

#50ForFood launched to benefit Latino, rural communities
written by Newspack Team | April 16, 2020



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As Congregate Charlottesville and Charlottesville Community Cares worked through its first campaign to aid those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, there still were hundreds of people who had applied to the program but couldn't get help. One of the reasons was because some were outside of the borders of Charlottesville and Albemarle County.

Christina Rivera, co-president of Congregate Charlottesville, also learned that Sin Barreras had received many calls from the Latino community, asking for help to buy food and pay for rent.

That led to Charlottesville Community Cares teaming up with Congregate Charlottesville to raise \$50,000 through the #50forFood campaign to assist those needing help buying groceries. Sin Barreras is expected to receive half of the money through gift cards. Congregate Charlottesville will receive the rest and will disburse it to the surrounding counties.

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on behalf of the Latino community because many of these people worked in the service industry and have lost their jobs.



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“They don’t know how the system works. They don’t know how to apply for help. They don’t know much about the city or the county,” she said.

Experts have said that the hurdles that Latinos face include a lack of access to regular medical care, job loss and language barriers that keep them from staying up to date to information pertaining to the pandemic. For example, between 10% to 20% of the materials on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have been translated into Spanish, according to Charlottesville Tomorrow archives.

Latinos account for nearly 6% of the population in Albemarle and 5.6 % in Charlottesville, according to Dr. Max Luna, an associate professor of medicine at the University of Virginia’s Specialty Care division of UVA Health and founder of the Latino Health Initiative, an organization empowering communities with health literacy.

In the state, they account for about 11% of the population and the figure stands at 17% nationally. These numbers are expecting to grow in the next two decades. About 60 million Latinos live in the U.S., the Pew Research Center states, and a great number of that population are employed in services industries, such as leisure and hospitality.

To receive the grocery gift card, Smedile will be taking into consideration the types of jobs people had prior to the pandemic and the duration of their employment, as well as those who recently immigrated to the U.S.

Although Cville Community Cares’ online grocery form explicitly instructed it was seeking to assist those in Charlottesville and Albemarle, it still received requests from households in surrounding counties. Cville Community Cares received 700 requests in the first 15 days online, and about 150 of the calls were from outside counties.

“We don’t have a deadline,” Rivera said. “We feel like the need is urgent. We don’t want to wait until we reach a certain mark before we start helping people.”



Albemarle High School ninth-grader Yatzil Romero Rodriguez was expected to assume the class officer position this academic school year. The 15-year-old said she ran for the position in hopes of making a difference.

In the first campaign, the organizations distributed nearly \$150,000 in microgrants to families and about \$40,000 for groceries. Rivera said her team either issued people a grocery gift card or went grocery shopping and delivered items to people, especially those who cannot risk compromising their health.

Sara Tansey, coordinator for the Cville Community Cares Grocery Team, said there are nearly 145 households in the surrounding counties that still need help.

“We want to honor people who are putting in request with us,” Tansey said. “We’re just trying to raise money to do that.”

Donations can be made at Checks can be sent to Congregate Charlottesville, PO Box 2293,
Charlottesville, VA 22902.