

How Can I Help Others During This Crisis?

April 14, 2020

The COVID-19 crisis is a once in a lifetime pandemic that is impacting all of us, some more than others. Yet, it is heartening to get inquiries from caring community members and business leaders that ask, "How can I help?" There is no doubt that the list of things to do to help others is long, and the need in our region is great. The top priority for us now is to help prevent the spread of the virus and be safe, wear a mask when out, and maintain social distancing. Some of us will weather the storm quite well, just inconvenienced by canceled trips and more family time than we thought possible. At the same time, others' lives will be destroyed, loved ones lost, or they may experience financial ruin. In times like these, we want to come together and help those in need, but how? Here is just a short list that you may want to consider, as you ponder ways you can step up and make a difference.

Say Thanks to our Health Care Professionals: Our healthcare providers are not only putting their own lives on the line for us, but they are also putting the health and lives of their families at risk. The least we can do is to say thanks. If you know anyone personally, send them a note, flowers or a meal. If you want to support them in general, you can contribute to the Community Foundation's COVID-19 Relief Fund. The Relief Fund will help them by providing support such as hotel rooms, meals, emergency childcare, counseling, or other needs so they can stay safe, stay healthy.

Support the COVID Kindness Program: The Chamber has taken the COVID-19 Relief Fund one step further by launching the COVID Kindness Program. Chamber member restaurants willing to participate, provide COVID Kindness "gift cards" with \$100.00 value for take-out or delivery. The area hospitals ensure the gift cards get to the health care providers, and the Community Foundation reimburses the businesses 80% of the card value. A great win-win!

Support Our Local Businesses: Speaking of small businesses, many will not survive this crisis according to national projections. These small businesses are the fabric of our economy. While the government loan programs may keep them alive for a while, they need customers to buy their goods and services. That is where we come in. Order and pick up your meals, buy merchandise from local retail on-line, or buy gift cards from them to be used sometime in the future. The loss of these businesses is not good for them, their employees, or our economy.

Volunteer Where You Can: United Way has a program where you can sign up to volunteer to help, and if you need help, you can sign up as well. It's a new volunteer matchmaking site uwnns.org/volunteer. While you're at it, consider ways to volunteer to help your favorite non-profit or church; they are doing so many good things to support those in need and could use our help.

Of Course, There is Always Cash: There are so many non-profits, churches, and agencies attending to the needs of those most impacted. The demand for their services is way up while donations are down! The new CARES Act supports more charitable giving. One of the tax law changes allows for a new above-the-line charitable donation deduction of up to \$300, for taxpayers who do not itemize their deductions. If you can help, please donate to one of your favorite local charities like The Food Bank of Northern Nevada, where the need to feed those unemployed is skyrocketing.

This crisis will not end abruptly; it could drag on for months or even years. While many of the jobs lost will return, thousands of jobs and many businesses will be lost forever. We are in this as a community, and it is times like these that can bring us together and make us stronger. Fortunately, many of us will not be severely impacted by the crisis. So, if you've had enough of the non-stop gloomy news reporting and your fill of Netflix binge-watching, it may be time to answer the question, "how can I help?"