Housing

Housing Relief Fund to aid idled workers; group asks for donations

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No county in Utah has seen more jobs lost per capita in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic than Grand County—more than 500—nearly 18 percent of the local workforce. To address this problem, the Moab COVID-19 Housing Relief Fund has been created and its members seek donations to help people struggling to make rent or pay a mortgage.

Administered by a subgroup of the COVID-19 Emergency Shelter Task Force, which consists of the City of Moab, Grand County, the Housing Authority of Southeastern Utah and the Moab Valley Multicultural Center, the fund is taking donations for those facing financial hardship, with priority given to those who have “limited or no access” to other types of relief, such as stimulus checks, unemployment insurance, or any other relief.

Tenants will work with their landlord to apply for relief and fund administrators will send checks directly to the landlord or designated payee.

Donations can be mailed to PO Box 55, Moab, UT 84532. Checks should be made out to “MVMC” with “Housing Relief Fund” written in the memo line. Donations can also be made online by visiting moabmc.org/covid-donate.

“We definitely recognize 1,200 bucks [in stimulus money] is not going to make or break a lot of people,” said Kaitlin Myers, representing the City of Moab. “We don’t know how much money we’re going to get.” To date, roughly $9,800 had been donated, with the amount ranging from $25 to $1,000 or more.

Myers said beneficiaries would get their rent or mortgage paid on time, with the idea that the payment will help them catch up quicker after landlords agreed to defer rent for April.
and May. The numbers demonstrate “a significant need for financial assistance. If just 50 respondents need almost $30,000 in housing relief, what does that mean for the needs of our entire community as the May rent or mortgage payment approaches?” wrote Myers.

A small survey of 50 affected workers revealed that slightly more than half of them will not be able to pay rent next month. Nearly 30 percent of the 50 had to defer all or a portion of April’s rent, according to the multicultural center, which reported the total deferred amount for April was more than $10,000, or $678 per person. The figure jumps to nearly $19,400 for May, or an average of nearly $700 per person.

“While there are many COVID-19 relief funds to donate to, and I am confident I am not the first to ask you to donate to those in need, I ask you to consider donating anyway,” said Myers in an email.

Who is eligible?

Tenants who have lost income as a result of COVID-19 are eligible to apply. Landlords are not eligible but can and should work with tenants to submit an application on their behalf.

Applicants must live within the Grand County School District and must demonstrate a loss of income as a result of COVID-19.

Applicants can file as a family, defined as two or more people living in a household, or as a single applicant if they live alone or in a roommate situation if each roommate is responsible for their portion of rent or mortgage.