



# Community Voices, Community Connections

## Regional Funders Unite to Give over \$6M for Rapid Response in Pierce County

As the public health response to COVID-19 in Pierce County escalated Friday, March 13, United Way of Pierce County and Greater Tacoma Community Foundation partnered for an aligned philanthropic response to emerging community needs. Together, they launched the [PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED](#) fund, seeded with \$750,000 from GTCF. GTCF committed another \$1 million in matching dollars for regional funders joining in the effort.

*Since the launch, 220 regional foundations, business, and individuals have donated a combined \$6.7 million.*

The Russell Family Foundation committed \$1 million to the fund. "The Russell Family Foundation has been investing in Pierce County for over 20 years," said **Holly Powers, TRFF Senior Program Officer**. "This moment calls for a bold response to support our most vulnerable community members experiencing food insecurity, housing instability and other impacts from COVID-19. We are confident these

funds will be rapidly deployed for the greatest needs through the PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED Fund."

**Todd and Teresa Silver share why they joined the fund**, "There are so many moving parts and roles to be played during this crisis that it needs a collaborative effort. The Pierce County Connected fund provides us an efficient way to invest in our community's needs rapidly with breadth and depth. We so appreciate the expertise that is being brought together and know that it will leverage every dollar to maximum impact."

PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED funding partners are committed to delivering rapid funding to



*PHOTO: Members of Tacoma Rescue Mission's Search & Rescue team prepare to deliver food and supplies to local residents experiencing homelessness (via Tacoma Rescue Mission)*



**PIERCE COUNTY  
CONNECTED: COVID-19  
EMERGENCY RESPONSE  
FUND**



organizations in a way that supports their continued services to vulnerable populations with the fewest barriers possible. Funding requests are being reviewed weekly, and as of April 24, \$2.6 million in rapid relief funding has already gone out to support over 70 organizations in Pierce County providing services that meet urgent health and basic human needs due to COVID-19.

**Sue Potter, Executive Director of Nourish Pierce County Food Bank**, shared the dramatic rise in need they're seeing, "In 2019, 66,000 Pierce County residents visited a Nourish Food Bank at least one time. This represents 7% of the county population. As this current health crisis negatively impacts the economy, more and more people need us. Businesses are shutting down temporarily or permanently causing the state unemployment numbers to increase by 3,500% over last year. Our neighbors are going to need help and we want Nourish to be there for them. We know we will be seeing record numbers. We are preparing for a tidal wave."

In the City of Puyallup, a sudden surge of persons experiencing homelessness led the City to mobilize resources to create a Temporary Emergency Location (TEL). **Brenda Fritsvold, Public Information Officer for the City of Puyallup**, "We know that persons who are homeless are at special risk of sickness and infection. The temporary emergency location includes a hand washing station, which is critical for maintaining good hygiene to ward off highly communicable diseases such as COVID-19.

Additionally, the temporary emergency location requires that all tents and vehicles be situated at a distance from each other. As we've seen, severely curtailing social contacts helps deter the spread of COVID-19. The temporary emergency location allows this distancing to occur not just by offering the physical space needed, but also by providing essential basic facilities and meals on site."

**Our Sisters House (OSH)** is a victim service agency with a primary focus of serving the African American victims of domestic violence. **OSH Executive Director, Kelli Robinson, MBA**, "Over the past few weeks, we have seen not only an increase in the number of victims reaching out, but the needs are becoming greater and more complex. We are scrambling to find safe housing, we have had victims who have fled their abusers and now living in their cars and unable to go to with family

members and friends due to everyone being isolated and not wanting to be exposed to COVID-19.

"OSH continues to work 5 days a week, with all advocates working remotely. All staff are able to take calls, complete intakes, and work with clients as needed. We have also posted flyers in all the local grocery stores because we feel when victims are able to get out it is the grocery store and want to make sure information is posted that includes our phone number, website, and hours available. Victims can access OSH by our website 24 hours a day and there is an escape button in case the abuser happens to walk in or tries to track browsing history."

As regional funders unite through **PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED**, individual donors can make a difference for their communities during COVID-19 by contributing in any way they can. **Kathi Littmann, President/CEO, GTCF**, "There's an enormous need right now, more than any single entity can meet. If you can, this is the time to give. Give directly to the organizations and causes that matter to you. They need your support. Give to **PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED** to ensure rapid funding is delivered to the organizations in Pierce County meeting the crisis for health and human services during COVID-19."

