$1 million milestone in sight for donations to local pandemic coverage via COVID-19 Local News Fund

Local Media Foundation rapidly closes in on goal, partnering with more than 230 participating local news outlets across 39 states on an emergency response program to activate grassroots giving

(May 6, 2020) — Local Media Foundation expects to eclipse $1 million in total donations to the COVID-19 Local News Fund within hours, achieving its initial goal in just 40 days. The program is an urgent response to challenges posed by the global pandemic, raising funds that directly support local news organizations’ coverage of COVID-related issues in their communities.

More than 230 independent and family-owned local news outlets participate in the program, proactively engaging their communities to appeal for support of their COVID-19 coverage. More than 11,000 individual donors from 48 states have contributed. On GivingTuesday alone, the program generated $90,417 in grassroots giving from 936 donors, its highest single-day totals.

“Our mantra from the earliest days launching the program has been to democratize giving,” said Jed Williams, chief strategy officer for Local Media Association. “Organizations large and small, from coast-to-coast, have engaged their communities with great success to support vital coverage of the pandemic. We’re floored by the outpouring of support for local news.”

Publishers in 39 states are participating, with 94 having raised more than $1,000 in donations and 25 exceeding $10,000.

“Launching our Examiner COVID-19 Local News Fund has had a transformative impact on our organization,” said Adam Stone, publisher of Examiner Media. “When the crisis first broke, our ability to finance reporting on the impact of the coronavirus in our communities appeared to be in jeopardy. By utilizing the marketing tools and fundraising savvy provided by LMF, we have raised more than $25,000 from 338 donors in a matter of weeks, an unthinkable total when we first
heard about the program. The collaboration and creative energy have also ushered in a new, more innovative approach to local news publishing at Examiner Media."

David Hulen, editor of the Anchorage Daily News, also said the paper found success with its campaign.

“The COVID-19 Local News Fund was a perfect solution at a time when we really needed it," Hulen said. "It gave us the ability to quickly spin up a campaign for reader donations well beyond what we could have ever done on our own. It was easy for us and for readers. And we were stunned by the response from our community - both the generosity of the donations and the many heartening words of support."

Local Media Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charitable trust affiliated with Local Media Association, acts as the administrator for the COVID-19 Local News Fund, collecting all donations and then disbursing them to participating local news outlets. All proceeds from the effort go directly to support COVID-19 reporting, to ensure that the public has essential facts on this important topic.

Participants have actively and creatively engaged their communities to motivate giving. Written appeals from publishers and editors, targeted email campaigns, word-of-mouth networking, and donation matches with foundations and nonprofits have all sparked outpourings of support.

“After nearly 128 years of continuous publishing, The AFRO (like so many independent local and family-owned news media outlets) faced unprecedented challenges precipitated by COVID-19 —including how to increase our local coverage of this devastating pandemic," said Frances (Toni) Murphy Draper, publisher of The AFRO. “Fortunately, we were given the opportunity to participate in the Local Media Foundation’s COVID-19 Local News Fund. In addition to realizing more than $20,000 in donations, the heartfelt comments from more than 250 donors have reminded us of the critical role The AFRO plays in our community and in the lives of our loyal and lifelong readers.”

The COVID-19 Local News Fund remains active in response to the global crisis. Local news organizations can enroll easily and activate community giving quickly. LMF provides a customized campaign page, a full library of marketing and promotion assets, and dedicated support. In addition to soliciting community funding, the program also shares best practices, tips for important news angles to cover, ideas for remote reporting, and more. Interested news organizations can learn more and sign up here.
About Local Media Association/Local Media Foundation

Local Media Association (https://www.localmedia.org/) is a thriving and innovative organization serving more than 3,000 newspapers, TV stations, digital news sites, radio stations and research & development partners. LMA is the only industry trade organization that brings all local media together for the purpose of sharing, networking, collaborating and learning. The association’s focus is on reinventing business models for news. LMA’s innovation engine, Accelerate Local, launched six projects in 2019 with 50 different media partners and three projects so far in 2020, including the COVID-19 local news fund, the Oklahoma Media Center and the news collaborative in Chicago. Local Media Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable trust that supports the mission of LMA and the essential role of local news and information in a healthy democracy.

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