

COMMUNITY *News*

Pandemic Prompts Revised Approach to Grants

As COVID-19 upended life around the world, it also brought major changes to the Community Foundation's grantmaking cycle. To meet the emergency, the Foundation's Board decided in March to direct all of our support for the moment to pandemic-related needs.

The resulting 100 grants—totaling \$485,004—focus in part on obvious issues, such as relieving food insecurity, ensuring that essential workers have personal protective equipment (PPE) and helping hard-pressed nonprofits pay for basic operations. Other grants meet less obvious but still-important needs attached to the pandemic, such as caring for animals whose owners can no longer support them, or helping artists whose gig economy work has dried up (see story on page 2).

Our response also included 44 micro grants of \$500 each, to help organizations with budgets of \$250,000 or less purchase PPE and meet other needs related to reopening.

The Foundation started its grantmaking pivot in early March, about two weeks before

emergency orders sent New York State into quarantine. We canceled the panel meetings for our fall grants cycle and identified proposals already in hand that touched in some way on COVID-19. Then we started to address the pandemic head-on, contacting nonprofits we

had worked with before to learn their needs.

We joined with other foundations in the COVID-19 Community Response Fund for Broome County and the Tioga COVID-19 Emergency Fund. We also formed our own COVID-19 Review Panel,

to provide support in Tioga, Chenango, Delaware and Otsego Counties and rural Broome.

Composed of experienced grant evaluators from throughout our service area, this new panel at the Community

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New Fund to Foster Racial Equity

A new fund at the Community Foundation will promote racial justice and equity with grants to local programs that seek a better future for communities of color.

The idea for the fund came from Angela Riley, a local pharmacist, member of the Binghamton City Council

and member of the Women's Fund Leadership Committee. Riley pointed to the Central New York Community Foundation's recently-formed Black Equity and Excellence Fund and suggested that our region needs a similar vehicle—not just to foster more discussions about

social justice, but to support real action.

“We need programs and services that are dedicated to achieving goals, to retool, recreate or launch initiatives that are targeted toward Black Americans, indigenous people

and people of color,” says Riley. The new fund will support agencies that help members of those populations enhance their skills, gain new tools and resources, perhaps launch new businesses, or gain strength in other ways, she says.

Formed with an allocation by the Board, the fund is one element of an initiative the Foundation started two years ago to become a more diverse, equitable and inclusive organization.

Details about the new fund are still being worked out. “We’re ironing out the language of the fund so that when it comes to marketing it to the community, people are able to understand what it’s all about,” says Aisha Jasper,

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Humane Society, Arts Group Offer COVID Response

Pandemic relief isn't always a matter of masks or meals. Sometimes a helpful response demands a bit of imagination.

Imagine, for instance, you're a dog or cat and your human becomes too sick to attend to you, or loses a job and can't afford your food or veterinary care. What then?

If you're lucky, you live in Delaware, Otsego, or Chenango County, where the Delaware Valley Humane Society can help.

Many people have adopted animals during the pandemic, but other pet owners have found themselves in a tough spot. "More people have to surrender their animals because they can't afford to feed them, or they cannot afford the vet services, or they are not healthy themselves," says Erin Insinga, who manages the Humane Society's no-kill shelter. There's also more demand for the Humane Society's pet food pantry and its low-cost spay and neuter services.

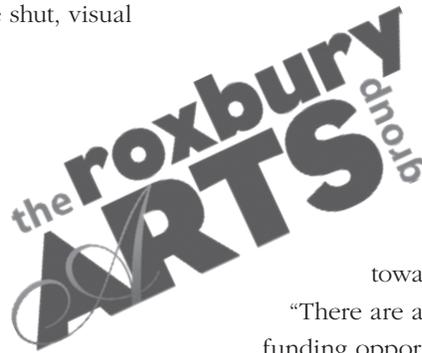
Responding to all that need has increased the Humane Society's costs. So a \$10,000 operating grant from the Community Foundation came as a big relief. "Most of that money will pay for medical expenses for our animals," says Insinga. It will also go toward the special cleaning products that keep kennels disease-free.

"The grant money from this Foundation was essential because it was basically to keep us going and maintain our animals," Insinga says.



Another \$10,000 grant, to the Roxbury Arts Group in Roxbury, N.Y., lent support to artists whose "gig work" has dried up due pandemic-related closures. These could be musicians and actors whose performing venues have shut, visual artists suddenly without galleries, arts teachers who can't give lessons, sound engineers whose film work has dried up, or artists in many other situations.

"In response to COVID-19, a number of resources were available for families and small businesses," says Jenny Rosenzweig, executive director at the Roxbury Arts Group, which presents programs and also provides services to artists and arts organizations. But gig workers and artists have often fallen through the cracks. Many artists are themselves entrepreneurs, she notes, although they're not always eligible for programs that help small businesses.



The Roxbury Arts Group used the Community Foundation grant to establish the Delaware County Creative Economy Relief Fund, which disbursed \$200 payments to qualified artists, based on a short online application.

Since, obviously, \$200 goes only so far, the Roxbury Arts Group has also been pointing artists toward other sources of support.

"There are a lot of discipline-specific funding opportunities," Rosenzweig says.

Some recipients have used their Relief Fund grants to catch up on bills. Others have used it to better adapt to the COVID era.

"Artists who were selling in a gallery are using this money to open online stores. One person has used it to take an online class about how to teach online courses," Rosenzweig says. "Some are really thinking about the future, and how to parlay the money into getting prepared for the new now."

