

Community Foundation of Western PA and Eastern OH initial funders of “Fill a Glass with Hope” Fresh Milk Program

Sharon, PA—(August 30th, 2017) Sometimes a great idea needs a boost to turn that idea into reality. And, the Community Foundation of Western PA and Eastern OH recognized the potential and impact that a program of the Community Food Warehouse of Mercer County was pursuing and that it would take a little funding to get a program off and running. The “Fill a Glass with Hope” fresh milk program started in 2016 with an initial grant of \$5,000 from the Community Foundation.

Launched in April of that year, the Fill a Glass with Hope milk distribution program, the first statewide charitable fresh milk program, is a collaborative effort between Feeding Pennsylvania and partners with the American Dairy Association of the Northeast, the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program and the Pennsylvania Dairymen’s Association and locally, Dean’s Dairy, to supply fresh milk to families through food pantries.

Locally, the first food pantry that the fresh milk was delivered to was the Salvation Army of Mercer County. Currently there are now seven sites in Mercer County including the Episcopal Community Services of Sharon, the Cedar Avenue Church of God Food Pantry in Sharon, the Salvation Army in Greenville, Sts. Peter & Paul Food Pantry in Sharon, Loaves and Fishes Pantry in Mercer and the Community Counseling program, which offer families fresh milk. The hope is to expand the program to three additional sites in 2018.

“There is nothing more basic in a child’s upbringing than being able to enjoy a fresh glass of milk. The board of the Shenango Valley Foundation, which is an affiliate of the Community Foundation of Western PA & Eastern OH, saw it as a privilege to help in launching, and subsequently supporting the expansion of this vital program,” explained Kyle English, executive director of the Community Foundation.

Lori Weston, executive director of the Community Food Warehouse of Mercer County agreed. “Milk is one of the most requested items of food banks, yet it is rarely donated. Hungry families are missing out on the essential nutrients milk provides.

“So far the milk output from this past January through June 3 has been 5,599 half-gallons of milk. We see that the demand increases significantly over the holidays. We are projecting just under 13,000 half-gallons of milk will be distributed by year’s end to approximately 660 households,” Weston said.

“This is a unique program in the U.S. for food banks,” Mimi Prada, agency relations/PR manager for the Community Food Warehouse said. “The program set a precedent in Pennsylvania and organizations are looking at us as a model. This community, Western Pennsylvania and Mercer County are on the map for the fresh milk program.”

Funds to support the Fill a Glass with Hope program are provided through grants of the Community Foundation of Western PA and Eastern OH, corporate sponsors and individual donations. In 2017, the Community Foundation of Western PA and Eastern OH, along with other funds housed in the foundation, funded the expansion of the program.

“We initially provided \$5,000 from our pool of unrestricted money for the pilot project, then another grant at the end of last year for \$6,664 for its expansion. In this last grant, the

Shenango Valley Foundation board used \$3,500 in unrestricted money, the Strimbu Memorial Fund granted \$1,500 and the Community Foundation provided a grant of \$1,664 from our administrative budget. Unrestricted money is provided to the board by donors so that it can support initiatives that will benefit our community,” said English. “Fill a Glass With Hope is a perfect example of what can be accomplished when local non-profits, government leaders and private sector companies work together to reach a common goal.”

Founded in 1981, the mission of the Community Foundation of Western PA and Eastern is to ensure that donors are able to use the foundation to support causes that they hold close to their hearts, both now and in perpetuity. The Community Foundation, including its six affiliate foundations, has over 700 funds that contain upwards of \$86 million. These funds grant over \$5 million per year to support charitable causes throughout the region.