



## NEWS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **GULF COAST, BARANCIK FOUNDATION LAUNCH COVID-19 RESPONSE INITIATIVE**

#### **Joint Effort Will Leverage Additional Donor Gifts to Strengthen Region's Key Health and Safety Organizations Amid Coronavirus Crisis**

VENICE, FL (March 24, 2020) — Gulf Coast Community Foundation and Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation have introduced a philanthropic initiative to fortify key health and safety organizations in the region amid the growing COVID-19 crisis.

The foundations announced their [joint effort](#) on Saturday with total commitments so far of \$1.5 million to support the initiative. They positioned the funding as a challenge to Gulf Coast donors and other philanthropists in the community to match that amount.

“Philanthropy must be a leader in complementing governmental responses to this crisis,” said Mark S. Pritchett, president and CEO of Gulf Coast Community Foundation. “Our nonprofit partners count on us, especially in times of unforeseen challenge, and we are counting on our donors to lean in right now too.”

The foundations’ COVID-19 Response Initiative aims to support lead health, human-service, and safety organizations facing increased demand for services right now and in the coming months. Working together, the foundations will strategically deploy funding to give strained organizations immediate relief while also helping to build their long-term capacity to continue providing vital safety-net support.

“Our Board views this as an investment in shoring up the systems and relationships we have already built,” said Teri A Hansen, president and CEO of Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation, which held an emergency board meeting to commit \$500,000 to the initiative. “We want to make sure that our region’s coordinated systems for things like hunger relief, homeless services, and mental healthcare can withstand the added burdens that are sure to come.”

Jon Thaxton, a senior vice president at Gulf Coast Community Foundation who is directly overseeing the initiative for Gulf Coast, was quick to note that the uncertainty of the escalating pandemic means the foundations' response will evolve too. "Initially, we anticipate investing in the strong partners and existing safety-net systems we have in place in our community," Thaxton said. "However, we must remain flexible and nimble so we can adapt our approaches to meet newly emerging needs."

One area where the foundations anticipate added challenges for public and nonprofit agencies is the sheer number of residents who may seek assistance for the very first time. Besides the direct health impacts of the coronavirus, the containment strategies necessary to control its spread are already affecting everything from employment and financial security to childcare and feeding availability. "We expect to see many community members who have never turned to a nonprofit for help before," said John Annis, Thaxton's counterpart at the Barancik Foundation. "Guiding them to assistance that's available and making sure they can navigate the system will be crucial services in and of themselves."

Foundation leaders stressed that this new initiative should not divert direct charitable giving to other community organizations during the crisis. "We need our donors to continue supporting their favorite arts and cultural organizations, animal shelters, and other programs, even as we invite them to help us strengthen the social safety net for those most vulnerable to COVID-19's devastating impacts," said Gulf Coast's Pritchett. "This is a time when we are urging our donors to *do more* if they are able to do so."

Donors with charitable funds at Gulf Coast Community Foundation are encouraged to use the foundation's online [donor portal](#) to direct a gift from their fund to the initiative. Other community members who would like to make a donation may visit [GulfCoastCF.org](http://GulfCoastCF.org) and click "COVID-19 Fund."

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#### **About Gulf Coast Community Foundation**

For 25 years, together with our donors, Gulf Coast Community Foundation has transformed our region through bold and proactive philanthropy. Gulf Coast is a public charity that was created in 1995 through the sale of the Venice Hospital. Since then, we have become the philanthropic home of nearly 1,000 families, individuals, organizations, and businesses that have established charitable funds here, and together we have invested over \$360 million in grants and initiatives in the areas of health and human services, civic and economic development, education, arts and culture, and the environment. Learn more at [GulfCoastCF.org](http://GulfCoastCF.org).