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RAPPAHANNOCK UNITED WAY SHARES COVID-19 IMPACT SURVEY RESULTS

In the midst of this crisis, RUW seeks to understand how local households are being affected.

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Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, requests for financial assistance from Rappahannock United Way have more than tripled – many of them from households who are normally financially stable requesting help with bills, childcare and housing costs for the first time.

In order to assess the true impact of COVID-19 on local households, Rappahannock United Way launched an online survey to gather impact information directly from area residents.

From January 25 to February 12, 2021, over 1,100 people living in the Greater Fredericksburg Region of Virginia responded to the COVID-19 Impact Survey. These areas include the City of Fredericksburg and Caroline, King George, Spotsylvania, and Stafford counties.

The results of the COVID-19 Impact Survey provide important insights into the issues area households are facing during this time of profound uncertainty.

When COVID-19 hit, 35% of all households in the Greater Fredericksburg Region (approximately 44,000 households) were already struggling to make ends meet — a 10-year record high — setting the stage for the unprecedented economic impact of the pandemic. This includes households below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and households who are ALICE®: Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed.

With income above the FPL, ALICE households earn too much to qualify as “poor” but still struggle to cover the basics of housing, child care, food, transportation, healthcare, and technology. Of all respondents surveyed, 588 (48%) had income below the ALICE Threshold, which includes both households below the FPL and ALICE households.

The COVID Impact Survey Results Report can be found at:
www.rappahannockunitedway.org/covid-survey

“The survey shows that after concerns about contracting COVID-19, paying housing expenses has moved to the number two area of concern among residents, with child care and education after that,” said Sarah Walsh, Chief Impact Officer, Rappahannock United Way. “We have seen first-hand the worry that local individuals and families have about keeping a roof over their heads. Requests for rent and mortgage assistance increased exponentially over the past year.”

One survey respondent shared ***“We have kept our small children home instead of daycare and had to balance one parent now working full time remotely and the other still needing to report to an office several times a week – the mental toll of the pandemic has been incredible. The anxiety, stress, sadness, and depression ... is like nothing I ever could have predicted.”***

“During 2020, Rappahannock United Way was able to direct funds to assist local ALICE households financially impacted by the pandemic. Over 2.5 million dollars was provided in rent and mortgage assistance to local households,” said Walsh, “and we were proud to partner with the Rappahannock Area YMCA, investing \$100,000 in their child care program, keeping essential workers working and children safe and learning.”

Before the pandemic ALICE households were already struggling financially which means few had the resources needed to survive a long-term reduction or loss of income. A significant number of ALICE households reported in the survey that they increased their credit card balance (25%), and borrowed money from friends and family (20%) to make ends meet. While there are signs that the local economy is starting to recover, businesses are reopening and school children are back in the classrooms; it will be a long road to recover financial stability for ALICE households.

Rappahannock United Way hopes to use the COVID Impact Survey findings to continue to inform the community about services and resources that they offer to better meet the need for ALICE families struggling through the pandemic.

“We encourage anyone struggling financially to check out some of the resources that Rappahannock United Way offers,” said Janel S. Donohue, President and CEO, Rappahannock United Way, “free financial workshops, one-on-one financial coaching, tax preparation and financial assistance is available. For those who have weathered the pandemic well financially, we encourage you to consider donating so that we continue to do this important work.”

For questions about this survey or the research effort, email or call Sarah Walsh, Chief Impact Officer – swalsh@rappahannockunitedway.org or (540) 373-0041 x315.

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About Rappahannock United Way

Celebrating over 80 years in our community, Rappahannock United Way is a local nonprofit serving Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania, Stafford, King George and Caroline. Rappahannock United Way’s vision is a community where individuals and families achieve their potential through Education, Financial Stability and Healthy Living. Together, we can create opportunities for a better tomorrow.
