



WICHITA
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION



2021

Stronger Together

Community > Crisis



A Stronger Wichita, Together

Generous donors, organizational partners and the broader community joined forces to support our city.

IMPACT AT-A-GLANCE

\$1,074,000

committed to pandemic relief efforts

313 donors

contributed to COVID-19
response related funds

692 grants

to Wichitans, nonprofits and
businesses impacted by COVID-19

When the world shifted, our community responded

Protective gear for healthcare workers, shelter for our neighbors, lunch meals for students learning remotely and emergency support for local nonprofits. The list of needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic goes on—and keeps growing—for so many in our community.

Fortunately, so does the generous spark of Wichitans.

In 2020, the Wichita Community Foundation, alongside donors and committed local nonprofits, found the collective courage to meet this hardship head on.

After all, when the place we call home is faced with crisis, community foundations like ours are uniquely positioned to act swiftly and meet the ongoing needs of our city.

Thanks to the hundreds of philanthropic Wichitans who've entrusted resources to WCF, we were prepared to mobilize relief funds, activate recovery efforts and catalyze change as a united force.

In the following pages, you'll read stories that show our community's generosity and the ways we came together to support Wichita in some of our most significant COVID-19 relief efforts. That generosity is clear in the \$1.07 million committed to pandemic relief through WCF.

Even while the Foundation's total assets reached a record \$105 million in 2021, we continue to grow the charitable muscle for our community needs. WCF is grateful to partner alongside you, the trailblazers, to re-focus and drive forward solutions that will propel Wichita forward.



Together, We Mobilize

Nonprofits responded swiftly during this crisis, adapting to meet urgent needs and assisting the most vulnerable. Here are highlights of three local organizations that received support from WCF's Emergency Fund.

Photos courtesy
of Real Men
Real Heroes



Shifting to fill the school meal gap

When Wichita Public Schools announced they would be canceling in-person classes the remainder of the spring 2020 semester, students faced the loss of school-provided meals. Without missing a beat, Real Men Real Heroes (RMRH) swiftly took action to fill this critical gap.

“We were thinking of ways to be of service to the kids that we work with,” said RMRH Executive Director Kyle Ellison. “We wanted to make sure they had all the best tools possible while learning from home.”

Equipped with a WCF Emergency Fund grant to buy Personal Protective Equipment, RMRH safely ventured through the community every week to deliver school supplies and snack packs from the Kansas Food Bank to USD 259 kids in need.

Food delivery is not a usual service of RMRH, a mentoring program empowering youth to help build strong communities, but serving youth has always been at the heart of their goals. The nonprofit was able to shift their mission to distribute 400 lunches and school supplies.

“I remember when we rang the doorbell to deliver three snack packs... and six kids opened the door,” said Ellison, who highlighted the value of the meals and how it provided for other younger children living in the household. “It was a small way to help these families. The Emergency Grant allowed us to be able to do that.”

RELIEF FUNDS

Stand with Wichita Fund

in partnership with
The Salvation Army

514

families helped

WCF Emergency Fund

55

nonprofits helped

WATCH STORIES OF OUR GRANTEES

Scan the QR code with
your phone camera



In March 2020,
the Wichita Police
Department reported a:

65%

rise in aggravated
assaults

39%

rise in aggravated
batteries compared to
the same three-week
time period in the past
three years



Photo courtesy of Wichita Family Crisis Center

Addressing the shadow pandemic: domestic violence

When the pandemic began, a stay-at-home order followed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. But, what happens when home isn't safe?

"In the middle of March during lockdowns, our 24/7 hotline went completely silent," said Wichita Family Crisis Center (WFCC) Executive Director Amanda Meyers. "It was terrifying. We quickly realized people were quarantined at home with their abusers."

With an influx of women and children seeking a safe haven and social distancing guidelines in place, WFCC pivoted to find alternative housing spaces for victims. One unique challenge the agency faced was the cost of more hotel rooms to shelter survivors.

To help WFCC overcome this barrier, WCF immediately deployed an Emergency Fund grant. The investment provided extended-stay hotel rooms to those needing to escape a violent environment.

