



Leveraging Long-Standing Relationships to Address Urgent Needs



● Ann Murtlow led United Way of Central Indiana in identifying the area's urgent needs and distributing funds to community organizations such as the Edna Martin Christian Center (top) and Gleaner's Food Bank (opposite) in the early months of the pandemic.

As orders to shutter Indiana schools and businesses and curtail large gatherings took hold in March 2020, community human services organizations were quick to realize what the COVID-19 restrictions would mean to clients. Their swift, organized response meant myriad Hoosiers had more to eat, kept roofs over their heads and were able to regain a semblance of normal living, including helping children continue their education and adults return to work.

With the pandemic surging across the nation, the Endowment on March 13 helped launch the Central Indiana Community Economic Relief Fund (C-CERF) with a \$15 million grant. Joining in the new fund were the Central Indiana Community Foundation (through the Glick Fund and The Indianapolis Foundation), Eli Lilly and Company Foundation, Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation and United Way of Central Indiana (UWCI), which administered C-CERF.



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— United Way of Central Indiana President and CEO Ann Murtlow

Donations from those funders and others surpassed \$23 million, which was distributed to nearly 200 community organizations during the first four months of the pandemic.

“Our coalition of funders was in daily communication with community leaders across Central Indiana to assess the emerging needs of residents and direct service providers arising from the pandemic,” explains UWCI President and CEO Ann Murtlow. “With this information, we were able to quickly make grants to organizations that provided a range of support and services to address the critical needs of those most negatively affected as the pandemic evolved and before government funds became available.”

A few weeks later, the Endowment expanded its support for basic pandemic-



BASIC NEEDS



related needs statewide through a \$30 million grant in early April to Indiana United Ways, the statewide professional association of United Ways and United Funds. Like C-CERF, the funding was designed to help social service and other agencies respond to the basic needs and critical challenges posed by COVID. Indiana United

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Ways spread the funding to 55 grantees covering the 86 Indiana counties not served by UWCI.

At the same time, the Endowment granted an additional \$3.5 million to UWCI to support basic needs efforts in Boone, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks and Morgan counties, which UWCI serves in addition to Marion County.

Both Gleaners Food Bank and the Midwest Food Bank received several rounds of C-CERF support in the spring and summer to help feed the growing number of people who needed food assistance. In October, Gleaners also received a \$1.3 million Endowment grant to expand its refrigeration storage capacity, which enabled the organization to provide more fresh food to Hoosiers.

In all, Endowment grants provided funding to more than 100 United Ways and community foundations across Indiana, which in turn supplied direct aid through various charitable organizations and ultimately to tens of thousands of individuals and families struggling with the economic effects of the pandemic.

Well-established relationships and systems of support with member United Ways throughout the state enabled Indiana United Ways to channel Endowment funding to organizations within a few short weeks, recalls Maureen Noe, who in 2020 led Indiana United Ways as president and CEO.

- Maureen Noe led Indiana United Ways in distributing grant money to struggling Indiana communities.

“We are very honored and grateful to support Lilly Endowment’s vision to help meet the needs of Hoosiers who otherwise would continue to struggle,” Noe says. “It’s just a real gift to be in this role and to be trusted to be good stewards.”

One of the pivotal organizations receiving funding was Edna Martin Christian Center, which has served the Martindale-Brightwood area of the near eastside of Indianapolis for 80 years.

A multi-service community center providing food, medical care and mental health referrals among other services, Edna Martin was led by a new president and CEO, Barato Britt, who had begun his tenure in January, just about the time the virus was discovered in the United States.

“It was baptism by fire,” Britt recalls with a laugh.

In April, a C-CERF grant of \$250,000 helped Edna Martin absorb the initial shock of the pandemic rippling through the neighborhood.





In June the Endowment granted Edna Martin \$674,000 for infrastructure and staffing support that primarily helped the organization work with clients to process applications for federal CARES Act rental assistance through the city of Indianapolis' IndyRent program. IndyRent doubled Edna Martin's geographic footprint, enabling the nonprofit to alert new people to the services it offers.

In August, the center significantly bolstered e-learning sites, employing staff to support students as they grappled with online learning. The effort complemented Edna Martin's strong out-of-school programming and enabled overwhelmed parents to return to work.

"I don't know if any of us were prepared to support students here in an e-learning environment" Britt recalls, noting that students who normally attended school now gathered at Edna Martin for e-learning. "We were able to adapt. We could not have done this without Lilly Endowment.

"The Endowment was really proactive," Britt says. "The way they invested in agencies like ours enabled us to focus on what we do best."

● Edna Martin Christian Center was able to expand staffing to become a K-12 e-learning site and also help adults apply for rental assistance.