United Way of Greater New Bedford establishes “Help United,” COVID-19 response fund to assist residents effected by the Coronavirus

In Greater New Bedford, residents are already feeling the impact of COVID-19. Many local businesses have closed or moved to reduced hours, workers are either out of work or struggling to find child care, and schools have been closed until May. It’s an uncertain time and many are finding themselves in financial situations where they have to choose between food, rent and/ or medication.

United Way of Greater New Bedford is stepping in to help, and the City of New Bedford is actively supporting the effort. United Way has established the Help United – Greater New Bedford COVID-19 Response Fund to assist residents affected by the Coronavirus. This fund will provide cash assistance to out of work service workers and retired or out of work seniors over 65 in the Greater New Bedford area.

“United Way is no stranger to helping those in most need in our community. We have been working around the clock to ensure people have what they need during this difficult and uncertain time,” said Michelle N. Hantman, President & CEO. “We’ve set up the Help United Fund to assist residents financially and our Hunger Commission is making sure local food pantries are well stocked.”

The Help United Fund is the only local fund being endorsed by the City of New Bedford and Mayor Jon Mitchell.

“The Covid-19 pandemic has abruptly turned upside down the

lives of many of our fellow residents of Greater New Bedford, some of whom will not be eligible for federal relief. It is with them in mind that United Way launched this fund," said Mayor Jon Mitchell. "I encourage everyone in our region to step forward with whatever you can afford in support of our friends and neighbors."

Mayor Mitchell has appointed Christian Farland as Chairman of the Help United Response Fund. Mr. Farland is a professional civil engineer and the founder and President of Farland Corporation, Inc., a site contracting company specializing in residential and commercial site development, and the President of Thompson Farland, Inc., a civil engineering land surveying company.

"The impact of the Covid-19 crisis on our community is unprecedented," said Farland. "As a business owner with deep ties to New Bedford, I am increasingly concerned for the service workers in our cities and towns, laid off or working reduced hours that compromise their ability to provide for their families. I am confident in United Way of Greater New Bedford's ability to effectively raise and designate resources to those in need, and proud to support this effort."

You can make a donation to the Help United Fund by texting HELPUNITED to 313131 or visiting unitedwayofgnb.org.

"We aren't sure how long our community will be impacted by the coronavirus, but the more donations we receive, the longer we will be able to support residents and keep them in their homes," said Hantman.

Those looking for assistance from the fund can review the guidelines and apply at unitedwayofgnb.org/help-united.

In addition to the financial assistance to residents, United Way's Hunger Commission continues to deliver food to pantries in Greater New Bedford. Restaurants with food they are unable to use are encouraged to donate their food to the Hunger

Commission by calling 508-994-9625.Those looking for food assistance should visit unitedwayofgnb.org to see an up-to-date list of open pantries and their hours.

Anyone with questions regarding COVID-19 should dial 2-1-1 to get information. Mass 211 is a 24/7, free, confidential hotline that provides information on local resources. 211 has been designated by the Department of Public Health to answer your questions. Mass 211 is funded by local United Ways.