



Cape Cod fund pivots to respond to COVID-19



Judy Scarafile

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Organizers aim to raise \$1M to help those affected by outbreak.

The idea behind the Cape Cod and Islands Major Crisis Relief Fund when it was organized four years ago was to create a super charity that would help local people devastated by major events such as a hurricane.

But on Wednesday, relief fund employees spent part of the day switching out website photos of storm damage and replacing them with graphic depictions of the new coronavirus.

Disaster has struck the region, but it's not what was anticipated, said Judy Scarafile, the fund's managing director.

"It's a health disaster, a health crisis," Scarafile said. "Not what we expected here on Cape Cod, on a peninsula that sticks out in the ocean, for our first launch."

When the nonprofit was first established, major donors including Barnstable County Mutual Insurance, Cape Cod Healthcare, Shepley Wood Products and Cape Cod Five Savings Bank stepped up, Scarafile said.

As recent years went by without a major weather event, the fund did not generate much activity. Now that a major crisis is facing Cape Codders, the fund is ramping up fundraising to meet local needs, Scarafile said.

The goal is to raise at least \$1 million, possibly more, she said.

"We may need to go far beyond that. We don't know where the need is yet."

The novel coronavirus that is wreaking havoc with the national economy is causing particular damage on the Cape, with its mix of a medically vulnerable older population and sidelined hospitality workers, many of whom rely on tips to pay their bills.

People who have found themselves suddenly without a paycheck "will be on top of our list," Scarafile said. "will be on top of our list," Scarafile said.

As with the Needy Fund, recipients do not receive cash, she said. Instead payments are made directly to the individuals' mortgage companies, landlords or fuel companies, she said.

Scarafile said the relief fund is working with local officials and nonprofit organizations such as the Cape Cod Foundation to fill in the financial gaps for people who need help.

Scarafile likened the relief fund to a rainy day fund writ large. "It's now raining," she said.

For information about receiving assistance or volunteering, look for website updates on majorcrisisrelieffund.org.

To learn more about donating, visit majorcrisisrelieffund.org/donate/, call 508-778-7107 or email mcrf@needyfund.org.

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