



Cunningham Township

Danielle Chynoweth, Supervisor

205 WEST GREEN ST • URBANA, IL 61801
(217) 384-4144 • FAX: (217) 367-7063
WWW.CUNNINGHAMTOWNSHIP.ORG

April 9, 2020

NOTE: The Annual Town Meeting, originally scheduled for Tuesday, April 14th at 6pm, has been cancelled due to the COVID 19 outbreak.

Town Bills

- Town fund = \$55,850.54
- General Assistance Fund = \$70,333.53 in expenditures
- TOTAL: \$126,184.07 in expenditures

Assistance Statistics as of today

- **General Assistance**
 - 133 Current Participants (up from 96 last month)
 - 55 are homeless (36 last month)
 - 26 Participants found temporary housing for COVID19 Shelter-In Place
 - 80 males / 53 females / 0 transgender or gender non-conforming
 - 46.3 is the average age
 - 243 total Urbana residents served by GA July 1, 2019 to present
 - 99 total homeless Urbana residents served by GA July 1, 2019 to present.
- **Rental Assistance**
 - 5 (5 last month)
 - 3 eviction prevention cases
 - 2 move in assistance
 - Total households served July to present = 87 (average of 11 per month)

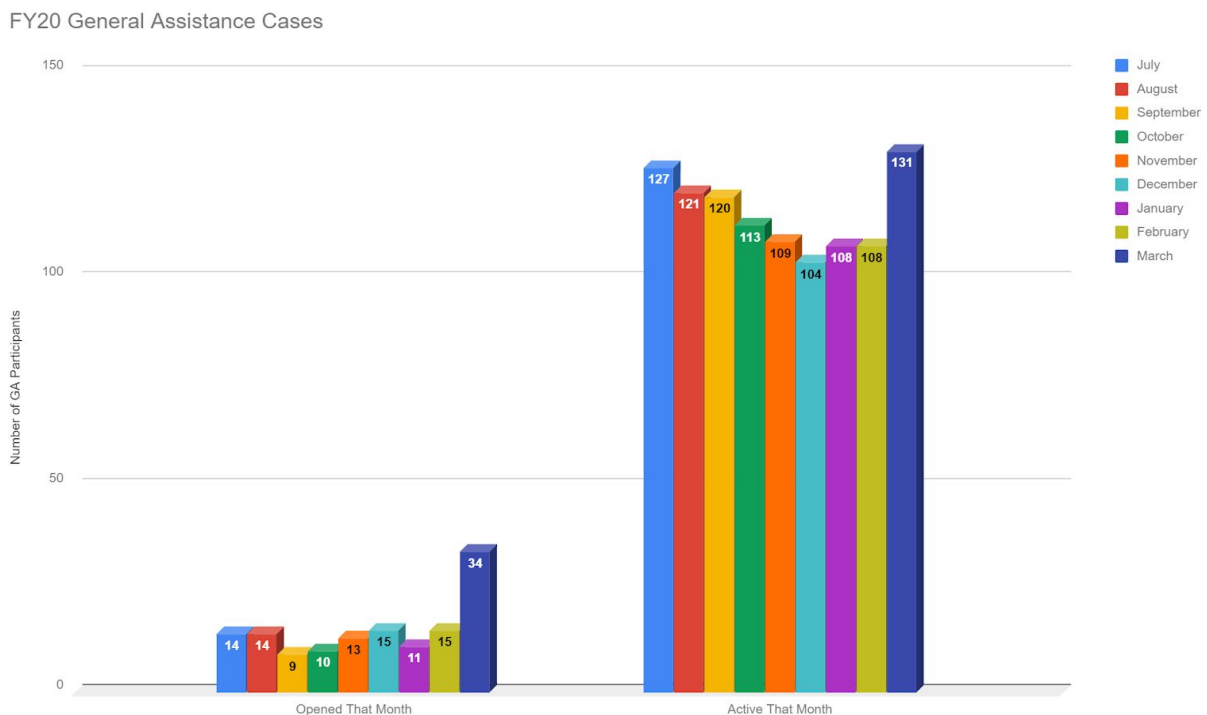
Assistance Increases and Budget Impacts

Rental Assistance cases levelled off a few months ago and have stayed steady this month. As the federal unemployment toll rises to the highest in history, we expect fewer people to have earned income applying for our program. We do expect more people applying with unemployment benefits and have adjusted our program to prepare for that. I can not determine whether we will see an overall increase in this fiscal year or not, but likely not much. Most of this need will come after the stay on evictions is lifted and people run out of stimulus funding.

We have seen a significant increase in GA and expect to see the cases double or more over the coming months. To avoid an increase in staffing costs, I have streamlined processes so that the

same number of staff can serve significantly more participants. We will likely need to do a budget amendment as a result before the end of the year. At this time it is near impossible to anticipate how long the economic impact will last, but with the extension of the Stay At Home order and the University of Illinois moving to online courses for the summer, we could see ramifications for a year or more. We will be using our General Assistance reserves to cover the rising costs. It should be noted that we were already deficit spending this year on the Personal Allowances line item, so I expect we will need to address this in next year's budget and with a request for an increase in the levy.