"The grant we received from the Foundation went directly to sheltering our clients safely off site," said Meyers. "In the first six weeks, we were able to help 100 survivors and their children."

The pandemic was a stark reminder of domestic abuse happening behind closed doors. No less than the battle against COVID-19, the battle against the shadow pandemic of domestic violence is certain to be an ongoing one.

"The Foundation and donors recognized this was a crisis and their gift was efficient, effective and life-saving in the moment," said Meyers.

Play time re-imagined

Playgrounds are a fundamental part of the childhood experience and contribute to their overall health and well-being. When Heartspring had to quarantine children to their residential homes on-campus, questions regarding the playground emerged. How would students unwind and play at recess when they're required to stay six feet apart?

“Our staff knew they needed to separate kids in houses, but they also knew kids were kids who needed to play,” said Heartspring Senior Director of Development and Advancement Stacie Williamson. “When the Wichita Community Foundation reached out to help, that was one of the first prompts to compile our wish list.”

With a grant from WCF's Emergency Fund, Heartspring invested in fencing to re-imagine play time. The portable fence created outdoor zones for each child in every home to safely play while following COVID-19 protocols. As time allowed, the fencing boundaries widened and were eventually placed around Heartspring's brand-new playground.

Heartspring was also able to purchase iPads for their residential school program. The iPads helped teach the adjusted curriculum and allowed kids to video conference with family members while the campus did not allow visitors.

“Receiving funds for fencing and iPads allowed children to continue to connect with one another and with their family members,” said Williamson. “We were able to keep the numbers of contamination down but also allow them to be kids.”



*Human services
is a focus of our
philanthropic agenda*



Photos (including cover) courtesy of Heartspring



Together, We Exemplify Strength

Organizations are tirelessly working to fulfill critical missions that recover and strengthen our community. Learn how three grant-supported nonprofits responded to the changing and growing needs of those they serve.

Marty Miller, Botanica executive director and Shelly Prichard, WCF president and CEO



Wellness initiative creates relaxing space for frontline heroes

Worldwide, people are stressed and worn out by the pandemic. The physical and mental strain has been especially grueling for frontline personnel who work tireless hours and provide care for COVID-19 patients.

This concern ignited Botanica staff to brainstorm garden activities that help individuals decompress and destress. It sparked a focus on providing relief to frontline workers, an idea from City of Wichita Mayor Brandon Whipple. Inspired by the concept, WCF financially supported an initiative allowing healthcare heroes to visit the gardens at no cost through September 2021.

“We received positive messages of people appreciating the recognition of the stressors that were out there,” said Botanica Lead Garden

Ambassador Janet Lyda. “Throughout the last couple of months, I saw people stopping and participating in the breathing exercises and meditation activities in our gardens.”

Botanica’s Wellness in the Gardens, funded by WCF, consists of stations that include a walking program, self-guided meditation and yoga, nature journaling and wellness Wednesday activities. The initiative provides an opportunity for healthcare workers and the community to immerse in nature and find time for reflection and rejuvenation.

“We served nearly 3,500 frontline workers since the program was initiated in March (2021),” said Lyda. “The program is a good fit for Botanica and for the community.”

TOP 4
mental health
symptoms of
healthcare workers
during COVID-19

93%

STRESS

86%

ANXIETY

77%

FRUSTRATION

76%

BURNOUT

Source: Mental Health America survey, June 2020 – Sept. 2020



Vaccine outreach focuses on Hispanic community

As the COVID-19 vaccine rolled out in early 2021, local health clinics strived to make the vaccine as visible and convenient for hard-to-reach populations. However, certain groups were not getting access to vaccines.

“We saw there was a niche (population) in the Hispanic community that wasn’t being reached as much,” said Guadalupe Clinic Executive Director J.V. Johnston.

According to the U.S. Census, 76,500 Hispanic and Latinos are living in Sedgwick County. Johnston says the language barrier that exists in many of these households is the biggest challenge to getting them vaccinated. This need inspired Guadalupe Clinic to launch a COVID-19 vaccination campaign in Spanish.

Supported by a grant from WCF’s Emergency Fund, the “Encuentre su razón para vacunarse” campaign, which translates to “Find your reason to get vaccinated,” aimed to inform Latino families of the vaccine and encourage them to get vaccinated.

