

May 12th, 2020
For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE

Over \$70K Contributed to Local COVID Crisis in South Okanagan

A partnership between the Community Foundation of the South Okanagan Similkameen (CFSOS), United Way Southern Interior BC (UWSIBC) & Valley First, a division of First West Credit Union, has granted over \$70,000 to projects and programs directly dealing with the COVID-19 Crisis.

“Since launching the Community Response Fund partnership in March, we have received a tremendous number of applications for the fund from organizations working with groups who are directly affected by COVID-19 and are doing front line work in the terms of food security, housing, mental health and well-being, and safety,” said Aaron McRann. “We also received applications from organizations who are facing financial strain from having to shut their doors, a decline in donations, and lost fundraising opportunities to support operations,” said McRann.

After launching a combined application on the CFSOS website, the group expedited the grant review process and came to an agreement on the most pressing charities and causes to fund in phase 1 of the Community Response Fund. These included food banks, meal programs, family services, mental health and addiction programs.

“During times of dire need and crises, it is more important than ever for us to come together to most effectively meet the needs of the people and communities we serve,” says Kahir Lalji, Executive Director of United Way SIBC. “I would like to acknowledge all partners who have contributed to making these supports available during this time, and to all those who continue to provide essential frontline social and community services.

“It is our collective responsibility to ensure that those facing heightened and deepened unignorable issues get the help they need. I implore everyone to spread their local love a little bit more where possible to ensure we emerge stronger and healthier together,” added Lalji.

“There is strength in numbers and this is a perfect example of that. In order to support the sustainability and, in some cases, increasing need for organizations that are providing some of the most critical services in our communities, we are pleased to create a funding partnership with the United Way and the Community Foundation of the South Okanagan Similkameen,” said Paulo Araujo, President of Valley First. “We are all in this together, helping our members and our communities thrive.”

Funding has been approved for the following South Okanagan/Similkameen agencies:

Canadian Mental Health Association- SOS
Desert Sun Counselling
Ooknakane Friendship Centre
Penticton Soupateria
Pathway's Addiction Resource Centre

Princeton Foodbank
Princeton Family Services
St. Vincent de Paul Food Bank
School District 67- food for school families
South Okanagan Immigrant Society
Starfish Backpack Program

“We are proud to collaborate with UWSIBC and Valley First to provide direct and immediate support to these local organizations in the South Okanagan Similkameen who are dealing with the fallout from COVID19,” said McRann. “The Community Response Fund is also a way for donors and interested citizens to pool their donations to make a bigger impact in their community,” added McRann.

To learn more about the community efforts to support the charitable and non-profit sector during COVID-19, please visit each of our websites:

Community Foundation of the South Okanagan | Similkameen: www.cfso.net/covid19/

United Way Southern Interior BC: www.unitedwaysibc.com/covid-19

Valley First: www.valleyfirst.com/covid-19

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