



WOODY AND GAYLE HUNT
FAMILY FOUNDATION

For Immediate Release

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COUNTY OF EL PASO, EPiSO/BORDER INTERFAITH, WOODY AND GAYLE HUNT FAMILY FOUNDATION LAUNCH FUND TO PUT CASH IN THE HANDS OF EL PASO FAMILIES

Fund will help El Paso families that have been economically impacted by COVID-19

EL PASO, TX - Today, the County of El Paso, in partnership with the Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Foundation, El Paso Interreligious Sponsoring Organization (EPiSO)/Border Interfaith and the Family Independence Initiative (FII), announced a new effort to put cash in the hands of families struggling with the COVID-induced economic slowdown and fighting their way out of poverty: The El Paso County COVID-19 Emergency Relief Assistance Fund.

Thanks to initial investments of \$275,000 from the County of El Paso and \$175,000 from anonymous national funders, as well as a \$500,000, five-year commitment from the Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Foundation, at least 1,000 families in El Paso County will be able to use the COVID-19 Emergency Relief Assistance Fund to access up to \$500 in unrestricted cash, which they can use to cover any expense or financial obligation. The initial fund will include \$550,000 for 2020.

“We have all read reports that nearly half of Americans do not have enough cash on hand to meet a \$400 emergency,” said El Paso County Judge Ricardo Samaniego. “And that was before the COVID-19 pandemic closed businesses and stifled economic activity across the region. Many aid programs create backwards incentives, requiring people to show how needy they are instead of how resourceful they can be. FII turns the traditional model on its head. This approach will be a game-changer for many in El Paso.”

The fund will be overseen by El Paso County, and managed by FII’s UpTogether platform, which during COVID-19 is processing more than \$100 million in cash disbursements. By blending technology with community support systems, FII trusts and invests directly in people living with low incomes so they can work collectively to achieve prosperity. UpTogether allows people experiencing poverty to build and strengthen their social networks and access unrestricted financial transfers so they

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has worked with over 4,000 households, who have seen average increases in their monthly incomes of 23 percent and in their personal savings of 400 percent. The end goal is to give families a boost out of poverty and move toward self-sufficiency.

“Our model is about letting families lead, rather than prescribing what they should be doing. Families living in poverty have the solutions to achieve economic mobility; we just need to invest in their initiative and goals,” said Ivanna Neri, FII Partnership Director. “At this time of unprecedented economic upheaval, we are excited to work with El Paso leaders to introduce an approach that invests in the strength and initiative of low-income families while promoting and strengthening social networks.”

The Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Foundation is making an initial contribution of \$100,000 to the El Paso County COVID-19 Emergency Relief Assistance Fund as part of its longer-term \$500,000 investment in FII’s anti-poverty model who will work with El Paso families to achieve economic prosperity. The foundation has committed to a \$100,000 challenge grant for each of the next five years, up to 100,000 made in the first year.

“This innovative effort brings a refreshing approach to address family poverty and economic stability,” said Fr. Pablo Matta of EPISO/Border Interfaith. “We congratulate the Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Foundation and the County of El Paso for their foresight to pioneer a long-term effort to support struggling families, and we encourage others to join in investing in this pathway to build regional prosperity.”

FII will partner with EPISO/Border Interfaith to ensure that harder-to-reach families are aware of the El Paso County COVID-19 Emergency Relief Assistance Fund and that they are able access these new financial resources for families in our region.

“I am proud El Paso County is partnering on this initiative that will empower people, helping to bring them more financial stability,” said Precinct 2 Commissioner David Stout. “Data-driven decision making is key, even more so in times where dollars are scarce, and the positive outcomes that have proven to result from this type of program can have long lasting impacts in so many aspects, from the economy, to healthcare, to even public safety. I can’t think of a smarter way to deploy our precious CARES Act funding.”

“For nearly 20 years, FII’s approach to tackling poverty by supporting the strength and self-determination of working families has shown impressive results,” said Woody L. Hunt, Chairman of the Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Foundation. “We are excited to bring FII’s successful model to El Paso County families as they navigate financially difficult times. This investment will also help us reimagine how we tackle poverty in the Borderplex region moving forward.”

Applications for the El Paso COVID-19 Emergency Relief Assistance Fund will be available mid-October in English and Spanish at www.EPCounty.com Cash transfers will be distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis to qualifying households. To be eligible, households must: reside within the County of El Paso but outside the City limits of El Paso; have an income at or below 80% AMFI for the local El Paso County area or show eligibility for or enrollment in means-tested benefits programs such as SNAP; and provide documentation that they have experienced a financial hardship due to COVID-19.

Awardees will receive funds via transfers; to their banking institution or with a prepaid card. Delegate agencies are prepared to assist eligible households who do not have immediate access to a computer.

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FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

El Paso County: Irene G. Valenzuela, (915) 276-6549 or igvalenzuela@epcounty.com

Chris Lechuga, 915-274-2407 or clechuga@rabengroup.com

FII: Rae Oglesby, Rae@fii.org

EPISO/BorderInterFaith: Joe Rubio, jrubio.vip@gmail.com

About the County of El Paso:

Delivering sound and exceptional public services to the people of El Paso County through judicious, efficient, and responsive government, and the conscientious development of ideas that produce compassionate solutions to our community's obligations, challenges, and ever changing demands.

About the Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Foundation:

The Woody and Gayle Hunt Family Foundation is one of the Borderplex region's preeminent private family foundations focused on creating a globally competitive region. Since 1987, it has made grants and commitments of more than \$111 million in individuals and institutions working to transform education, improve healthcare, advance regional economic and cultural development, and create a greater quality of life for all Borderplex residents.

About the Family Independence Initiative:

The Family Independence Initiative trusts and invests directly in people living with low incomes so they can work individually and collectively to achieve prosperity. Through our technology platform, UpTogether, people experiencing poverty can build and strengthen their social networks and access

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About the El Paso Interreligious Sponsoring Organization (EPISO)/Border Interfaith:

The El Paso Interreligious Sponsoring Organization (EPISO) / Border Interfaith is a broad-based organization affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation that has developed local leadership to address quality of life issues for nearly 40 years. It works across religious, racial, ethnic, economic, generational and neighborhood lines and has successfully leveraged hundreds of millions of dollars for colonia infrastructure, education reform and parental engagement, neighborhood improvements, immigration, wage theft and payday lending protection, and workforce training for the good of the whole community. EPISO/Border Interfaith builds relational power to strengthen our communities and bring about a more just society.

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