

The Palm Beach Post

JUPITER

Jupiter is dishing out thousands to local nonprofits with CARES Act money

Sam Howard Palm Beach Post

Published 9:11 a.m. ET Oct. 1, 2020

JUPITER — A small slice of the roughly \$2 trillion federal coronavirus relief package is making its way into town.

Perhaps best known for bankrolling \$1,200 checks to U.S. adults, the CARES Act is also responsible for doling out \$5 billion in community development block grants to boost resiliency to the coronavirus pandemic.

The federal government allocated roughly \$520,000 to Jupiter over multiple funding rounds. Town officials have already decided to use the first portion, about \$179,000, to fund projects by three local non-profit organizations. The three groups are actually slated to receive \$274,500 through town-administered grants.

More: This is how Palm Beach County has spent its CARES Act dollars so far

Jupiter officials previously planned to use other federal grant funding not tied to the pandemic to pay for the full cost, plus about \$36,000 for town consultants, but they could use their latest batch of CARES Act cash to cover the difference, said Satu Oksanen, Jupiter's neighborhood services manager.

The town is setting up a task force to determine what to do with the latest funds, Oksanen said. Officials will likely bounce around various ideas, but Oksanen said it's important they don't duplicate other local efforts tied to the CARES Act.

"It's a real priority for us to get the first set of funds moving because these nonprofits are really wonderful and are doing such good work," Oksanen said. "So we should get the funds out to them as soon as possible."

Members of Congress passed and President Donald Trump signed the CARES Act, formally known as The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, in March. Though the

issue has come up, Congress has not agreed on further coronavirus stimulus plans since the spring.

More: COVID-19 is the culprit: 44th annual Jupiter/Tequesta holiday parade canceled

The Pearl Mae Foundation

Jupiter awarded \$96,500 to the Pearl Mae Foundation. The Indiantown Road-based organization focuses a large part of its mission on helping senior citizens in need of health care or financial assistance.

The group has doubled down on those efforts during the pandemic by starting a program to buy and deliver groceries and household goods to local seniors, keeping them away from often-crowded grocery stores.

Since the spring, the program has delivered food to about 250 individuals, said Lauren Sullivan, the foundation's executive director.

Sullivan said the funding is a critical boost for the Pearl Mae Foundation. She wants to buy an industrial refrigerator and freezer to store more food and to hire delivery drivers. Right now, Sullivan said she's enlisting volunteers.

"The idea is we want to put the money back into the economy, the Jupiter economy," she said. "We're going to hire people in Jupiter who are going through hard times due to COVID."

Merciful Heavens

Another \$25,000 is heading toward Merciful Heavens, a Jupiter-based group that provides food for Thanksgiving to resource-strapped families in the area.

The organization has a slew of related projects, including stocking refrigerators and pantries for families referred by Jupiter's code compliance division and getting groceries and recipes to underprivileged children during the summer.

Like the Pearl Mae Foundation, President Patti Bowman said Merciful Heavens has added work during the pandemic. During the spring, Bowman said the organization set up shop on a weekly basis in the parking lot of the Jupiter Branch Library and offered groceries to families needing some help.

"It shouldn't be this way," Bowman said. "There shouldn't be hungry people anywhere."

Bowman and Sullivan said they plan to team up in November to deliver Merciful Heavens' holiday meals to senior citizens.

The influx of money comes at an important time, Bowman said. Her usual October fundraiser has been scrapped and without the grant, she figured Merciful Heavens may have only been able to feed around 200 families this Thanksgiving. Last year, the organization served about 900 families.

"We hope to feed as many people as we possibly can," she said.

MyClinic

The final awardee, at least so far, is MyClinic. The independent, not-for-profit clinic offers free healthcare at its facility on Indiantown Road.

MyClinic is receiving \$153,000 to grow both in terms of its physical space and in the services it offers, executive director Amy Pepper said.

The clinic plans to expand its building to better accommodate infection control and allow extra space between people inside. MyClinic owns the building and leases part of the facility to the Health Care District of Palm Beach County's C. L. Brumback Primary Care Clinic. Right now, Pepper said her clinic is currently offering a range of services via telehealth appointments.

MyClinic also wants to do more referrals of patients to other entities for help beyond the scope of medicine, such as for rent or food assistance. Pepper envisions growing the clinic's mental health services, as well.

"MyClinic would like to be seen as kind of a central access point for people in need. ... We hope to be that central point so that people can enter one organization and be screened for a variety of needs."

The USA Today Network contributed to this report.

showard@pbpost.com

@SamuelHHoward