

Coronavirus Emergency Relief Fund (CERF)

June 16, 2020 – Weekly Update



CERF ETHOS

Our goal is for residents to be able to **stay in their homes** and to maintain access to utility service that enables **students to be connected to school** and enables **all residents to be connected to food resources** and other necessities during this crisis.

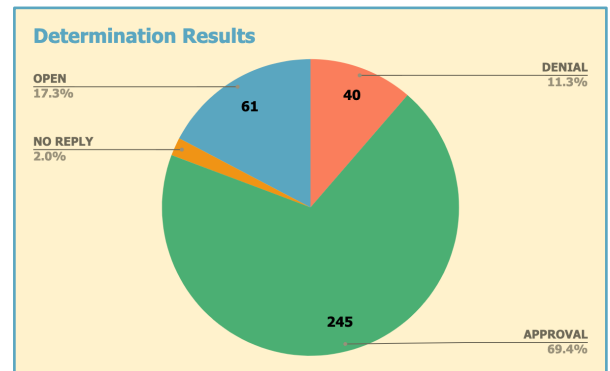
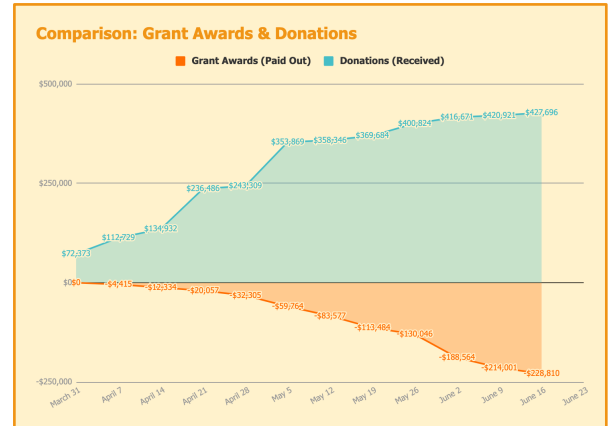
FUNDRAISING – \$427,696 as of June 16th

The CERF is supported in part with grants from the **Princeton University Relief Fund** and the **Covid-19 Relief & Recovery Fund** of **Princeton Area Community Foundation**. We are grateful to the University, to PACF, and to the over **800 donors** who have contributed.

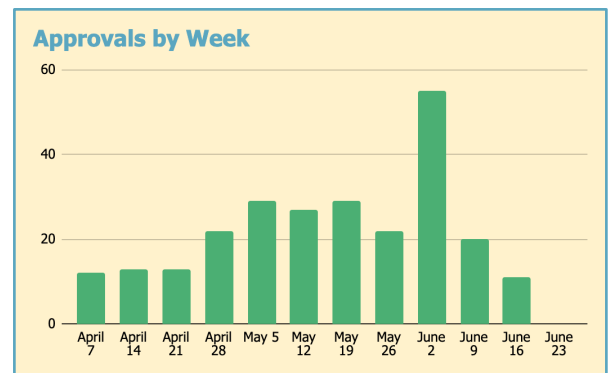
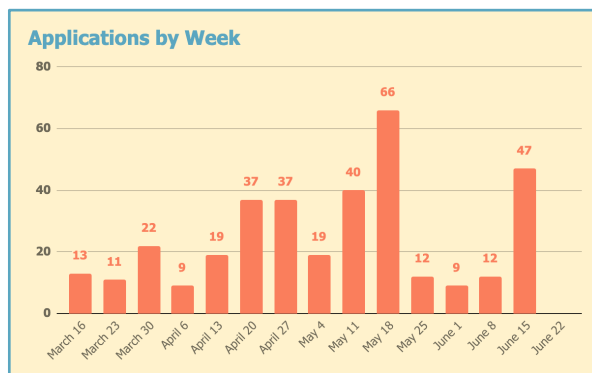


APPLICATIONS – 353 as of June 16th

To date, we have been able to help **184 unique households** stay sheltered and connected to resources. Of the 353 applications received, 169 are renewals and 245 grants have been awarded. The large influx of renewal applications we saw in May appears to be manifesting again this month. While some applicants have begun a slow, part-time return to work, we seem to be several months away from a meaningful end or a return to pre-COVID levels.