“Nearly 65% of the patients we serve are Hispanic,” said Johnston. “It naturally made sense to do this bilingual campaign.”

Operated for 35 years, the clinic’s deep roots in the Hispanic community serve as a source of information they can trust. Johnston says this long-standing relationship, word of mouth and flexible clinic hours allowed Latinos to be more receptive to vaccines.

“We’re over 4,200 vaccinations now,” said Johnston. “The grant supported the people who aren’t seen ... dishwashers, cooks, maids, construction workers ... but it also served the whole community.”



Photos courtesy of Guadalupe Clinic



Health is a focus of our philanthropic agenda

Uniting efforts to better serve women in Wichita

Two female-focused nonprofits that have co-existed in Wichita for 20 years combined efforts to efficiently meet the needs of women in the community.

“It was a year of gathering data before we decided to merge with Dress for Success in December 2020,” said Amber Beck, the Wichita Women’s Initiative Network (WIN) executive director. “We felt we could better serve our clients by merging. It was about bringing both programs together to truly help the women of Wichita.”

WIN provides domestic violence advocacy coupled with transitional employment opportunities. Dress for Success (DFSW), a worldwide brand, provides tools for women to gain economic independence.

A grant from WCF’s Magnify Fund covered the legal fees to merge the organizations, allowing WIN and DFSW to affiliate swiftly and efficiently without impacting services. The two now operate under the same roof, with a shared mission to empower women to thrive in work and in life.

“Because of the gift, we were able to cover the costs of the merger,” said Beck. “We’ve been able to really strengthen the services in our programs and create a better continuum of care for women in Wichita.”

DONATE TO OUR LOCAL NONPROFITS

Scan the QR code to give to the Emergency Fund



Photos courtesy of Women’s Initiative Network





Together, We Revitalize

Creating partnerships that support creative individuals
and small businesses.



Arts/culture is a focus of our philanthropic agenda

WHEN THE MUSIC STOPPED, THEY PLAYED ON

How does a performing arts organization stay connected to its community when doors are closed and performances are canceled?

That question faced Music Theatre Wichita when COVID-19 brought its theater performances and arts education to a halt in March 2020.

Managing Director Angela Cassette credits a stabilization grant from WCF and the Knight Foundation’s COVID-19 Connection Fund with helping Music Theatre Wichita reach socially distanced people—many hungry for fun and connection during the pandemic. The Fund’s support gave the organization an opportunity to monetize content and create higher quality deliverables. Music Theatre Wichita, in partnership with the Wichita Orpheum, hired local company Digital Brand ICT to produce two alumni concerts.

“Members of our newly formed Spotlight Society valued this kind of personalized, high-quality content,” Cassette said.

In addition, the partners filmed an hour-long holiday special, which aired on KPTS in December. This project reached a record 21,052 households, double the audience size compared to Music Theatre Wichita’s most attended show in 2019. In May 2021, the holiday special was nominated for a Heartland Emmy® Award.

In spite of a canceled 2020 season, followed by a modified 2021 season, season ticket holders remain loyal. Fewer than 10% of households have requested season ticket refunds during the two years.

“Retaining such a high volume of theater supporters is not accidental,” said Cassette. “We believe the grant and the projects enabled by these funds were instrumental in Music Theatre Wichita’s successes.”

**CREATE A
LASTING IMPACT
WITH WCF**

Scan the QR code
to learn more about
legacy giving



*The holiday special was
nominated for a Heartland
Emmy® Award. Photo courtesy
of Music Theatre Wichita.*



COVID-19 CONNECTION FUNDS

Business Support Program

Downtown Wichita partnered with local professionals to provide assistance to small businesses that were suffering as a result of COVID-19. These services included law, accounting, human resources and marketing.

18

downtown businesses supported

\$27,000

awarded

Wichita Creatives Emergency Relief Fund

Supported independent artists, musicians, performers and individuals who work in a creative capacity and were impacted by COVID-19.

105

artists/creatives/musicians supported

\$52,500

awarded

UPLIFTING LOCAL ARTS AND BUSINESSES

Philanthropy is no stranger to supporting economic development, community revitalization, and arts and culture entrepreneurship. This form of philanthropic activity was critical in 2020 when shutdowns were necessary to limit the spread of COVID-19 and many small businesses felt the strain.

