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Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation Announces New Rapid Response and Recovery Fund Grants for Local Nonprofits

(January 3, 2022) – The Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation (OPRFCF) today announced its latest round of Rapid Response and Recovery Fund grants, totaling \$50,000 for five nonprofits in the western Cook County region.

“As we close in on two full years of the pandemic, our communities still face significant challenges,” said Tony Martinez, Jr., president and CEO of the OPRFCF. “Government funding for personal protective equipment (PPE) is no longer available, leaving childcare facilities to struggle with added expenses to keep children and employees safe. In addition, mental health remains a pressing concern, especially for our region’s children and young people. This most recent round of grants will help childcare centers maintain a COVID-safe environment, and provide support for organizations that offer mental health services.”

The following organizations have been awarded grants in the latest round:

- Austin Child Care Providers Network
- Hephzibah Children’s Association
- The Nehemiah Community Project
- NAMI Metro Suburban
- YEMBA, Inc.

“Clearly, we have all been impacted by this unprecedented disruption in our lives, but evidence shows that our youth are suffering greatly from the isolation, lack of social engagement and general uncertainty,” said Chris Chambliss, CEO and executive director of the Nehemiah Community Project. “This pandemic has our young people resorting to engaging in unhealthy coping — even reckless behaviors. More than ever before, our youth need support. Not a ‘cookie-cutter’ answer but an evolving, multi-layered, thoughtful approach that is tailored to the individual. We’re trying to bring it home and help them where they are.”

The Rapid Response and Recovery Fund was created in March 2020 with a seed investment of \$50,000 from the Foundation to provide desperately needed dollars to agencies fighting to provide daily, ongoing support to our most vulnerable neighbors: those struggling with food insecurity, permanent housing, and health concerns. In addition, the fund is combating the socioeconomic inequities exacerbated by this virus, and is supporting the mental health and physical safety of all our community members. The fund has received more than \$1.2 million in donations since its inception, and has given grants to 65 organizations in the community.

Individual, family and corporate donors contributed generously toward this vital effort — including almost \$40,000 raised by the 700 Block of Bonnie Brae’s LemonAid charity drive, which selected the fund as its beneficiary in 2020, and over \$500,000 in a match challenge by longtime Oak Parkers Ken and Patty Hunt. The fund also received \$250,000 from the Illinois COVID-19 Response Fund.

“These grants could not have happened if not for the heartfelt generosity of so many community members,” said Martinez, “We are eternally grateful to everyone who has contributed to this fund.”

To support the Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation and its work on behalf of the community visit oprfcf.org or call 708-848-1560.

About the Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation

Founded in 1959, The Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation has built lasting, impactful connections among area residents and locally-based service programs. Today as an integral presence in the community, the Foundation’s mission is to unite community members and mobilize resources to advance a racially just society and equitable outcomes for residents of Oak Park, River Forest and surrounding neighborhoods in western Cook County. Learn more about the Foundation’s programs and services online at oprfcf.org.

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