Donors can make a significant impact during this by giving directly to the organizations and causes that matter to them. GTCF's Philanthropy Team is available to support fundholders in fulfilling their philanthropic goals by offering insight and guidance around the most pressing needs and organizations providing services.

To support rapid response funding for urgent human service needs in Pierce County due to COVID-19, donate to [\*\*PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED\*\*](#).



## Pierce County Connected Spotlight: Working Together To Feed Our Neighbors

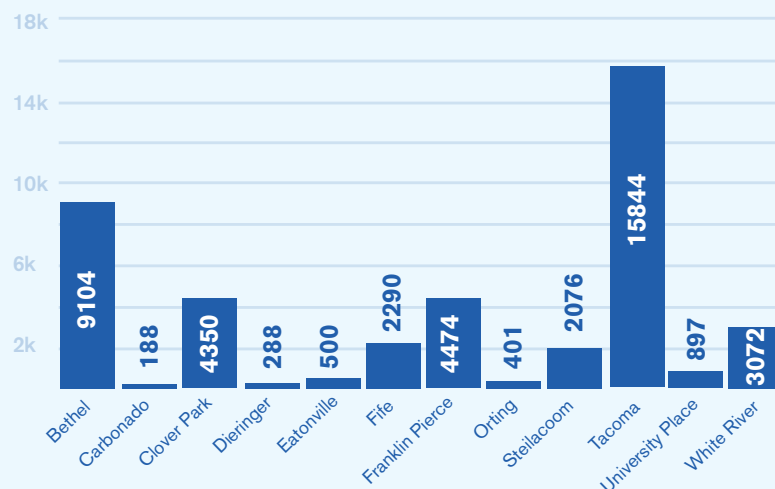
### The Need

Even before COVID-19, food access was an area of need for many Pierce County residents. 1 in 7 adults and 1 in 5 children in our community are food insecure, and over 60,000 students in Pierce County receive free or reduced-cost meals at school.

*"This community has always worked together in creative and unconventional ways, and it's in moments like this that we see that paying off."*

That need is now projected to more than double as a result of lost wages and jobs due to COVID-19 and health measures to mitigate its spread. Based on United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates, Pierce County food pantries could see 732,000 visits per month during peak need, up from a normal monthly average of 114,618. "We're seeing a lot of new, first-time clients at our locations", said Claire Bunker, Grants & Communications Manager at [Nourish Pierce County](#). "You can feel the sense of urgency. Some of them never thought they would have to rely on the food bank."

Local schools are seeing evidence of the increased need for food as well. According to Leeda Beha, Child Nutrition Services Director at [Bethel Schools](#) the number of meals



*Data shared by Mary Tuttle, Metro Parks, showing the number of meals served at school districts across Pierce County on one day last week.*

served through the district's [Meals in Motion](#) program has jumped from around 3,500 meals a day when it launched on March 14, to over 9,000 meals a day last week. "There are more people out of work now and they need to make choices about how to spend their money. If they can access food for free, they can use what money they have to meet other needs."

As the need increases, local food banks are trying to increase their inventory as well. [Emergency Food Network](#), a local nonprofit that provides 14.4 million pounds of food annually to food pantries, hot meal sites and shelters across Pierce County, has dramatically ramped up their buying; already exceeding their annual purchasing budget in the past four weeks alone.

According to Emergency Food Network CEO, Michelle Douglas, purchasing food in this economy is more difficult than it sounds. "Buying food right now is like trading on the New York Stock Exchange. The available supply is lower than normal, and everyone across the country bidding on it." Michelle says the available supply is not going to be enough to meet the demand over the next few months. "No system is designed to meet this need. We are all going to need to think outside the box to work together for a solution."

While the need is great, Michelle says she's inspired by the way she has already seen individuals and organizations

stepping up to address it. “This community has always worked together in creative and unconventional ways, and

it's in moments like this that we see that paying off.”

## How You Can Help

### VOLUNTEER

Food banks rely on volunteer support to maintain their day to day operations, however, due to current health conditions many regular volunteers are unable to help. According to Claire from Nourish Pierce County “a majority of our volunteers are over 60 years old, and, based on recommendations from the CDC, are staying at home to safeguard their health.” While the National Guard has stepped in to help at all 26 Nourish locations, many other local food banks and mutual aid collectives are still in need of volunteers.

