



United Way
of the Coastal Empire

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**UNITED WAY OF THE COASTAL EMPIRE ACTIVATES COVID-19 RAPID RESPONSE FUND
AND CALLS FOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

SAVANNAH, GA (March 24, 2020) – United Way of the Coastal Empire has created a fund to support local residents financially impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. This fund will be used to help families retain stable housing by assisting with rent, mortgage, and utility payments when grace periods are not offered and to provide financial assistance for additional critical needs such as medical expenses and child care.

"It's easy to feel overwhelmed in the face of this pandemic, but you can do something to help. By donating to United Way's COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund, you are providing resources that others desperately need to stay afloat," said United Way Board Chair Toby Moreau. "United Way has been serving the needs of the community through good times and bad for over 80 years. Our staff and volunteer leaders are committed to doing our best to support our United Way agencies and helping those most in need through this crisis."

Brynn Grant, President and CEO of United Way of the Coastal Empire, added, "In our four-county region, many of our friends and neighbors are living paycheck to paycheck – with 23.7% of total population in Bryan County, 25% in Chatham, 24.6% in Effingham, and almost 36% in Liberty County considered Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed or ALICE*. As governments, schools, and businesses respond to public health recommendations to close or limit operation, many people have already or will lose their jobs and will experience extreme financial challenges. This is the workforce that lifts our economy. These are our neighbors."

United Way of the Coastal Empire is releasing \$80,000 to get started and asking the community to help by making donations. The COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund will address the emerging needs of households that struggled to afford the basics even before the pandemic. The fund will help to ensure the stability of the region's social service infrastructure and close gaps in needed assistance in the near-term for fragile households in poverty and those living paycheck to paycheck.

"ALICE families are those in our society most uniquely vulnerable to the impacts of illness and economic disruption. Through our county offices and 211 call center, we are connecting those most in need with resources that can help them," Grant said. "I don't think there has ever been a time when community support has been

more widely needed, not in my lifetime. We are already getting urgent calls for help, and this emergency fund is a starting point. We ask individuals and corporate partners to join us to help as many people as we possibly can.”

United Way Rapid Response Fund will provide financial assistance to:

1. Residents of Bryan, Chatham, Effingham, and Liberty Counties
2. Residents who are not able to pay all or part of their monthly rent, mortgage, or utility bill(s) due to financial hardship caused by COVID-19. This could be due to temporarily increased expenses or decreased income.

Some documentation is required, and residents must meet eligibility guidelines. Apply by calling United Way of the Coastal Empire offices:

- Bryan County residents, call 912.651.7750
- Chatham County residents, call 211 or 912.651.7730
- Effingham County residents, call 912.826.5300
- Liberty County residents, call 912.368.5300

For more information about COVID-19 Rapid Response eligibility guidelines, visit uwce.org/211 or call 211. United Way 211 is available Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 5 pm. Temporary weekend hours will be added, beginning March 28th.

United Way is actively seeking grants and additional contributions from individual donors and corporate partners to serve more people impacted by COVID-19 crisis. 100% of contributions made to the Rapid Response Fund will be used to meet the fast-emerging critical needs in our community. To give, visit uwce.org/rapidresponse or text UWCOVID19 TO 41444.

United Way of the Coastal Empire staff is working remotely and taking any necessary meetings by appointment only. Services such as the United Way 211 help line, Landings Military Family Relief Fund, and more remain available.

For more information, visit www.uwce.org.

*Source: United For ALICE Research Center – National Comparison <https://www.unitedforalice.org/national-comparison>

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About United Way of the Coastal Empire

The mission of United Way of the Coastal Empire is to improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities.

United Way conducts an annual fundraising campaign and invests donor contributions in programs and services within three impact areas: Education, Financial Stability, and Health. United Way serves Bryan, Chatham, Effingham, and Liberty Counties.

United Way is a volunteer-driven organization that involves hundreds of community leaders, professionals, and other volunteers in every aspect of our business, including fundraising, marketing, and funding decisions, to ensure that donors' donations are truly making a difference.

Thanks to the Herschel V. Jenkins Trust Fund and other income, which covers almost all administrative and fundraising costs, donor contributions go to help people in need.

For more information, please visit uwce.org.