

GLADIATOR GRAM

The latest news from GCCSA, a Community Action Agency



Chromebook Giveaway to Students in Need

Gulf Coast Community Services Association, Inc. (GCCSA) invested \$23,000 of its disaster relief aid in order to equip Houston-area families with brand new Chromebooks and educational software in time for the start of a new school year - a school year that went virtual almost overnight.

“We have taken a long, hard look at the depth to which this health crisis interrupts and

possibly deters the educational goals that lead to families’ economic stability,” said Dr. Jonita W. Reynolds, chief executive officer of GCCSA.

“Therefore, equipping children with reliable access points for their education and aiding their parents with technology that allows them to search for work, is key to decreasing the stress of this pandemic.”

One hundred Chromebooks were awarded to families who live in Harris County, have at least one K – 12th grade child in the home, have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19, and have median household incomes within 200% of the federal poverty income guidelines. These families have demonstrated remarkable need for



technology in this virtual age of distance and learning.

“We find ourselves in the most uncertain of times. Our health, livelihoods and overall quality of life are being challenged by a novel virus that, fortunately, we are on our way to defeating”, said Dr. Reynolds.

Families who were previously experiencing income inequality find their vulnerability

even more pronounced. GCCSA is focusing our relief efforts on individuals and families who have been deeply impacted by the novel coronavirus.

One of the silver-linings of this pandemic is that we, as a community, have discovered how intertwined and interdependent we



Equipping students with vital technology is a step in decreasing the stress of this pandemic.



are on one another. Neighbors are helping neighbors in new and encouraging ways!

Gulf Coast Community Services Association, Inc. has amplified its promise to assist our vulnerable residents and will continue to source innovative methods that will close gaps and make every day living less stressful. Now, more than ever, is the time for all of us to band together.



The Food Pantry of GCCSA Drive-Through Distribution Keeps Harris County Households Afloat

Two weeks after the brick and mortar doors of Gulf Coast Community Services Association, Inc. (GCCSA) were forced closed amid the spring 2020 shuttering of Houston businesses, the Agency figured out a way to get food, cleaning supplies and other household items to those who needed it – a drive-up service.



Trunks popped and back doors opened, GCCSA had a line of volunteers and employees assembled to place overflowing bags of groceries in the vehicles of Houstonians. Since those early days in April when resources were scarce and car lines extended down Kirby Drive and down the feeder road, GCCSA has served upwards of 9,500 individuals whose empty cupboards have seen little relief. Donations from the Houston Food Bank and independent suppliers have enabled

the Agency to hold twice weekly drive-through distribution events over the course of the ongoing health crisis.



Food Pantries Remain a Staple of Crisis Assistance

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Gulf Coast Community Services Association has also developed and implemented the GCCSA COVID-19 Community Action Relief Effort (C.A.R.E.) that invests in three critical areas to address the specific needs that have arisen from the pandemic. One of those three prongs is aimed at economically challenged individuals and households. The C.A.R.E. program provides direct access to household essential items (nutritious food, transportation, hygiene products, clothing) via the contactless, curbside pick-up, as well as support through gift cards for households to purchase items that meet their needs.



C.A.R.E. has additionally provided housing stability in the form of 2-3 months in support and a Chromebook award to 100 families with K-12 children to close the digital divide. On average, the Contactless Curbside Food Pantry services 125 households per 2-day week. However, the need surpasses the agency's stores. Food pantries across the county are stretched beyond capacity and GCCSA's food pantry is not immune. To help keep the pantries of our food insecure neighbors from running dry, donations to the Houston Food Bank are encouraged.

GCCSA's Contactless Curbside Food Pantry currently operates every Wednesday and Thursday, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.



Six Community Partnerships to Aid in COVID-19 Community Action Relief Effort (C.A.R.E.)

The Gulf Coast Community Services Association, Inc. (GCCSA) has partnered with six area non-profit organizations who will play an instrumental role in helping to combat the obstacles posed by the nation's ongoing health crisis. GCCSA has awarded \$300,000 grants to these well-established community-focused agencies.

The GCCSA, Inc. COVID-19 Community Action Relief Effort (C.A.R.E.) takes a holistic approach by identifying highly impacted Harris County residents and providing them with targeted assistance. The partner organizations have committed to expanding their service offerings for COVID-19 relief.

The Alliance (Alliance for Multicultural Community Services) was founded in 1985 through a union of refugee organizations. They work to create opportunities for refugees, immigrants, and underserved residents so that they may achieve their goals for self-sufficiency and improve their overall quality of life. The Alliance's programming includes refugee settlement, financial opportunity and microenterprise initiatives, youth programs, and wellness, employment and legal services.

