Focusing in on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

This country is reeling from two horrible diseases: a worldwide viral pandemic that is ravaging our community, and a national disorder of racism that tears at the very fabric of our souls. Systemic racism continues to contribute to the growing inequities in our communities. We are suffering in our hearts for Black lives lost, for Black lives disregarded, and for Black lives without opportunity.

LVCF stands united with those calling for racial justice and access to the same freedoms for all people, and we recognize that change begins within. We have taken these past few weeks to pause, to listen, to reflect, and to begin taking action.

First, LVCF’s Board of Governors has committed to continuing the organization’s diversity, equity, and inclusion journey, including the adoption of a set of guiding principles. Second, we have reaffirmed our support of nonprofits that are on their own diversity, equity, and inclusion journeys by continuing to include DEI in our nonprofit effectiveness grant platform. Third, we formalized our support of the United Way’s Fund for Racial Justice & Equity to partner with our community to continue efforts to seek solutions to systemic racism. We have been exploring our role in community conversations on race, and we have begun hosting important entry points to this discussion.

Most importantly, as a funder and a steward of philanthropy, we recognize that we are in a position of power and privilege. We must do more heavy lifting to shift dynamics and achieve change. We have begun to ask ourselves: What barriers might be within our processes that need to be broken down to better partner with more diverse organizations, more leaders of color, and our communities of color? How do we formally apply an equity lens to all that we do? How do we use our voice as a community leader to amplify those who need to be heard? These are hard questions to answer, but we commit to having the critical conversations and reflections that are needed to make change within and throughout.

When partnering with organizations, we value those with a culture of learning and continuous improvement. We hold ourselves to this same standard as we seek wisdom from others, while taking responsibility for educating ourselves and our stakeholders. We will continue to share developments with you as we take action as a learning organization, growing and evolving during these challenging times.

We must stand together, plan for our shared future, and strive to improve the quality of life for all.

In solidarity | Lehigh Valley Community Foundation Staff
COVID-19 Response Fund Grants Support Update

The LVCF fund first supported the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley initiated Lehigh Valley COVID-19 Community Response Fund, a regional, coordinated effort to rapidly deploy resources to community-based, front-line nonprofit organizations in the region.

In addition to contributing to the regional fund, LVCF’s Fund has and will continue to make grants outside of the regional effort’s scope, both are important factors to our region’s recovery.

Round One Grants

The regional partnership of funders distributed over $320,000 to 43 nonprofits providing food, shelter, healthcare, income supports, and other essentials to our neighbors who live paycheck to paycheck, who are elderly, who have disabilities, or who are youth, among other vulnerable or marginalized populations in our community. LVCF contributed $50,000 to this round. The organizations included a mix of those who focus on one service and those who offer multiple services. See the list of grantees at https://tinyurl.com/LVCFC19.

Round Two Grants

During May, the regional partnership of funders distributed $120,000 to 18 Lehigh Valley nonprofits. While food and housing access and income supports remained a top priority, special consideration was given to organizations that focus on mental health or substance use, as well as organizations led by Black Individuals or People of Color. LVCF contributed $30,000 to this round. In this round, grant amounts ranged from $2,500 to $15,000, with almost $50,000 in total. See the list at https://tinyurl.com/LVCFC19.

Round Three Grants

Funding for phase 3 will be distributed over the summer with a focus on advancing racial justice.

Round Four Grants

The ongoing fourth and final phase of funding will engage community and nonprofit leaders in a co-design process of reimagining the Greater Lehigh Valley nonprofit sector to address community needs in the response and recovery from COVID-19. So far, LVCF has directed $90,000 to this innovative approach and is co-leading the effort with the United Way. More news will follow in the coming weeks. so please stay tuned!

We thank the nonprofit sector for their leadership and commitment during this difficult time of uncertainty. We’re here to answer your questions and to discuss issues related to COVID-19. Contact Megan Briggs at meganb@lvcfoundation.org.

LVCF Workshop Series to Focus on Anti-Racism and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Lehigh Valley Community Foundation will hold, Choosing a Path for Anti-Racism in the Nonprofit Sector, a three-part introductory workshop series that will give those working at nonprofits space to reflect, dialogue, process and move to action within a peer learning community. The workshop is co-sponsored by Humanitarian Social Innovations, and planned in collaboration with the Volunteer Center of the Lehigh Valley.

The three part series will be facilitated by Erica T. Mahady, Illumination Consulting Partners.

The series will provide the following:

- Shared language for discussing racial equity, biases and how to facilitate these difficult conversations.
- Frameworks and tools to understand how to respectfully enter into Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work for transformational change.
- Guidance on how organizations can make a commitment and concrete plans for dismantling racism within the organization and in the larger society.

The three part series will be offered in two separate cohorts during Tuesdays and Wednesdays in the first three weeks of August.

For more information and to register via EventBrite, please click here.

Thank you to our co-sponsor Humanitarian Social Innovations.