



Harvard Pilgrim
HealthCare Foundation

newsrelease

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 4, 2020

**HARVARD PILGRIM HEALTH CARE FOUNDATION GIVES
\$60,000 TO SPONSOR GREATER PORTLAND COVID-19 RELIEF MEAL
DELIVERY PROJECT AND HELP GET PEOPLE BACK TO WORK**

*Cooking for Community and YMCA of Southern Maine will Coordinate with Local
Restaurants to Prepare and Deliver 1,000 Weekly Meals for Older Adults, Immigrant
Families in Need*

(Wellesley, MA) – Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation today announced it will contribute \$60,000 to Cooking for Community and the YMCA of Southern Maine to sponsor and coordinate the greater Portland COVID-19 Relief Meal Delivery Project. Starting Tuesday, May 5th and running through May 30th initially, Cooking for Community will coordinate with local restaurants to prepare 1,000 weekly meals for older adults, immigrant families, and others in need in and around Portland, Maine. As part of this project, meals will be delivered to homes by the YMCA of Southern Maine two times per week, serving low-income residents in Biddeford, Freeport, New Gloucester, and Portland. As a result of the Cooking for Community and YMCA's sponsorship of the meals program, at least 24 local people will now be back to work helping others.

"Through Cooking for Community's ability to work with local restaurants, and the Y's ability to deliver nutritious and delicious meals, we can help support our most vulnerable neighbors during these challenging times," said Michael Carson, president and CEO of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care and chair of the Foundation's board of directors. "This project is designed to support social distancing, take care of those most at-risk for complications from COVID-19, and help put people whose jobs have been impacted by COVID-19 closures back to work. The Harvard Pilgrim Foundation has initiated similar meal delivery projects in Mass., NH. and Connecticut, and we remain committed to providing necessary resources to support our communities."

As part of this project, Cooking for Community and the YMCA will connect restaurants, their employees, and locally farmed goods to create easy to reheat, packaged meals, using primarily locally sourced and donated ingredients. Chefs will be able to buy fresh ingredients sourced primarily from local growers, farmers and fishers, and supplement it with donated perishable food from the Good Shepherd Food Bank. Multiple restaurants are involved in this initiative including Chaval, Little Giant, Gather, Mr. Tuna, Union, and Istanbul Café.

"This partnership with Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation will enable us to serve hundreds of older adults, immigrants, those high risk to COVID-19, and unemployed individuals across the greater Portland area, many of

whom lost access to healthy, cooked food when the pandemic hit,” said Ellie Linen Low of Cooking for Community, a newly formed initiative between food producers, restaurants and agencies to help people experiencing food insecurity. Based in Portland, Cooking for Community’s goal is to create a movement that injects essential nourishment, resources and hope back into people’s lives during this crisis and beyond.

According to Helen L. Breña, President & CEO of YMCA of Southern Maine, YMCA staff will pick up and deliver meals twice a week, allowing them to also provide wellness check-ins and connection to individuals isolated by the pandemic. Meal delivery participants will be identified by the YMCA and their potential partner organizations, including York County Community Action; Freeport Community Services; Maine People’s Alliance; Freeport Friends; ILAP; Opportunity Alliance; Gray, New Gloucester, and Bread of Life Food Pantries; New Gloucester Recreation; and Gray Recreation.

“People may experience hunger and isolation due to a number of issues brought on by the pandemic,” said Breña. “The Y is committed to strengthening our community and, as part of that, ensuring our neighbors don’t go hungry. We welcome the opportunity to partner with Cooking for Community and Harvard Pilgrim Foundation – we truly are stronger when we work together.”

Harvard Pilgrim Foundation recently announced more than \$770,000 in support for more than 55 Maine nonprofits as part of its \$3.5 million COVID-19 relief efforts throughout the region. This includes the following grants: Good Shepherd Food Bank, \$150,000; United Way of Eastern Maine, \$60,000; United Way of Greater Portland, \$25,000; and Boys & Girls Club of Portland, \$10,000.

About Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation

Created in 1980, The Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation supports Harvard Pilgrim's mission to improve the quality and value of health care for the people and communities we serve. The Harvard Pilgrim Foundation provides the tools, training and leadership to help build healthy communities throughout Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. In 2019, the Harvard Pilgrim Foundation awarded nearly \$2.9 million in grants to 990 nonprofit organizations in the region. Since its inception in 1980, the Foundation has awarded \$155 million in funds and resources throughout the four states. For more information, please visit

www.harvardpilgrim.org/foundation

About Cooking for Community

Formed on April 2, 2020, the Cooking for Community collaborative has sourced, prepared and delivered more than 2,000 meals to people in need. This innovative program model presents an efficient solution to a multitude of crises erupting during this unforeseen time, while complementing and amplifying the work of traditional social service programs. The intent is to catalyze a ripple effect through our Maine community supporting restaurants, local food supply chains and people in need. To learn more, please visit

www.cookingforcommunity.org

About the YMCA of Southern Maine

The YMCA of Southern Maine is a nonprofit organization committed to building strong kids, individuals, families, and communities through programs and services that promote a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all, regardless of ability to pay. The YMCA of Southern Maine's four branches, four before-and-after-school sites, five camps, and childcare center serve over 30,000 individuals each year. Last year, the YMCA of Southern Maine provided more than \$2.3 million in financial assistance and program support to ensure access to all YMCA programs. The YMCA of Southern Maine is committed to diversity and providing an inclusive community for all. To learn more, please visit www.ymcaofsouthernmaine.org.

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