develop research-based solutions.

This latest effort resulted in a report released in November that provides updated findings on the state of economic mobility in Charlotte/Mecklenburg and highlights potential policy strategies to improve mobility rates.

“Although the findings are based upon Charlotte data, we’re pleased that Opportunity Insights will use the report to inform efforts across our greater region, state and country,” said Brian Collier, FFTC executive vice president.

To read the report: fftc.org/Publications