Here is a graph showing General Assistance this fiscal year. On the left are case opens (34 last month). On the right is the number of cases each month (131 last month).



COVID Response

On March 15th, with the announcement of the first COVID-19 infection in Champaign County our community was already facing significant challenges in housing with:

- Over 350 residents already street homeless
- 66% of Urbana renters already rent-burdened
- No same-day emergency shelter for parents with children (Regional Office of Education ended their hotel voucher program last May).

After March 15th, lack of stable housing moved from a perceived “personal” crisis to a public health crisis. Low-income residents are likely to be some of the hardest hit in our community by the coronavirus since:

- It is nearly impossible to stock provisions for 2-3 week quarantine without funds.
- The homeless are exposed to shelters or the streets and can not self-quarantine.
- Many struggle with disabilities and chronic health conditions.

In the past four weeks, CTSO has worked hard to pivot quickly to adapt to and address the needs of the low income Urbana community. CTSO has adjusted existing programs and processes, launched new programs, convened partners, and raised money to fulfill unmet needs. Please see our expanded website at www.cunninghamtownship.org. We have:

- Convened with our County-wide Rental Assistance Partners, United Way and Community Foundation to launch the **COVID Relief Fund**, providing rental assistance to households out of work because of COVID.
- Worked to **ensure immigrants can qualify for local COVID relief** since our immigrant neighbors face great hardship as they are largely excluded from federal benefits. We convened a listening session with immigrant support groups, funders, and rental assistance partners to meet the need in ways that address the language and security needs of this population.
- Created **many ways to apply for assistance**: online form, PDF, over the phone, or in person through a video doorbell system, applications on the door, and mail slot. Applications are in **English and Spanish**. We have asked homeless partners to
- Ended terminations and greatly streamlined our General Assistance application process. **We now provide immediate support for out-of-work Urbana residents** and then follow up to help participants with additional paperwork requirements such as unemployment submission, since that office is overloaded, or Social Security Administration, since that office is closed and the website is unreliable.
- Changed our programming so that **residents receiving unemployment can more easily qualify for our Rental Assistance Program** - their rent can be up to 70% of their income and still qualify.
- Created a **COVID Resource Guide** for low-income residents in English and Spanish, distributing it through our bucket brigade and to local shelters.
- **Researched unemployment and stimulus funding**, providing this to partners, so we can work together to help local residents access these entitlements.
- Provided **input to our State Representative, Housing Action Illinois, and Illinois Progressive Caucus** on state-level changes needed to address the housing crisis exacerbated by COVID.
- **Planted our township garden early** so we can have free, fresh food as soon as possible.

Angel Donor Fund - COVID Response

Our angel donor fund has gone viral with over \$12,000 in donations in the past month. We have carefully prospected local needs so that we provide services in a way that fills unaddressed gaps. As a result, we are currently supporting the following initiatives with Angel Donor funds and will continue to prospect needs and work to fill gaps.

Weekly Bucket Brigade of Stay-At-Home Provisions

Very low income and out of work residents do not have the funds to stock up to stay at home and self-quarantine. Township participants live off \$16 a day in General Assistance and food stamps -- and many are disabled, immune-compromised, elderly, or limited mobility.

In response, we have created a weekly "Bucket Brigade" to deliver prepared meals, two weeks of provisions, toiletries, cleaning supplies, and our COVID resource guide to the lowest income residents of Urbana and surrounding areas. This includes homeless residents precariously housed with friends, disabled residents, low-income families, and immigrants. **Since March 25th, we have delivered to 76 households.** It costs us \$45 per bucket to deliver ~\$200 in value.

Our bucket brigade is done in partnership with Channing Murray Foundation and the Red Herring Restaurant with help from Sola Gratia Farm, H2O Salon, Grace Lutheran Church, St. Andrews Church, and township friends gathering and donating items. Spontaneously, our musician friends have been hosting virtual fundraising concerts for this project - thanks to Emily McKown, Matt Turino, Clare Johnson, Mike Ingram, and others.

If you know of someone in need of provisions please email intern4@cunninghamtownship.org or have them call us at 217-384-4144.

Motel Vouchers for our Homeless Neighbors

We have committed to Austin's Place, the local winter Women's Shelter, and CU at Home, which runs the local Men's Shelter, to ensure every homeless person who needs a place to stay for the night can have one. We are paying for motel stays, at low negotiated rates, for anyone past shelter capacity or anyone who has symptoms. We are also providing bridge housing for any homeless family who has been assessed by Centralized Intake for the Homeless and is awaiting room at the Emergency Family Shelter to move in.

Special Needs of Township Participants

We are in weekly contact with all 150 of our General Assistance Participants and other Urbana residents who call our office in need, surveying them for their safety needs. Thanks to our staff, volunteers, and angel donors, we can deliver to their home over the counter medication, masks, thermometers -- even dog food -- so they can self-quarantine in place.