[United Way of Pierce County](#) is also hosting this [volunteer connector page](#) that provides a list of volunteer opportunities at food banks across the county. Tacoma Mutual Aid Collective is also accepting volunteers [through this intake form](#).

While most school districts are currently unable to accept volunteers due to health requirements, there may be a need for help in the summer months when many of the food service employees are not contracted to work.

### GIVE

Making a financial donation is the most effective way to support hunger relief during this time, and there are many ways you can give.

- Give directly to your local food bank ([find a food bank near you](#)).
- Give to a larger organization like [Nourish Pierce County](#) or [Emergency Food Network](#) who support countywide food operations.
- Give to the [Washington Food Fund](#) to support food access on a statewide level.
- Give to the [Pierce County Connected Fund](#) to support food access and other urgent COVID-19 related needs in Pierce County.

### ADVOCATE

May is Hunger Awareness Month in Pierce County, and Emergency Food Network is asking residents to do at least one thing to help increase food access locally. In addition to volunteering, here are a few ways you can get involved:

- Keep SNAP benefits up so people can shop at grocery stores

- Continue advocating for the [Washington Food Fund](#)
- Support agriculture, farmers and all those who help provide food
- Continue advocating for more relief for hospitals, small business, and nonprofits
- [Find contact information for your state and federal representatives](#)
- Participate in the 40th Annual Emergency Food Network Hunger Walk & 5K – May 2, 2020

Based on the stay at home order from the Governor's office, Emergency Food Network has transitioned its annual Hunger Walk to a [Virtual Hunger Walk](#). This year's event is taking place on May 2, and instead of gathering everyone in one location, they will walk from their own homes and neighborhoods. You can register to participate in the [Virtual Hunger Walk here](#).

- Plant a Victory Garden With a shortage of food in the system, one way to help is by creating new food sources. Many local families have already started their own gardens and are donating a portion to local food banks. More people growing own food also decreases the demand from grocery stores and food banks. Emergency Food Network is also sharing vegetable starts from their [Mother Earth Farm](#). You can pick them up at the farm or at many of their partner food banks.
- Share Gratitude

Food Bank Staff, School Nutrition Staff, and numerous volunteers are on the front lines every day working long hours and potentially putting their own health at risk to make sure everyone has access to the food they need.

Whether it's making a card, a banner, a social media post, or just saying “Thank You” let all these essential food workers know how much we appreciate the work they are doing to help ensure everyone in Pierce County has access to food in this time of need.

Further requests for funding to are now being accepted. Details are available at [GTCF's website](#).

Donations to the PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED Fund can also be made by [contacting GTCF's Philanthropy Team](#) or through [United Way of Pierce County's website](#).



## Local Organizations Encourage 2020 Census Participation While Responding To Covid-19

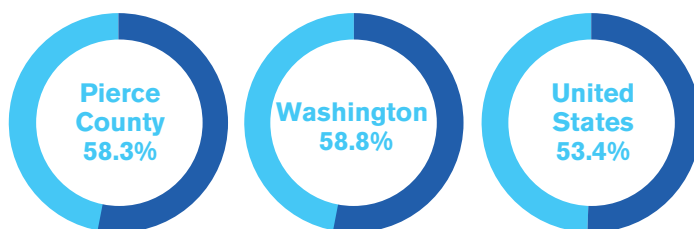
Since December 2019, [more than 40 organizations received funding](#) for census outreach through GTCF, thanks to a grant from the State of Washington Office of Financial Management. In response to COVID-19 and the challenges it presented to outreach, GTCF received an additional \$857K from the Office of Financial Management to support rapid response census outreach efforts in Pierce, Kitsap, and Mason Counties. All organizations funded in the first round of 2020 Census Community Grants received additional funding. Five new coalitions and one new organization also received census outreach funding.

**Here are some creative ways 2020 Census Community Grant recipients have encouraged census participation while responding to community needs due to COVID-19:**

- Raising Girls handed out 1200 hygiene kits for young girls and boys with census inserts
- Emergency Food Network is putting food inserts in all of their food boxes
- Puyallup Watershed Initiative, in collaboration with VT Radio Universal, is hosting bilingual digital radio programming encouraging census participation

Even with shelter-in-place orders in effect, many individuals and families have already completed their forms.

### 2020 CENSUS SELF-RESPONSE RATE (AS OF APRIL 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2020)



If you haven't submitted your census response form yet, there is still time. There are only 10 questions on the form, and completing it online takes about 10 minutes. Responses can also be [submitted over the phone](#), or [mailed in](#) for those who received a form in the mail.