SERJobs supports, trains, educates, and places more than 5,000 Texas Gulf Coast job seekers each year who come from low-income backgrounds or who have barriers

to employment. They provide four core services to the community: career coaching, occupational skill development, employment services, and financial empowerment.

Star of Hope serves Houston's homeless men, women and children daily with help for their immediate crisis needs. The Star of Hope Family of Ministries also aids with longer term, structured recovery programs focusing on spiritual, educational, vocational, and employment needs. In response to the pandemic, Star of Hope is utilizing its grant by





The GCCSA, Inc. COVID-19 Community Action Relief Effort (C.A.R.E.)

The GCCSA, Inc. COVID-19 Community Action Relief Effort (C.A.R.E.) is a system-wide approach the Agency is taking to alleviate the additional challenges posed by the current global pandemic. C.A.R.E. invests in three critical areas that are impacting the Harris County social and economic health – people, places and partnerships.

People. Gulf Coast Community Services Association is helping people. Through C.A.R.E., economically challenged individuals and households will gain housing affordability, access household essential items (i.e. food, transportation, hygiene products, clothing), and connect with family support and services. Over 4,500 people completed the GCCSA COVID-19 Assessment detailing the impact

of the health pandemic to their home. The Agency has doubled its client services team in size to accommodate the demand, currently processing over 2,300 requests for assistance. COVID-impacted, Harris County households will gain housing stability via monetary support that should cover a two-to three-month period. Gift cards aimed at meeting basic needs – food, water and other household essential items - are being distributed.

GCCSA is closing the digital divide by providing 100 new Chromebooks to K-12 children who have been struggling to transition to an online learning environment. Innovative services such as contactless, curbside pick-up to distribute nutritious food options is

now a weekly staple, increasing from twice a week throughout the summer months to 4 days a week in the fall. GCCSA is continuing to provide referrals and linkages to other service providers throughout the Greater Houston area.

Places (of Business). Independent entrepreneurs, self-employed and licensed professionals in select industries are receiving support through GCCSA C.A.R.E. Assistance will go toward revitalizing both their existing business and future growth after their doors have been shuttered during this extended period.

Over 300 self-employed, Harris County small business owners have completed the GCCSA COVID-19 Assessment. These professionals, most of whom are state-certified technicians, stylists, and aestheticians, have discussed with us the ramifications that the health pandemic has had on their livelihoods. The unfortunate reality is that many micro-businesses have



not been able to obtain the small loans and grants provided through the Small Business Administration and other business-resource agencies. GCCSA's support, though small, will help to sustain this vital community.

GCCSA is concurrently working on a partnership with Houston Community College to establish a virtual learning program, aimed at providing scholarships and digital marketing expertise to these Harris County business owners.

Partnerships in Community. Mission-minded organizations have been invited to participate with GCCSA C.A.R.E. in varying capacities – as formal partners, referral sources, or as a member of a community advisory committee.

GCCSA has established six C.A.R.E. Partners who will operate Community Services Block Grant funded programming for the Houston-Harris County area. These partners have been awarded \$300,000 in grant money



A systemic approach to alleviating the additional challenges posed by a global pandemic

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to develop and operate community action centered programming that will expand their service offerings for pandemic relief. They are: The Alliance, SER Jobs, Star of Hope, Houston Area Women’s Center, Catholic Charities, and Chinese Community Center.

assist them as they focus on their educational pursuits, rather than pandemic-imposed difficulties. The ISD Essential Workers Pilot program will pinpoint essential employees such as bus drivers, food service workers, and custodial staff for assistance.

Inter-agency agreements for referrals and priority access are the driving force behind the C.A.R.E. Key Referral Partnership. Houston Community College is the C.A.R.E. training partner, developing virtual workshops and courses that will help self-employed customers who are learning to pivot their business in the age of the novel coronavirus. Lone Star College, Houston North and Texas Southern University are aiding in the identification of their hardest hit student populations, so that funds may be directed to

The C.A.R.E. Advisory Committee will provide on-going community feedback and analysis of Harris County’s diverse community needs as COVID-19 recovery continues.

By taking a holistic approach to pandemic disaster relief efforts and pinpointing three fundamental areas – people, places and partnerships – GCCSA will be able to help the greatest number of Harris County’s vulnerable and affected residents as possible.

