

For Immediate Release

Southwest Montana COVID-19 Response Fund Requests Show Need for Mental Health and Well-Being Support for Community

May 19, 2020 – Bozeman, MT – The Southwest Montana COVID-19 Response Fund was created as a joint effort between the Greater Gallatin United Way (GGUW) and the Bozeman Area Community Foundation (BACF) to streamline support and focus it to the areas of our region that need it most at this time. Initially, organizations were applying to the fund for help in providing basic needs – food security, rental assistance, and shelter. The fund has seen a shift in requests reflecting a greater need for mental health services and a focus on maintaining the general well-being of the populations being served.

Over \$104,000 (out of \$334,000 grant awards allocated) from the Response Fund, has been invested for specific mental health and counseling needs as well as programs to provide increased emotional support related to COVID-19. These organizations' work revolves around supporting the mental health and well-being of members of our community. They are seeing increased demand for their services and they are making adjustments to how they deliver their services. These organizations include Bozeman Help Center, HAVEN, ASPEN, Intermountain Deaconess Children's Services, and Women In Action. You can see a complete list of awards and recipients [HERE](#).

"Help Center 211 has seen a 49% increase in the need for services since COVID arrived in Montana," reports Christina Powell, Executive Director, Help Center, Inc. "Initially, callers were in need of access to support for their basic needs and financial assistance. However, we have seen a shift over time to more contacts from people who are in crisis or need strengthened emotional support. Providing crisis services that encompasses the ever-changing landscape of COVID-19 is challenging but we are so grateful for the privilege to be allowed to serve our communities."

Other requests and awards have been made to help organizations provide increased emotional support to the populations they serve due to COVID-19. For example, given the increased risks and vulnerabilities of their residential clients, REACH Inc. needed to invest in technology to help keep their clients connected with their families and other resources, reducing their anxiety and sense of isolation during this unprecedented time of social distancing.

Another group that received support from the COVID-19 Response Fund is Roots Family Collaborative, a group that supports mothers before, during, and after the birth of a child. Already an emotional time for many women, the added isolation brought about by the stay-at-home order and the anxiety around contracting the virus have made Roots' resources even more vital.

"While the Fund initially focused on ensuring that the basic needs of those most vulnerable could be met, we knew that there would be many ways the pandemic, social distancing, and shutdown orders would impact our community as the situation evolved," explained Jennifer Lammers, President of the BACF board of trustees and a member of the COVID-19 Response Fund's donations steering committee. "The mental health and well-being of all community members is so important and essential to our region's ability to weather the various phases of this ongoing storm and recover strong. We knew we had to provide funding for these essential services."

The donations steering committee will continue to monitor changes in community needs, with a commitment to providing meaningful support as long as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are felt in Southwest Montana. At this time, the identified needs are greater than the funds raised to date. Individuals interested in contributing to the Southwest Montana COVID-19 Response fund can do so at, SWMontanaCOVID-19ResponseFund.org.

If individuals or families require emergency food, housing, transportation, financial or other social assistance, they should call 2-1-1. The 2-1-1 hotline is an information and resource line and crisis response call center answered by Bozeman Help Center for calls made in the Southwest Montana region. Referrals to the appropriate source(s) of assistance will be made. Call center data will be monitored to understand trends in current needs, which will assist us on funding allocation decision-making.

###

About SW MT COAD

Officially founded in June 2018, the Southwest Montana COAD (Community Organizations Active in Disasters) is an association of local organizations assisting our communities to be mobilized and prepared for disasters including the COVID-19 pandemic through coordination, preparation, education, and implementation serving Gallatin, Madison, and Park Counties.

Find us online on Facebook (Southwest Montana COAD), Instagram (@SWMTCOAD), and Twitter (@SWMTCOAD).

About Greater Gallatin United Way

Greater Gallatin United Way's mission is to mobilize the caring power of our communities. We empower donors, volunteers, businesses, governments, nonprofits, and community groups to invest in neighbors and improve quality of life for everyone in Gallatin, Madison, Meagher and Park Counties. Working together, we identify the community's most critical needs and implement collaborative, innovative solutions. Learn more at www.greatergallatiunitedway.org.

About the Bozeman Area Community Foundation

Established in 1998, the Bozeman Area Community Foundation is connecting people who care to causes that matter most to them. The Bozeman Area Community Foundation serves the areas of Bozeman, Big Sky, Belgrade, Manhattan, Churchill, Three Forks, and the rural areas in between. Since its inception, the Foundation has distributed more than \$4.3 million dollars to 194+ local nonprofit organizations. Learn more at www.bozemanfoundation.org.

For COAD media inquiries, please contact Rachel Allen at SWMTCOAD@gmail.com.

For media questions about the SW Montana COVID-19 Response Fund, please contact Danica Jamison, President and CEO, Greater Gallatin United Way at 406.451.1343 or covid19@greatergallatinunitedway.org OR Bridget Wilkinson, Executive Director, Bozeman Area Community Foundation at 406.587.6262 or covid19@bozemanfoundation.org.