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## **‘Facemask Challenge’, Generous Gifts Put ‘Worcester Together’ Over \$5 Million Milestone**

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**WORCESTER, MA** – The Worcester Together: Central Mass COVID-19 Fund announced today that it reached a new milestone of \$5 million in donations raised. The fund, a joint effort between the Greater Worcester Community Foundation and the United Way of Central Massachusetts, in collaboration with the City of Worcester, is supporting the needs of local organizations working with communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak in Worcester County.

A number of factors contributed to achieving the new milestone, including the recently announced “Facemask Challenge” and several generous donors who made significant contributions in the last few days. These include:

- Fletcher Foundation - \$200,000
- Martha Pappas – \$100,000

Warner Fletcher, Chairman of the Worcester-based Fletcher Foundation, said he hoped that their recent grant, which followed those of other foundations, would encourage others in the community to step forward with support. “The Worcester Together Fund is doing critically important work in these unprecedented times to help our community respond to COVID-19 and its painful fallout, both short term and over the longer term, as well,” Fletcher added.

“We are grateful for the continued support of our many donors large and small who are stepping up each day to meet the challenge of helping our community recover,” said Tim Garvin, CEO of the United Way of Central Massachusetts. “Our response to the COVID-19 outbreak will be a marathon, and we are inspired to know that our donors are in it for the long-run.”

Donations to the recently announced “Facemask Challenge” also helped push the fund past \$5 million. Modeled after the Ice Bucket Challenge, the goal is to raise awareness of Worcester’s needs and raise money for Worcester Together. The social media challenge asks people to take selfies of themselves

wearing their favorite face masks, and tag their friends and family to encourage them to donate to the Worcester Together Fund.

“This milestone speaks to the determination and solidarity of our community in the face of the outbreak,” said Barbara Fields, President and CEO of GWCF. “We are grateful for our donors who continually step up to the needs of the community.”

“We have a long road ahead of us,” Fields added.

Grants from the Worcester Together fund will target organizations with deep roots in the community. Many of these groups serve residents without health insurance and/or access to sick days, people with limited English language proficiency, healthcare workers and seniors, among others.

Worcester Together has already granted a total of \$732,759 to 51 organizations. The Fund will continue to make grants on a rolling basis as fundraising continues throughout the outbreak and recovery phases of the crisis.

Worcester Together invites philanthropies, businesses, individuals and other donors to contribute to the fund at [www.greaterworcester.org](http://www.greaterworcester.org) and [www.unitedwaycm.org](http://www.unitedwaycm.org). In addition, Worcester Together urges donors to look for opportunities to support the critical needs of nonprofits by making general operating support grants to organizations they wish to help.

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#### **About the Greater Worcester Community Foundation**

*Greater Worcester Community Foundation (GWCF) is central Massachusetts' leading community foundation dedicated to improving the quality of life in the region by connecting donors to high impact nonprofits and community partners. The Foundation employs its expertise and resources to address the region's most urgent needs. Since 1975, GWCF has worked in partnership with donors to build a \$163 million endowment and awarded close to \$125 million in grants that have helped transform communities and build a strong and vibrant region. We apply our knowledge, relationships and resources to our work every day, combining passion and discipline to pursue a vision of Worcester's success that works for everyone. For more information on GWCF programs and how to give, please visit [www.greaterworcester.org](http://www.greaterworcester.org)*

#### **[About the United Way of Central Massachusetts](http://www.unitedwaycm.org)**

*Every day, The United Way of Central Massachusetts works to improve the community and break the cycle of poverty. Our donors and supporters contribute \$5 million each year, which gets invested into programs and initiatives with a proven track record of results. Our programs are aligned with our strategic goals: Education, Family Stability, and Health and Safety Net. Our entire community benefits when the most vulnerable members of our community find a way out of crisis, children are able to learn, people are healthy, and parents earn enough money to support a stable family. For more information on The United Way of Central Massachusetts programs and how to give, please visit [www.unitedwaycm.org](http://www.unitedwaycm.org)*