A Snapshot of the Community Feedback

Survey data through June 2020

When asked about “the impact of COVID to your household and family” economically fragile Harris County families responded:



76% At-Risk Eviction



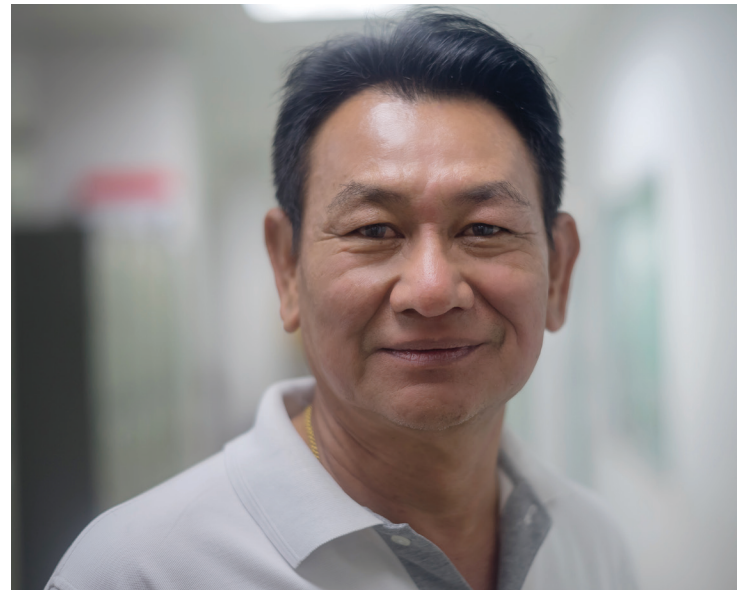
33% Credit Impacted



44% Food Unaffordable



12% Medical Unaffordable



Partnerships are instrumental in doing the most good for the most people in the most need

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expanding the reach of its Extended Services Team, providing homeless diversion and prevention assistance to many by offering help with food, rent, and utilities.

Houston Area Women's Center (HAWC) is Houston's largest non-profit support services for domestic violence and sexual assault, helping affected individuals in their efforts to move their lives forward. HAWC works to end domestic and sexual violence, supporting all in building safe and healthy lives through advocacy, counseling, education, shelter, and support services. They seek social change to end abuse through community awareness and education.

Catholic Charities has provided food, clothing, shelter, and a network of support services to people of all ages and walks of life for more than 75 years. In collaboration with

parishes and communities, they advocate for social justice, serving as a voice for the poor and vulnerable of the Houston-Galveston area. Over 100,000 people per year benefit from the compassionate services provided by the people of Catholic Charities.

Chinese Community Center (CCC) serves over 10,000 families per year, providing comprehensive support to a diverse population. CCC conducts educational and social service programs that help new immigrants settle into their new communities, acculturate, and gain personal independence and economic self-sufficiency. They operate youth programs, adult education programs that equip immigrants with skills to succeed in the workforce, health and wellness programs, and culture and community programs that provide enrichment for the whole family.

GCCSA COVID-19 Response: Data from low- income, Harris County residents

I AM EXPERIENCING A HOUSING BURDEN



88% are at risk of Eviction or Foreclosure.

76% (1,946) of respondents will need rental assistance to keep primary residence.

11% will need mortgage deferment or financial assistance to stay in home.



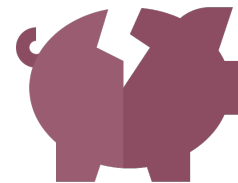
Photo by Barbara Kinney



Photo by Gallup

I AM NOW FINANCIALLY INSECURE

31% indicated that, "I cannot afford my car payment."



22% stated, "My credit is negatively affected. I am not able to make credit card or student loan payments timely."

44% stated, "I cannot afford groceries or food."

35% cannot afford transportation costs, including the cost of gas.

12% cannot afford medical bills, including prescription delivery costs.

I CANNOT AFFORD MY BASIC NEEDS



332 people have limited food access, no toiletries and loss of household essentials.



I HAVE A CHILD(REN) AND NOW CHILDCARE IS INACCESSIBLE



11% cannot afford childcare, full-time or part-time

Survey Respondents

378
families



Head Start & Early Head Start Families

112
individuals



Self-Employed, Micro-Business, Licensed/Certified Technicians

2,665
individuals



General Public, Harris County Residents



As Harris County's Community Action Agency, the purpose of Gulf Coast Community Services Association, Inc. (GCCSA) is to strengthen the educational, social and economic well-being of individuals and families as they move toward economic independence and self-sufficiency. Founded in 1965, GCCSA provides diverse programs designed to eliminate the inhibitive conditions of the under-served and un-served populations of Harris County. Through programs such as Head Start/ Early Head Start, Rent and Electricity Assistance, Food Pantry, Adult Literacy and Education, and Vocational Training and Education Scholarships, GCCSA is able to assist families in earning a living wage, individuals in the advancement of their education, and communities in gaining economic security. To learn more about GCCSA's programs and services, visit: www.gccsa.org.