

COVID-19 RESPONSE FUND PARTNER PROFILE: MICAH 6 COMMUNITY

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United Way for Southeastern Michigan and our partners work to ensure that our region's most vulnerable families have the support they need to weather the short- and long-term impacts of the coronavirus outbreak. The [COVID-19 Community Response Fund](#) allows us to rapidly deploy funds to organizations that are working tirelessly to help individuals and families access food, shelter, health care and other critical resources.

As of May 14, more than \$13 million had been [awarded to nearly 500 organizations](#).

We'll continue to share more stories of how together, we're helping families in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties weather this crisis. [Visit our blog to learn more about how we're responding](#).

[Micah 6 Community](#) works to combat food insecurity and increase access to healthy options by providing fresh, local produce. The organization partnered with Oakland County growers to turn 1.5 acres of land in Pontiac into community gardens. This project turned into an entrepreneurial venture that serves long-term needs in the neighborhood.

In 2017, the [Sprout Fresh Food Store](#) opened in Pontiac to provide fresh produce, year-round. Sprout meets more than one need in the community. The store also provides soft-skills training to employ and empower its neighbors.

When COVID-19 began to impact the community, schools closed and layoffs mounted. At that time, it was clear that for the foreseeable future, Micah 6 Community's mission would be providing free fruits and vegetables to anyone in need.



Bags of fresh produce from Micah 6 Community's Sprout Fresh store ready to go to families. Photo: Shelby Gansler

UNCERTAIN TIMES

Unfortunately, like many community nonprofits, Micah 6 Community is not immune to the impacts of COVID-19.

In spring, the community garden is usually buzzing with activity. Right now, it is silent. Neighborhood meetings and summer kids programs hang in what feels like an eternal limbo.

"Right now, we can't meet, and we aren't even sure what options are going to be available this summer in terms of field trips, get togethers or large events. So, we have to wait," said Coleman Yoakum, executive director of Micah 6 Community.

Nonprofits are rooted in service. When neighbors are in need, they work to meet those needs, and that's just what Micah 6 Community did.

Since March, the small nonprofit has focused their efforts on helping local families get food and other basic necessities.

"While enrichment opportunities like trips to the DIA are great, it doesn't really matter if your neighbor can't eat or if they're struggling because they've been laid off," Coleman said. "Our focus just got a lot more basic. Bags of food, helping with utilities and making sure everyone has toiletries has taken the front seat in our community care."



A volunteer with Micah 6 Community prepares bags of produce to go to families. Photo: Shelby Gansler

STAYING UNITED

With the support from United Way for Southeastern Michigan's Community Response Fund and other donors, Micah 6 Community has provided 1,400 bags of produce to Oakland County families.

In addition, Micah 6 Community has increased access to healthy food beyond their backyard by delivering to [Community Housing Network](#), [Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency](#), and [Lighthouse](#).

Volunteers prepare bags weekly to help additional small organizations like [Accent Pontiac](#), [Pontiac SUN Time Bank](#), the [Underground Church](#), [House of Hope](#) and several group homes.

"I'm humbled by the dedication, commitment and hard work of those in our community. I'm blessed to serve alongside them," said Kathy Cota, Micah 6 Community Volunteer.

Yoakum knows his organization—and our community—will get through these uncertain times by staying united.

"We are stronger together," he said. "Stay home. Check on your neighbors. Share your needs with folks who can help. We're going to get through this."

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