

Southcoast Health makes a donation to address food security for New Bedford and the Southcoast

This holiday season will look and feel different this year due to the pandemic, but it hasn't changed the holiday spirit for one local company – Southcoast Health. Knowing that they would be unable to host traditional holiday activities for staff, employees were surveyed in November to decide how to best use the funds designated for these activities. In an overwhelming majority response, employees opted to donate the funds to local charities including United Way of Greater New Bedford.

“I am so proud that Southcoast staff have elected to make meaningful contributions to important not-for-profits whose work in the region is all about equity and empowerment,” said Keith Hovan, Southcoast President and CEO. “This year, in addition to our annual grants and charitable efforts, we will make significant donations to organizations like the United Way. During a public health crisis that has further devastated underserved families who were already facing deeply challenging circumstances due to social influencers of health like food scarcity, a lack of access to quality education and economic opportunity, and homelessness, their efforts are more important than ever.”

Southcoast Health announced they would donate a sizeable donation to United Way's Hunger Commission to help those on the Southcoast struggling with food insecurity. This donation comes as the region faces a surge in COVID cases putting more people in difficult situations. The Greater Boston Food Bank reports that 1 in 8 residents and 1 in 6 children are struggling with hunger in Massachusetts due to the challenges

being faced by COVID-19, this is up from 1 in 13 residents and 1 in 11 children last year.

“We are at a point in time where food security is at the forefront of concern for so many local families,” said Michelle N. Hantman, President & CEO of United Way of Greater New Bedford. “Many of them are still out of work or working reduced hours and they are being forced to make difficult decisions between feeding their families and putting a roof over their heads. This donation from Southcoast Health will assist many local families facing these tough decisions.”

Due to the increase in need this past year, United Way’s Hunger Commission took the lead in food security in the region by seeking out new partnerships to obtain more food for residents. This past year, the Hunger Commission delivered over 1.2 million pounds of food to local food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelter – up 269% from 2019.

Earlier this year, the Southcoast Cares program sponsored United Way’s Mobile Market in Wareham to increase access to free, fresh produce for residents in struggling with food security in the area. Southcoast employees also volunteered during these markets, handing out produce to 1,244 individuals.

“Our Southcoast Cares program enables us to deliver on our mission of providing health services that extend beyond direct patient care, addressing emerging needs in the community,” said Rachel Davis, Southcoast Director of Community Benefits. “The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated longstanding food insecurity across our region, and we are honored to have the opportunity to support community partners like the United Way. We’re grateful for their commitment, especially during these challenging times, to delivering critical resources to those most in need.”

Over the past 9 months, Southcoast Health and United Way of

Greater New Bedford have been on the forefront of the pandemic and will continue to take the lead in their respective areas in order to keep the Southcoast safe, healthy, and have their most basic of needs met in the year ahead.