

BREAKING

Sidney groups aim to provide assistance for nonprofit organizations

- By Allison Collins Contributing Writer
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Help is planned for local nonprofit organizations affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, thanks to a fund established by the United Way of Sidney, in cooperation with the Sidney Central School Alumni Association.

In an April 1 letter, United Way of Sidney announced organization of “a fiduciary fund entitled ‘Sidney Area COVID-19 Relief Fund’ to serve the needs of Sidney-area nonprofit organizations that may be unable to fulfill their missions ... as a result of economic distress resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Sidney United Way Executive Director Dennis Porter said the roughly 20-member group seeded the fund with \$10,000. Members of the Sidney Central School Alumni Association Board of Directors voted unanimously to match that amount at their April 4 virtual board meeting. Porter said, through collaboration with the alumni group, the Sidney United Way has previously provided similar aid.

“My idea was to reach out to them to see if there was an interest in starting a COVID-19 relief fund,” Porter said. “In the past, we had two major floods, and we set out to help the community with donations from the Sidney Alumni Association to help people recover from the floods, so we thought we would continue to do that. I made phone calls to our president and executive committee and we were not sure how it was going to go or who the players would be, but we thought the alumni association would be a good organization to help us out.”

SCSAA President Doug Sheldon said partnering with the United Way to bolster relief furthers the group’s purpose.

“The alumni association has an overall mission to serve the alumni, but also the school and community,” he said. “In recent years, in part because we’ve managed to sustain our membership at a good rate, we’ve been able to think about school and community ... and be part of the fundraising process for the Sidney Veterans

Memorial Park and other activities and events. So, it was easy when the United Way said, 'Will you join us and help us organize a fund for the community?'

"We know COVID-19 will have a serious financial impact on the lives of people and the businesses of people," he said. "We decided if we could focus on nonprofits in the Sidney area — those organizations whose mission is also to serve others — we'd be providing an important service."

Porter, who said about 20 larger United Way chapters statewide have established similar relief funds, said he found the association's support affirming.

"I thought it showed good trust in our organization," he said. "I'm quite proud that we're able to be here to support the community. You don't see small United Ways like this in New York state; they're all in bigger cities, so we're unique."

Porter said he hopes to gain more contributions from local businesses. The April 1 statement says, too, that "once ... the fund is publicly announced, Sidney-area businesses will be invited to join and donate." According to the statement, the account will be managed by the United Way and "administered by a joint advisory committee, with representatives (from) the various local contributors."

"We have a \$50,000 goal," Porter said. "We want to make sure we have significant funds to meet all the needs of all our local nonprofits." The April 1 statement said that requests for relief will be welcomed in May, "with hope for distribution by June."

Porter said proximity and need will help determine beneficiaries. Rules, regulations and relief applications, he said, will be posted to sidneyunitedway.org.

"The COVID fund will be more of a recovery fund, used to bring nonprofit organizations back into fulfillment of their goals," he said. "We will prioritize (organizations from) Sidney and the immediate surrounding communities. It's not a specific geographic area ... but any organization that supports our Tri-Town area will certainly be reviewed."

To donate, mail checks to the Sidney United Way, with "COVID-19 Relief Fund" in the memo section, to PO Box 14, Sidney, NY, 13838. For more information, contact Porter at dporter@binghamtonwireless.com.