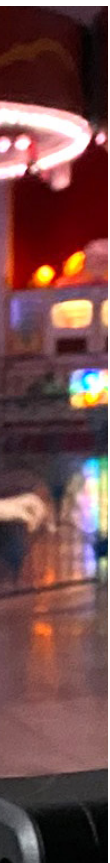
To revitalize small, downtown-based businesses and arts and culture entrepreneurs, WCF partnered with the Knight Foundation to create the COVID-19 Connection Fund, which focuses on:

Organizational information needs

Relief support for previous grantees with a focus on downtown revitalization

Technical funding for nonprofits and small businesses within the downtown and surrounding areas

From the outset and throughout our efforts, we engaged with local organizations to award the grants highlighted to the right. Key insights and knowledge of local small business activity and the creative community played a vital role in our giving strategy.



WICHITA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
NEWS WORKSHOP



Together, We Are Catalysts

At the heart of WCF is a strong focus to address changing community needs and issues that donors seek to support.

ADVANCING OUR COMMUNITY

Scan the QR code
to learn about our
strategic initiatives



SHAPING THE FUTURE OF WICHITA

Community needs evolve over time. To respond to these ever-changing priorities, the Foundation serves as a vehicle to spearhead the most pressing community issues, now and in the future.

In 2012, WCF made a shift, moving from transactional – multiple, small-sum grants – to transformational – large, systemic change grants built on funder and grantee partnerships. This strategic decision narrows the focus of giving and places an emphasis on significant investments to further the growth of our city.

Unrestricted funds play a major role in our forward-thinking grantmaking strategies and allow us to be unusually nimble and proactive for a local philanthropic organization. This flexibility enables the Foundation to support long-term solutions, respond quickly to emergencies such as the pandemic and meet changing needs in our community.

In fact, much of WCF's support for COVID-19 relief efforts were made possible by reallocations of Fund for Wichita programs. This fund, formerly called our Unrestricted Fund, needed a more appropriate name that reflects the impactful work it has allowed WCF to do. The Fund for Wichita mobilizes resources where they are needed most in our community today, tomorrow and the future.

WCF is grateful to work with fellow Wichitans to activate long-term initiatives that will improve the quality of life and shape the future of our region for years to come.

Currently, Fund for Wichita grants are being directed to three focus areas:

1

News and Information

2

Nonprofit Development

3

Talent Ecosystem

RAISING THE BAR ON LOCAL NEWS

As a result of the Foundation’s work with Focus Forward, there’s a concerted effort to frame local news as a public good - a new target for philanthropic giving and a must-have for our community to consume accurate and timely information. That effort has never been more crucial than today, in the midst of a pandemic and misinformation surrounding the COVID-19 vaccine.

The News and Information Fund at WCF supports the creation of a more informed city through strengthening the local news ecosystem. Several WCF initiatives have already made an impact in hyperlocal news:



Wichita Journalism Collaborative

The Collaborative includes 10 media and community partners working to collaborate, facilitate audience engagement initiatives and push the boundaries of traditional delivery platforms. Since launching, partners have published several in-depth stories covering effects of COVID-19 in Wichita.



Workshop with Hearken and the Wichita Journalism Collaborative



WCF Director of Strategic Initiatives Courtney Bengtson shares News and Info efforts at the Knight Media Forum

Information Needs Assessment

WCF partnered with the American Journalism Project (AJP) for an assessment of local information needs. A months-long community listening effort and study of the local ecosystem revealed an absence of critical information and the need for hyperlocal news.

The Beacon

WCF has co-invested with AJP to further develop The Beacon, a nonprofit network of digital newsrooms, across Kansas and Missouri. Locally, the Wichita Beacon launched in June 2021, with a focus on public service journalism.



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Partner with us to better our community

We are grateful for our generous donors, organizational partners and the broader community who have supported our mission to make Wichita a better place to live. As our work continues, learn more about how you can invest in our community by visiting wichitacf.org or contacting Portia Portugal at pportugal@wichitacf.org.

Photo courtesy of USD 259