Instead of letting applicants know that they can reapply after the 20th for the following month, we are calling applicants to see if they need to reapply. In this way, we can somewhat manage the workflow and the impact to the team resources. Given the invoicing dates from the utility companies and the due dates for rent from landlords, the last 2 weeks of each month will remain unavoidably busy for the CERF team.



The 245 approved cases have received grants totaling just under **\$230,000**. The current average award rose again this week to **\$992.64**. We saw several first-time applicants who had multi-month requests – rent had not been paid for 2 or 3 months before the first application was submitted to us. This suggests some people have perhaps been delaying assessment of financial circumstances for several months and are just now realizing that ‘normal’ is some way off. At this award level and with our current funding, we will be able to help approximately 200 more applicants or times and have sufficient funding for approximately 8 weeks at the current average rate of applications received – 25 per week.



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PROCESS

We continue to adjust our existing process to accommodate a phased return to work. We are documenting continued unemployment or under-employment and working with applicants so we can support what will be a gradual return to work for most. Few, if any, will go from completely unemployed to fully re-employed so we want to make that transition as smooth as possible for applicants.

For each renewal application, case managers track changes in earnings and work with applicants to determine which bills they would like CERF to consider. If funding allows, each month as applicants income increases, the CERF award will decrease until applicants are able to earn their pre-COVID income.

Governor Murphy announced the creation of a New Jersey [rental assistance](#) program and has advised that more information will be available in mid-June. Initial goals are to begin accepting applications in July and awarding benefits in September. Given the difficulties applicants report with the Unemployment Benefits Program, which was in place well before COVID, there is some concern that the implementation schedule is overly ambitious. Details often direct some programs so there remains the significant possibility that our clients will not be covered by the New Jersey program regardless of the implementation schedule.

REASONS TO H.O.P.E. (Help One Person Everyday)

This week, our H.O.P.E.rs are another group of students – anyone see a theme emerging? This time, the Princeton High Bollywood Club gave us reason to hope. In early May, they launched a CERF fundraiser on social media with a goal of \$1,000. They realized that a gift of this magnitude would help a family stay sheltered and connected for a month, so they set about making it happen. These civic-minded students urged their friends and families to donate and help those in their community who are financially struggling in these difficult times. Driven by the understanding that fellow PHS students might be in need, the club members were determined to succeed and wound up exceeding their goal.

Engaging students in our community response helps foster the next generation of global citizens, and prepares them to take responsibility, lead others, and tackle tomorrow's social and environmental challenges. The Princeton High Bollywood Club, and many teen clubs and groups like them, understand that everyone of us can engage in civic and social efforts to change our community for the better and took it upon themselves to lead this effort. We are grateful for their leadership and their support!

CERF TEAM

Intake Coordinators – this team answers the Human Services phone number and helps potential applicants navigate the application process.

- Katherine Cardona* – Princeton Recreation Department (PRD)
- Kimberly Figueroa-Martinez* – Human Services
- Sindy Sandoval* – Corner House

Steering Committee – in addition to processing intakes, members check to see if applicants have access to reliable sources of food and refer them to available resources when appropriate.

- Emily Becker* – friend of PCF
- Diane Paulsell* – Solidaridad Princeton
- Zoe D'Eugenio-Pinel* – friend of PCF
- Nicole Paulucci – PRD
- Andrea Dinan* – Princeton High School & PCF
- Trinidad Rodriguez* – JW Middle School & PCF
- Jordan Goodwin – Princeton Community Village
- Angie Vargas*/Cecilia Avila* – Arm in Arm
- Sharon Hurley – Princeton Senior Resource Center

* = dual-language speaker

