The COVID-19 pandemic is both a health and economic crisis that has intensified existing social issues such as homelessness/affordable housing, hunger and educational gaps. This year, Valley of the Sun United Way will continue to provide relief for our Maricopa County neighbors struggling in these areas, respond to emerging needs, address racial, social, economic and educational inequities, and when the time is right, help our community rebuild.

In the near-term, we’ll focus our relief efforts on nonprofits and schools to provide support in these areas:

**ACTIVATE: SOLUTIONS**

**HOMELESSNESS/HOUSING**
- Rental and utility assistance to prevent homelessness
- Emergency shelter for individuals and families
- Transitional housing to move families toward independence
- Permanent Supportive Housing support services for families and individuals

**HUNGER**
- Emergency groceries through food banks and pantries
- Prepared meals delivered to seniors
- Prepared congregate meals for families and individuals in a safe setting
- Snack packs, food bags and school gardens to fill meal gaps for students
- Improved access to benefits such as SNAP and WIC

**EDUCATION**
- Quality early education and childcare
- Quality out-of-school time and distance learning programs
- Tutoring and mentoring, including Vello
- Youth leadership development

**EMERGING NEEDS**
- Closing the digital divide through access to affordable quality internet service and equipment
- Workforce development for youth and adults
- Face masks for students and PPE for teachers
- Voter registration and education
- Maricopa County Funeral Assistance

**SYSTEMIC ISSUES**
- Social, racial, economic and education equity
- Community planning to develop a 5-year Impact Agenda
THE NUMBERS

Prior to the global pandemic, 644,000 people in Maricopa County lived on $24,000 or less per year for a family of four. Some of these families are the hardest hit by the economic and health impacts of COVID-19. While statistics continue to come in, one glaring number shows the stress on families throughout our community: in June 2020, unemployment insurance claims increased 711.6% over claims filed in June 2019.

The numbers below from pre-pandemic are staggering, and we expect they are much worse today.

- **644,000** people in Maricopa County live in poverty – 1/3 are children
- **82,000** households are food insecure, meaning that they don’t know where their next meal will come from
- **More than 1/2** of students in Maricopa County are eligible for Free & Reduced Lunch, according to the Dept. of Education
- **7,400** people experience homelessness each night (only 2,000 shelter beds are available in Maricopa County)
- **56%** of Arizona 3rd graders did not reach “Proficient” on the AzMERIT reading test

The Federal Poverty Definition is $2,200/month for a family of 4, yet family expenses are often $2,500+/month for:

- **$815/MONTH** for RENT
- **$200/MONTH** for UTILITIES
- **$1,380/MONTH** for CHILD CARE
- **$192/MONTH** for TRANSPORTATION

And, even more responsibilities and costs factor in:

- **HEALTH CARE**
- **GROCERIES**
- **EMERGENCIES**

**AT THE NEXUS OF OUR COMMUNITY**

Your donation makes an impact in our community:

- **79,205** children received breakfast in their classroom
- **2,188** tenants retained permanent housing
- **635,646** individuals received emergency meals
- **4,058** adults obtained employment
- **7,000** children received school readiness kits
- **573** community members provided with Wise Choices Financial and Nutritional Training
- **1,095** pounds of fresh produce grown and distributed to community gardens through The Garden Harvest Program

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