

Local agencies re-purpose technology for collaborative COVID-19 response

Text alert system and network of partners provide immediate support to Lane County nonprofits

Whether to provide sleeping bags to shelters, clothing to families, or connect food banks with more volunteers, a new network of partners and a repurposed technology tool are filling urgent needs around Lane County — in a matter of seconds.

COVID-19 pandemic. LERN utilizes a text-based alert system so nonprofit “advocates” can submit urgent requests to a wide network of “providers” around the county. Nonprofits can request volunteers, as well as in-kind donations on behalf of specific clients, or on behalf of their organization as a whole.

sleeping bags for an emergency respite shelter. Today, Burley is delivering a bike trailer to a family needing transportation options, a connection made through LERN.

This new network was formed in mid-March when, anticipating the high volume of needs that would arise from the COVID-19 pandemic, members of COAD started to centralize a wide, well-resourced network of providers, ready to respond to the needs of nonprofits and their clients.

Upon receiving the text alert, providers representing a variety of public, private, and social sectors can instantly respond if they can fulfill the need.

So far, LERN’s text alert system has filled over 60 requests, including cloth masks for shelters, household items for families in transitional housing, and

15th Night stepped forward with technology to automate and streamline the process. By adapting 15th Night’s text-alert technology, LERN was able to

connect those in local nonprofits and the individuals whom they serve — with the people and organizations that could fill their in-kind needs.

LERN also has a “community responder” role for individual volunteers interested in helping out. Community responders receive alerts for specific volunteer needs — for instance, delivery of a prescription or food box — which are then filled based on which community responder is able to meet the need most efficiently.

“As we adjust to our new daily lives and to a new normal, ways to volunteer are adjusting, too,” said Alexis Amavisca, Volunteer Engagement Co-

ordinator at United Way of Lane County. “Being a Community Responder gives volunteers the chance to help local agencies and individuals in need simply via text message. Recently, an organization sent an alert requesting 50 fabric masks needed to open a new temporary emergency youth shelter. The alert was sent to Community Responders and within 20 minutes, three Community Responders replied, including Eric Richardson of Eugene/Springfield NAACP, indicating they could donate more than enough masks to open the youth shelter.”

While LERN is set up to connect social service providers and clients, addi-

tional new resource inventories are emerging to meet the needs of the community. A new resource map created by United Way of Lane County outlines the other systems, including the Lane County Mutual Aid Network — which focuses on neighbors helping neighbors — and LaneKids, a resource guide for families with children.

Agencies interested in participating in LERN as an advocate or provider can contact Megan Shultz at Megan@mshconsulting-nw.com.

Individuals wanting to sign up as Community Responders can do so at www.unitedwaylane.org/covid19ran.

Healing Matrix, Taubert Foundation award more than \$65,000 to local nonprofit programs

A number of local non-profits and community-oriented programs recently received financial awards from the Taubert Foundation and Healing Matrix, which have worked together for almost a decade to promote activities and partnerships that improve all aspects of health for community members.

The grants cumulatively totaled over \$65,000.

The award recipients, along with the amount awarded and a brief description of the intended use of the funds, includes:

- Bohemia Food Hub (\$11,500) — Support the BFH’s efforts to broaden opportunities for rural food entrepreneurship among underserved groups by providing low-risk exploration of food business ideas.

The funds will help a

physical makeover of part of the Bohemia Food Hub (S. 10th St) to develop three storefronts that will serve as a restaurant pilot area, host pop-up food events, and host teaching demonstrations.

- Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council (\$4000) — Support ongoing nature-based experiential environmental learning for middle-school students, including monthly hands-on lessons and capstone stewardship projects.

- Cottage Village Coalition (\$10,000) — Support ongoing development of Cottage Village, Oregon’s first rural tiny-house village.

- McKinney-Vento (\$20,000) — Provide \$75 emergency grocery gift cards to each of the more than 250 houseless students in the South Lane School District.

- Senior Center foot care (\$1,000) — Provide Registered Nurses with the supplies and equipment need

to provide foot-care services for seniors at the Cottage Grove Senior Center.

- Soil/FoodWeb consultant (\$3,850) — Funding a community member to complete a Soil Food Web course in regenerative agriculture; after this two-year program is completed, the trainee will share the knowledge with others throughout the community via info booths at the Farmers Market, presentations (e.g., at Science Pub), and visits to local schools.

- Soup’s On (\$5,000) — Replace old refrigerator and freezers, and provide additional storage, to enable Soup’s On to continue to provide a free community dinner every Sunday night at the Community Center in Cottage Grove.

- South Valley Farmers Market (\$7,000) — Enable the market’s continuing service. (Thursdays, 4 to 7 p.m. at Seventh and Main streets.)

Cottage Grove Historical Society offering education grant through June 30

In honor of one of its founders, Marcia E. Allen, the Cottage Grove Historical Society is offering a grant of up to \$200 to educators in the Cottage Grove area and/or the South Lane School District attendance

area who choose to use some aspect of Cottage Grove-area history in their classroom.

The grant is open to teachers of kindergarten through 12th grade in both public or private schools.

Grant applications are due on June 30 and the funds will be awarded for the 2020-21 school year.

Any subject matter is eligible.

Some examples would be photographing or drawing

historic sites for an art class, learning about local pioneers for an Oregon Trail unit, or having students explore the history of their school.

For more information about the grant, private

message the Cottage Grove, OR. Historical Society Facebook page, or email them at cghistoricalsoc@gmail.com.

The grant application can be found at <https://cghistory.org/index.php/ed-grant>.

Note, the application says that the deadline is at the end of May, but it has been extended until the end of June.

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