

## April 2<sup>nd</sup> Update

I hope you are all well and safe. I know for me, the past three weeks have been a blur of Zoom calls and late nights but I want to let you know that we are making real progress in providing relief to not only the students that PCF always served but to their families and others in our community who truly need our help. There is a Zoom meeting for 2 pm tomorrow for the official update. For those who are unable to attend, here's a short status update:

### Fundraising

We have raised over \$90,000 as of this afternoon through donations from over two hundred people. We only received coverage from local media yesterday (<http://www.towntopics.com/wordpress/2020/04/01/princetons-response-mounts-as-coronavirus-cases-continue-to-grow/>) so this is a tremendous start! The donors are our neighbors and friends as well as people who love Princeton from afar. The donations have ranged from \$10 to \$10,000 so they reflect a commitment to help from a wide range of people in Princeton. I am optimistic that our momentum will continue with this lift from the local media as well as support from all of you with your outreach efforts.

We received notice yesterday that we won a grant from PACF through their COVID emergency relief fund. They are unable to tell us the amount of the award at this time but indicated that we can expect to receive it in our bank account within the next 2 weeks. We have been able to partner with the Housing Stability Coalition which is a network of organizations providing rental and utility assistance during typical times. During this crisis, they are committed to share in the determination awards with us as much as they can through their respective benevolence funds. The outreach to local landlords has seen some early success. We are asking them to be part of solution with us and forgive 50% of the rent. As part of our process, we are having landlords sign a letter indicating that they are forgiving half of the current month's rent. We will provide a copy of these signed letters, as well as copies of the payments, to the applicants with their approval determination letter so they have it for their records. The copies will also serve to let them know that they are valued and supported by their landlord – we expect it will be a welcome message at this difficult time. As an aside, the CERF determination awards do not affect any Public Charge Factor Tests.

### Applications

We have a team of primarily dual language speaking social work /social service workers who are contacting applicants to gather missing information, clarify the specifics of the financial assistance needed, and ensure we have the correct payment information. We have a training manual in place so we can all work together remotely and fill in for one another at a moment's notice, should the need arise. We have over 40 applications so far and we expect that number to grow considerably in the next 2 weeks as rent and utility bills come due. At this time, denials have been limited to applicants who do not reside in Princeton or for whom Unemployment Insurance Benefits were available.

### Reasons to H.O.P.E. (Help One Person Every day – according to PCF's secretary, Shazia)

We are not alone in our efforts. There are helpers from other local organizations as well as national think tanks that have reached out to offer their support. This [article](#) from the New York Times today is authored by the leader of one of those groups and I've clearly repurposed her headline as my subject line. We had a call this evening with New America and were able to hear their suggestions. They have a national platform and may be instrumental in helping push our model out to other cities as well as share learnings from other cities to help us along. We are not only helping Princeton and we are not alone in helping in Princeton!

I am grateful every day for the work you have all contributed to this effort, and for your encouragement. PCF had an infrastructure that was virtual and inexpensive and sustained by volunteers. We took that system, made a few tweaks to redirect it toward this effort, and with your support didn't miss a beat in serving economically disadvantaged people in our community. For those who did not know us before, thank you for your faith in us, your willingness to cooperate and work together, and most importantly your steadfast dedication to our shared goal of keeping Princeton intact.

We find out who we are at difficult times. I have been blessed these past three weeks to find out who some of you are too and learn how many wonderful people surround me. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for embarking on this journey at this time. If we don't speak on the call tomorrow, enjoy your weekend (yes, it's Thursday!) and let's talk soon.