

Press Release From
Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation

Two New COVID-19 Response Funds Launch in Columbia County, N.Y.

Foundations, Business, Community, Elected Officials and Donors Help Seed Funds to Support Nonprofits and Small Businesses

Sheffield, Mass., and Hudson, N.Y. – Two new emergency funds to rapidly deploy resources to community-based organizations and small businesses as they respond to the impact of the coronavirus have been established in Columbia County.

Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation (BTCF) has launched the Columbia County COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund. It will provide flexible resources to nonprofit organizations to meet the needs of individuals and families who are disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus. The fund will prioritize human services and community-based organizations with experience helping individuals and families stabilize their lives in times of crisis. Donations to the fund and applications from eligible nonprofits can be made at BerkshireTaconic.org/ColumbiaCOVID19. BTCF staff and volunteer members of BTCF's Fund for Columbia County committee will review and award grants.

Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation and Columbia Economic Development Corporation (CEDC), in partnership with the Columbia Chamber of Commerce and the Hudson Business Coalition, have established the Columbia County Business Continuity Fund. It will provide cash grants to small businesses in our city and town centers with fewer than 10 full-time employees and less than \$1 million in annual revenue. These businesses can apply for grant funds from \$1,000 to \$5,000 to cover costs related to retaining employees, rent and other fixed operational costs. Donations to the fund can be made at BerkshireTaconic.org/BusinessContinuity. The fund will accept applications from April 1 to April 15 at www.columbiaedc.com. An independent, volunteer committee of local business leaders and will review and award grants based on the availability of funds.

Together, a group of partners has committed over \$360,000 for these two funds. One hundred percent of the dollars contributed to each fund will go directly to nonprofits or businesses. The partners encourage individuals, companies and other funders to contribute.

Early support for the two funds has come from Berkshire Taconic, its Fund for Columbia County and donors the Corbin Edsall Fund, Gretchen Stearns and Richard Weininger, Lael Locke/City Child Fund, Linda Gatter/Max Dannis Fund, the Mack-Schaefer Charitable Fund, Martha McMaster and Sheldon Evans, Susan Danziger and Albert Wenger/The Spark of Hudson, and Suzette and Seth Masters; the

Dyson Foundation; the Galvan Foundation; the Henry L. Kimelman Family Foundation; Berkshire Bank; and Greylock Federal Credit Union.

“While the outbreak in Columbia County is just beginning, we know that it threatens our neighbors who are already vulnerable and unprepared for its impact,” said Peter Taylor, president of Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation. “These funds will give an important boost to organizations meeting basic needs and small businesses that are the heart of the local economy, especially during this period before state and federal resources are more widely available.

“Columbia County is fortunate to have many restaurants, coffee shops, retailers and other independently-owned small businesses. These small shops and their passionate owners and employees contribute to our quality of life and the economic vibrancy that makes our county such a wonderful place to live, work and visit,” said F. Michael Tucker, president and CEO of Columbia Economic Development Corporation. “They are also our friends and neighbors, and we believe it is critical to try to help them address the economic challenges the pandemic has caused on their small businesses.”

“Those of us who live in Columbia County know what a very special place it is. In this time of crisis, protecting the small local businesses and not-for-profits that are the backbone of our communities is absolutely imperative,” said New York State Assemblymember Didi Barrett, who helped initiate and launch these two funds. “Our small shops and businesses are the innovators and energizers of the Columbia County economy, and we will need them more than ever during our recovery from the impact of COVID-19. These two funds will be a lifeline to the friends and neighbors that we all rely on every day, and I am proud to have played a role in their creation. My sincere thanks to Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation and Columbia Economic Development Corporation for their proactive and steady approach to supporting these vital local businesses and community organizations.”

Matt Murell, chairman of the Columbia County Board of Supervisors, said, “The Board of Supervisors is working around the clock to address our public health and preserve our businesses throughout the county. The Columbia County Business Continuity Fund represents our community stepping up and providing additional resources to help our small businesses during this challenging time.”

Hudson Mayor Kamal Johnson said, “The small businesses in Hudson are a major driver of not only our economy but also our community. They are among the first to donate or sponsor an event or cause. When we say ‘All Hands on Deck,’ we mean it and it’s time to reach a hand out to save our local businesses.”

Jeffrey Hunt, president of the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce, said, “The ability of our many businesses to continue to operate after this pandemic is critical to restoring Columbia County’s economic vitality and to restore our great quality of life. Rapidly getting money to these businesses in need will go a long way to achieving this goal.”

Chuck Rosenthal, president, and Monica Byrne, board member, of the Hudson Business Coalition, said, "Truly small businesses are the heart of every community. They are owned and staffed by our friends and neighbors. They provide service and jobs, and they drive local economies. They are the creative outlets that often define a community's unique personality and culture. We know that when disaster strikes, rebuilding the small businesses is key in rebuilding the community overall. We know that the quicker and more efficiently we get aid to small businesses, the less it costs and the quicker they rebound. When small businesses thrive, entire communities do, too. Rebuilding our small businesses in Hudson is key to rebuilding the community overall. The Business Continuity Fund will distribute aid to small businesses allowing these businesses and our community to begin to rebound, and the effects will be exponential."

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