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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OU establishes TEAM: The Engagement And Mobilization group to support community

New initiative supports delivery of services to those in need of health care, food, housing and social support, among other immediate needs

 March 24, 2020

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While now is the time to take precautionary steps and practice the preventive measures recommended by the CDC and Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer's "Stay Safe, Stay Home" announcement, it is also a time for some in the Oakland University community to come together to meet the needs of the community.

"We are mindful that it is of paramount importance to maintain good health and social distancing, yet we know there are many needs in our community that Oakland University campus community members can assist in fulfilling," said OU President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz. "That is why OU has established The Engagement And Mobilization, or TEAM, group to find places where we can help our community through this crisis."

Working in conjunction with state, county and local agencies, TEAM is supporting the delivery of services to those in need of health care, food, housing and social support, among other immediate needs.

“One example of our commitment to the community is through the creation of an Oakland County distribution center right here in our Oakland Center,” added Kevin Corcoran, Chief Community Engagement Officer at Oakland University. “Although people will not be able to just drive to campus and pick up food, the Oakland Center will serve as a place we will be gathering and sending out food and other necessity items to the community –especially to those without transportation – through a group of volunteers.”



Corcoran added that all necessary precautionary health measures will be taken to protect volunteers and those community members being served. And, for those who are at home, virtual volunteer opportunities are also available.

“We recognize that in this time in which physical distance is essential, we need to strive for social solidarity and human connection,” Corcoran said.

Those interested in volunteering in person or virtually, can email engagewithou@oakland.edu (<mailto:engagewithou@oakland.edu>) or call the communication hotline (248) 556-3330 for more information.



Volunteers can also visit [mycovidresponse.org](https://www.mycovidresponse.org) (<https://www.mycovidresponse.org/>). This site, led by The Pontiac Community Foundation and Oakland University, has taken the lead in creating a centralized database connecting a network of volunteers and a wide range of community organizations and agencies.

Together, they are all working to connect people in need with resources during this time of social disruption caused by the pandemic.

Jennifer Lucarelli, Ph.D., OU interdisciplinary Health Sciences professor helping lead the effort said, “This system is a first of its kind in this area and is facilitating communication and improving organizational efficiency. It’s helping reduce confusion and frustration for residents in need. The first few days have successfully connected people with food resources and now we are expanding to meet the diversity of needs, including providing social support for those experiencing social isolation and offering educational materials to families who are now home schooling for the first time.”

Current volunteer opportunities include:

- Working at Pontiac High School or the Oakland Center to distribute food to school children.
- Collaborating with OUWB SOM students to provide groceries to families who visit the Gary Burnstein Clinic in Pontiac.
- Delivering food and supplies to people's doorsteps
- Assembling boxes of food and supplies for distribution
- Volunteering at community food distribution events
- Providing social support through e-mail, phone and/or video calls
- Virtually tutoring of K-16 students
- Collecting, sorting and distributing books for children
- Staffing phone lines
- Providing child care for essential workers

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