**Complete the census form online** ➔

**Find out more information  
about 2020 Census** ➔

# CARES Act



## Charitable Giving Incentives From The Cares Act

COVID-19 and the necessary public health measures to address it are having a huge impact on the normal operations of nonprofits and community service providers in Pierce County and across the country. From shutting down operations to the sudden surge in need for vulnerable communities, nonprofits were not able to plan for or prepare to address these rapid changes through their usual services.

Supporting basic needs, like food and shelter, is harder as necessary public health measures lead to business shut-downs, layoffs, reduced volunteer staff, and greater restrictions due to social distancing. Meanwhile, the need for these basic supports is rapidly increasing. Many nonprofit organizations, including arts and culture venues and youth programs, are unable to operate at all under the state's stay-at-home order.

Donors can make a positive difference at this time by giving generously to the organizations and causes that matter to them.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, signed into effect on March 27, provides both financial relief for nonprofits and increased charitable giving incentives for individuals and corporations.

### Charitable giving incentives include:

#### A one-time, above-the-line deduction for cash charitable contributions of up to \$300

- + All taxpayers are eligible to take the deduction, even people who use the standard deduction.
- + The incentive applies to contributions made in 2020 and can be claimed on tax forms next year.
- + The new deduction does not apply to noncash gifts or to gifts contributed to donor advised funds.

#### A temporary increase of income limits for cash contributions by individual and corporate donors

- + Individual taxpayers who itemize their deductions can deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income (AGI) in cash contributions (raised from 60%).
- + Corporations can deduct up to 25% of taxable income (from 10%).

#### Waivers for 2020 required minimum distributions (RMDs)

- + Under the new rule, in 2020 you don't have to take a RMD which could reduce your 2020 tax bill.
- + Even though RMDs are waived, you can still use your IRA to get a tax break on giving to charity.
- + If you normally give to charity, consider a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your IRA. The funds are directly transferred from your IRA to a charity and excluded from income.
- + Only IRA owners and beneficiaries who are age 70 1/2 or older qualify for this.

Donations to the [PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED Fund](#) qualify for the additional deductions. You can also support the Fund with a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA, if you are age 70.5 or older.

As always, donors should consult with their tax and legal advisors when considering their charitable giving.

GTCF is ready to support donors in fulfilling their philanthropic goals with timely information about local COVID-19 responses and emerging needs. [Contact GTCF's philanthropy team](#) to learn more about making a positive impact right away.



## Every Adult Can Build Youth Resilience And Help Students Thrive

*(This story was originally published on February 13, 2020).*

During the end-of-school hustle and bustle on a recent afternoon at Tacoma's Reed Elementary School, a group of students gathered around Gary Lowery. He sat on the steps of a stage in the cafeteria strumming his guitar. After playing a couple tunes of his own, Gary passed the guitar around the circle and let each of the students try playing it. "They just love it," Gary said. "Some of them really get into it and start singing away."

*"...the way they show up and interact with kids can set a tone that creates a sense of belonging, safety and confidence that our students need to thrive."*

Gary clearly has a special rapport with the students, but he isn't a classroom teacher or an Expanded Learning provider. Gary is the school's afternoon custodian. He says the guitar playing isn't really part of his job description, but he's noticed that it helps create a sense of calm, especially in that transition time for kids who participate in the

after-school programs. "I saw one student who was having a rough day and I thought if I played, maybe it would help him chill. Next thing I know, I hand him the guitar and he holds it on his lap and starts strumming. It really did calm him down. Ever since then, all he wanted to do was play guitar."

Gary is an example of how school employees who work in a capacity often referred to as "support staff" can also play an important role in helping students learn and grow. "Whether it's a bus driver, front office staff, kitchen staff, or recess supervisor, the way they show up and interact with kids can set a tone that creates that sense of belonging, safety, and confidence that our students need to thrive," said Fahren Johnson, GTCF Whole Child Senior Program Officer. "Our goal with the Whole Child partnership is to create a seamless current at each school, where every adult on campus is connected and working together to support our kids throughout the day in and out of the classroom."

