NAWC IMMIGRANT RELIEF FUND

NEW AMERICAN WELCOME CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY YMCA

The New American Welcome Center at the University YMCA engages local institutions and mobilize community resources to make Champaign County a place where immigrants can thrive and flourish. Over the past three years, we have coordinated efforts to lay a foundation for equitable access, economic opportunity, and meaningful belonging.

ABOUT THE FUND

The NAWC Immigrant Relief Fund was established in April 2019 by a donation from The Chapel of Saint John the Divine to provide emergency financial assistance to immigrants in Champaign County regardless of status.

Between March 19, 2020 – May 10, 2020, the New American Welcome Center received 118 applications for emergency financial assistance totaling $110,000. Over 70% of applicants have lost their jobs or had their hours reduced, making housing and food the greatest areas of need. Thanks to the generosity of local donors, we have raised nearly $80,000. With that outpouring of support, we have been able to administer aid to 239 people in 60 households – 88% of recipients are ineligible for federal economic stimulus and unemployment insurance.

THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE

The COVID-19 pandemic has a disparate impact on immigrant communities in Champaign County where every 1 in 9 residents is an immigrant and as many as 1 in 3 immigrants may be undocumented. Thousands of immigrants throughout our community are currently on the frontlines—from those in the healthcare sector (11.5%) to those fulfilling essential roles in grocery stores and restaurants. Like millions of other Americans, many have also lost their jobs and are struggling to access unemployment benefits and healthcare coverage. Especially hard hit are undocumented and mixed status families. Many are ineligible for current forms of financial relief or are not able to get through the system quickly enough to meet immediate demands like paying for rent, food, utilities, phone, internet, etc.

Regardless of status, immigrants throughout Champaign County have established homes, found pathways to economic opportunity, and strengthened the social fabric of our community. And according to U.S. Census data, immigrants in Champaign County make significant contributions ($1.4 billion in 2016) to our state and local taxes, and also support federal social programs like Social Security ($61.5 million in 2016) and Medicare ($16.6 million in 2016).
THE NEED

AREAS OF ASSISTANCE. The primary area of need is rent assistance, followed by food, utilities, and other monthly bills (e.g. car payments, phone).

EMPLOYMENT STATUS. The majority of applicants (61%) have lost their jobs. Others have had their hours reduced (6%) or have closed their businesses (6%).

INDUSTRY. Most applicants are from the restaurant industry (34%), while others worked in general services (11%) like cleaning and childcare. Some (9.3%) are students from U of I and Parkland who are not eligible for federal aid.
FUND ADMINISTRATION

1. **APPLICATION.** Applicants [apply online](#) using a Google form (available in English, Spanish, French, and Chinese).

2. **FOLLOW-UP.** The NAWC Helpline Coordinator follows up with applicants to conduct intake and capture a fuller picture of their request by asking the following questions:
   - Are you currently receiving any other type of assistance (e.g. public benefits, charity)?
   - How has you/your family been impacted by coronavirus?
   - What specifically will the money be used for?
   - What are your current sources of income?
   - Is there a date that you need assistance by?
   - Would you like to get connected to any of our other programs?
   - Have you taken the 2020 Census?
   - What is your country of birth?
   - What are your current healthcare needs?

3. **INFORMATION & REFERRAL.** Often, additional needs are revealed through this process. The Helpline Coordinator uses the NAWC’s [COVID-19 Resource Guide](#) to connect applicants to information about food resources, bill deferral, stimulus checks, unemployment benefits, and more. We take care to ensure that the applicant has exhausted all other potential resources to preserve the mission of the Immigrant Relief Fund, which is one-time emergency assistance.

4. **DECISION.** A team of 4 NAWC staff review the Helpline Coordinator’s recommendations and make a collective decision on the amount of assistance to be granted.

5. **DISTRIBUTION.** University Y business manager cuts a check from the Immigrant Relief Fund. The check is either mailed to or dropped off at the applicant’s residence.

6. **ONGOING CASE MANAGEMENT:** We follow-up with the applicant as needed.

OUR PARTNERS

Our community partners have played an instrumental role in expanding access to assistance programs in the community and providing direct support to the NAWC Immigrant Relief Fund. Special thanks to:

- Chapel of St. John the Divine
- Community Foundation of East Central Illinois
- Cunningham Township
- Champaign County Regional Planning Commission
- First Mennonite Church
- Illinois Immigration Funders Collaborative
- Solidarity Sundays
- Three Spinners
- United Way of Champaign County
- Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting
- Wesley United Methodist Church

*New American Welcome Center at the University YMCA (May 14, 2020)*
OUR SUPPORTERS

We extend our deep gratitude to the following supporters for their generous donations. We also acknowledge the support of additional donors who have elected to remain anonymous.

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