Revised Approach *(continued from page 1)*

Foundation invited nonprofits to apply for help in responding to the pandemic or riding out the lockdown and financial emergency. To speed things up, we provided a shorter, more streamlined alternative to our usual grant application. A version of that form could become our standard application in the future.

Many of the grants that emerged from these efforts went to groups that are meeting an increased need for food aid—Meals on Wheels, Catholic Charities, the Food Bank of the Southern Tier, the Broome County Council of Churches, Broome-Tioga BOCES, numerous churches and many more. We helped buy PPE for nonprofit organizations, including child care centers. We also helped keep health care facilities in Broome County stocked with masks, gowns and other protective equipment.

Some nonprofits received operating expenses to help them stay afloat during the emergency. We also funded

child care programs in Broome and Chenango Counties. And we hired four arts councils—the Earlville Opera House, the Broome and Tioga County Arts Councils and the Roxbury Arts Group—to assess the pandemic-related needs of arts organizations. That information will inform a future grant cycle.

Micro grants went to many libraries and also to historical societies, art galleries, community centers and small nonprofits such as the Waterman Conservation Education Center in Apalachin, the Franklin Stage Company in Franklin and the India Cultural Centre in Vestal. Those requests required just a simple, one-page application.

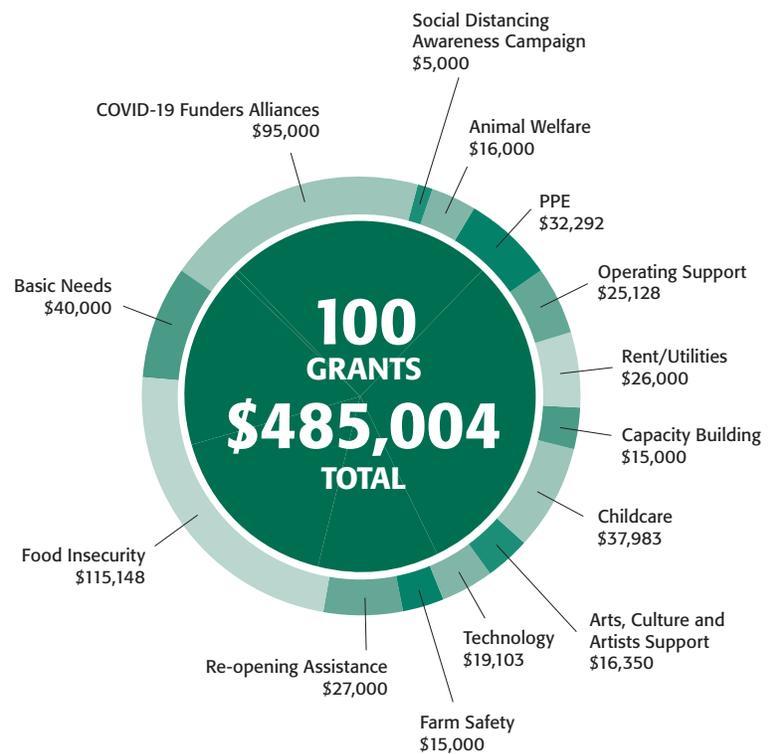
To fund all this support, the Foundation drew about 2 percent more than usual from our endowment and also drew from various special funds as appropriate. Some sponsors of our Women’s Fund 2020 annual breakfast—which the pandemic forced us to cancel—kindly allowed us to redirect their donations to COVID relief.

We asked donor advisors if we could redirect some of their money as well. Two of our donors were especially generous, providing \$20,000 each.

To keep nonprofits up to date on information and resources during the pandemic, the Foundation established a Facebook group called “CNY

Organizations Respond to COVID-19.” This has continued to draw much interest and participation.

As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, the Community Foundation stands ready to provide all the help we can to keep our communities safe, healthy and intact.



New Fund *(continued from page 1)*

community development liaison at Visions Federal Credit Union and a member of the Foundation’s Young Professionals Advisory Committee, who is working with Riley and Foundation staff to get the fund started.

Jasper says she hopes the fund will support grass roots organizations dedicated to promoting racial equity. But it could also help other organizations—such as libraries, historical societies, or groups that serve children—that have broader missions but can do good work for racial equity, she says. “Perhaps it’s a project that would serve the Black community specifically, but is no

different from the work they’re already doing.”

While the Foundation makes plans for the new fund, we continue working in other ways to become a more diverse, inclusive and equitable organization. At the start of 2020, we reconstituted the panels that recommend grants to the Board, achieving greater variety in race, ethnicity, age and socio-economic status. We have also been updating the Foundation’s policies and procedures, looking for opportunities to improve.

Achieving diversity, inclusivity and equity is an ongoing journey, but we hope we’ve made a constructive start.

The Community Foundation for South Central New York serves Broome, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego and Tioga counties.

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The Foundation Welcomes Our Newest Board Member, Dr. Tomás Aguirre



Dr. Tomás Aguirre

received his BA from the University of Texas at Austin and both his Master's and Doctorate degrees from the University of Southern California. He has worked in higher education for almost 20 years. He is a strong advocate for community service and social justice and has volunteered with the YMCA, Make a Wish Foundation, and Special Olympics, to name a few. When he is not at work or volunteering

We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Tomás Aguirre, vice president for Student Life and chief diversity officer at SUNY Delhi, to the Foundation's Board of Directors and to our *Racial Justice and Equity Fund* advisory board. Dr. Aguirre

in the community, he enjoys spending time with his partner (Cara) and three school age children, Diego, Zavi and Paloma. They love living in the Catskills and enjoy spending time outdoors hiking, kayaking, skiing, fishing, sailing and camping.

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