*“These relationships buffer children from developmental disruption and help them develop ‘resilience’ or the set of skills needed to respond to adversity and thrive.”*

Kathy Kiser, a Child Nutrition Cashier at [Sheridan Elementary](#), agrees that even the small interactions with students can make a big difference. Kathy only sees students for a few minutes each day, but she makes a point to greet them by name as they come through the lunch line, often asking them to “pay” for their food with a smile. “They’ll hand me their card and I’ll say, ‘Where’s your smile?’ or ‘Happy Wednesday, you’re halfway there!’ Just something to cheer them up; especially when I can tell they’re having a bad day. I think that’s something that can carry over into their next class or hopefully the rest of their day.”

*“I just want them to see that there are adults they can trust and come to for help when they need it.”*


Research shows that the connections Kathy and Gary have fostered with students can actually make a life-long impact. A [2015 report from the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child](#) explains that children who do well despite serious hardship have had at least one stable relationship with a supportive adult. “These relationships buffer children from developmental disruption and help them develop ‘resilience’ or the set of skills needed to respond to adversity and thrive.”

Back at Reed, Gary sees the importance of these relationships he’s built with students as well.

“I see what kids have to go through now compared to when I was a kid. It’s scary. I just want them to see that there are adults they can trust and come to for help when they need it.”



**The Tacoma Whole Child Partnership is a community-wide effort to ensure every child is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Greater Tacoma Community Foundation, Tacoma Public Schools, and numerous community partners are working together to expand this partnership by providing aligned, equitable, high quality social, emotional, and academic development opportunities to students in and out of school.**



# Boris And The Enduring Impact Of Endowments

At 34 years old, [Boris](#) the polar bear is believed to be the oldest male polar bear in the world. Boris has lived over half of his life at Tacoma's [Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium](#), where he found a safe, caring home after being rescued from a tropical circus.

From special vitamins and foods to medical treatment and companionship, Boris' long life is supported by his expert keepers and veterinarians at the zoo. To ensure that superlative treatment is possible for generations of animals to come, animal care for endangered species at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is supported, in part, by endowed funds.

*“An endowment is relatively easy to set up but has an impact that extends well beyond a person’s lifetime to leave an enduring legacy”*

Endowments are charitable funds invested and managed over time, generating earnings that are distributed annually to a donor's chosen organizations or causes.

[The Zoo Society](#), a 501c3 supporting the mission of Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium in Tacoma, receives funds from four endowments through GTCF. “Those endowments benefit animal care and our mission of saving species at risk of becoming extinct,” said Ruthann Howell, executive director of The Zoo Society.

“Endowments are vital to nonprofits,” added Ruthann, “Of course, we love support now, but when people give knowing their support will continue past their lifetimes, it is an altruistic, selfless act of giving.”

*“Endowed funds are managed to last forever – and serve the community forever.”*

One of the GTCF endowments that benefits the Point Defiance Zoo is the Charles Matejka Legacy Fund. A Navy veteran, Chip was a friendly produce staffer at a Lakewood grocery store. Helpful but reserved, Chip was also a shrewd investor. When he was diagnosed with late-stage melanoma, he had an estate worth more than \$2 million. Chip passed away in 2008, leaving a legacy fund at GTCF that provides annual gifts to many local nonprofits, including The Zoo Society.

“An endowment is relatively easy to set up but has an impact that extends well beyond a person’s lifetime to leave an enduring legacy,” said Robin Callahan, GTCF vice president of Philanthropic Services. “Endowed funds are managed to last forever – and serve the community forever.”

Boris the polar bear leads a peaceful life at Point Defiance Zoo, full of salmon treats and excellent health care. Point Defiance Zoo staff biologist Sheriden Ploof described Boris this way, “He has good days and slow days. Sometimes he’ll be out playing in the pool for way longer than Blizzard, and other days he’ll just decide to stay in his den or nap on the sun porch.”

Boris may not realize that he’s set a world record, far outliving the median life expectancy of 23.4 years for polar bears. Thanks to the care of his keepers and veterinarians, if Boris keeps on beating the odds his legacy may last as long as the endowed funds supporting animal care at the zoo.

**To learn more about establishing an endowment to support the causes you care about, [contact GTCF’s Philanthropy team](#).**

## Upcoming Virtual Fundraisers

**May 2, [Virtual Hunger Walk & 5K - Emergency Food Network](#)**

**May 15, [Virtual Breakfast from Home - Neighborhood Clinic](#)**

**May 21, [Elevate Emerging Leaders Digital Fundraiser - Degrees of Change](#)**

**Ongoing Event - [Empowering Youth Tacoma - College Success Foundation](#)**