

They took care of us.
They protected our families.

And so we took care of theirs.

The Brave of Heart Fund was established in early 2020 to provide charitable grants and emotional support services to families of the frontline healthcare workers, volunteers, and support staff whose lives were lost in the fight against COVID-19.

For over 20 years, E4E Relief has been steadfast in awarding disaster relief grants, serving our corporate partners and their employees around the world. In April 2020, we began a journey unlike any other in our organization's history. In partnership with the New York Life and Cigna Foundations, we established the Brave of Heart Fund, a relief effort dedicated to providing charitable grants and emotional support services to families of the frontline healthcare workers, volunteers, and support staff whose lives were lost in the fight against COVID-19.

This summary delves into the impact of our founding donors, New York Life and Cigna, and the over 2,000 additional donations we received to provide relief to affected families. E4E Relief is deeply honored to steward this program and award relief grants at such an enormous scale.

As the leading provider of innovative philanthropic solutions that rapidly and effectively respond to crisis and hardships, we realized early on that disaster relief caused by a global pandemic required an approach that had to match the size and significance of this event: A healthcare crisis never seen nor experienced in our lifetimes. We weren't sure of the exact approach, but together with our donors, we knew we needed to help. We did, and the end result was an incredible outpouring of support and love for our frontline healthcare workers and their families.

While our hearts break for these families, we have attempted to capture the sacrifices their loved ones made and their heroic commitment to do their jobs trying to save the lives of others – even in the toughest of circumstances. Collectively, our grantee families are linked to frontline healthcare workers that were primary wage earners and caretakers, parents and grandparents, children and siblings. Individually, they are souls now absent in our world – and whose memories we wish to honor via the Brave of Heart Fund.

They took care of us. They protected our families.
And so we took care of theirs.



Holly

Holly Welch Stubbing
Former President & CEO
E4E Relief

The Stories

Ultimately, The Brave of Heart Fund delivered financial relief to **909 families** of deceased frontline healthcare workers, whose lives were lost in the fight against COVID-19.

Collectively, these healthcare workers were primary wage earners and caretakers, parents and grandparents, children and siblings. Individually, they are souls now absent in our world – and whose memories we wish to honor.

These stories are a small sampling of the people our grantee families lost, told by the people who knew and loved them most.



Audrey Ellis
Transplant Nurse, Colorado

"Audrey Ellis was a treasured twin sister, daughter, granddaughter and proud unselfish nurse providing healthcare and comfort to those in need. She loved her family, the ocean, the mountains, yoga, travel and holistic healing practices. Her belly laugh, hugs, big green eyes and heart of gold are forever with us. She was right there on the healthcare front lines of this pandemic but is now answering a much greater calling."

Scott Ellis, Audrey's Father

Clea Alverio-Hume
Medical Records Director, Washington

"Clea worked at the same skilled nursing facility for 26 years. Since she passed, we've received hundreds of notes from colleagues and friends who admired what a determined and giving person she was. With assistance from the Brave of Heart Fund for medical and funeral bills, it allows us to do the more important work of remembering and healing."

David Hume, Clea's Husband





Clearance Lovell
Community Health Volunteer, Arkansas

"My dad was a visionary for health, education, and public service. He was a Volunteer and Public Servant who advocated for the health needs of poor and rural underserved populations in the State of Arkansas for over 30 years. He taught us that it is our duty to help others in need and to serve our community every day."

Delia Lovell, Clearance's Daughter

Glovis Foster
Flight Paramedic, New Mexico

"My father served San Juan County for 24 years as a flight paramedic and the New Mexico Army National Guard for 16 years. Anyone that knew my father can tell you how caring and compassionate he was. I miss him every single day. Thank you, Brave of Heart Fund, for honoring everyday heroes who have given their lives in this unpredictable time and line of work."

Shanitra Foster, Glovis's Daughter





Israel Tolentino
Firefighter / EMT, New Jersey

"Israel loved our community, he spent his life in service to help others. He always brought so much joy and commitment to whatever he was doing."

Maria Vazquez, Israel's Wife



Jeff Guernsey
Firefighter / EMT, Ohio

“I had never met anyone who loved his job as much as Jeff Guernsey did. Jeff worked for Washington Township Fire Department for 30 years where he was a lieutenant. We were married for over 17 wonderful years and were best friends with four amazing children and two grandchildren. He lived life to the fullest and inspired us to do the same. We miss him terribly and we will make sure his legacy lives on forever.”

Jennifer Guernsey, Jeff’s Wife

Jeffrey Schaffer
Volunteer EMT, Pennsylvania

“My husband was a proud, honorable, witty man who dedicated his life to Emergency Medical Services. His passion in life, besides his family, was helping others. It’s unbelievably difficult not having him here with us, however, I am extremely proud of the man he was and the impact he had on the lives of so many.”

Deborah Schaffer, Jeffrey’s Wife

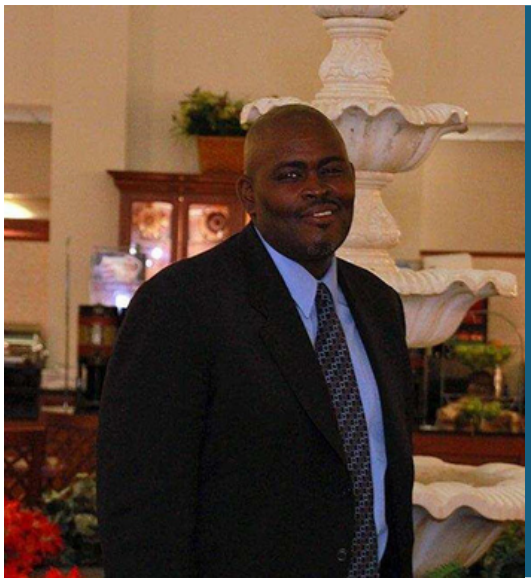




Joe Sykora
Nurse, Georgia

“Joe was the love of my life for 30 years. He was a loved father, husband, son and grandfather. Joe committed 40 years to serving others. He served as a police officer, paramedic, and firefighter in his early years. The last 15 years of his career he served in the nursing profession caring for those with heart conditions. He had a huge heart and would give his life over again to save another’s. That’s the man he was.”

Vicki Sykora, Joe’s Wife



Tony Carter
Patient Transporter, New York

"Maurice 'Tony' was a health care worker and defensive football coach for over 30 years. He was the epitome of a humble man with character, sacrificing for his family's needs above his own. Tony was an avid reader and loved making a difference in the lives of others."

Yolanda Carter, Tony's Wife

Michael Field
Firefighter / Volunteer EMT, New York

"Even when faced with an unknown pandemic, he answered calls and alarms, and went above the call of duty. It was not how he died that made him a hero, but the life he lived."

First Assistant Fire Chief Patrick Scanlon, Michael's Supervisor





Mohammed Jawed
Doctor, Kentucky

"Dr. Jawed was a devoted physician who took pride in his work for over 25 years. In addition to being a knowledgeable doctor, his calm nature was always comforting to patients. Beyond that, he was a loving father and an outstanding member of his community."

Mohammed's Family



Pamela Orlando
Nurse, New York

No matter how tough life could get, my mother always picked her feet up and continued to move forward. If she saw something in you, she would tell you and make you feel special. My mother's life revolved around saving lives, and letting people know their lives mattered. She was a special woman who was loved by so many."

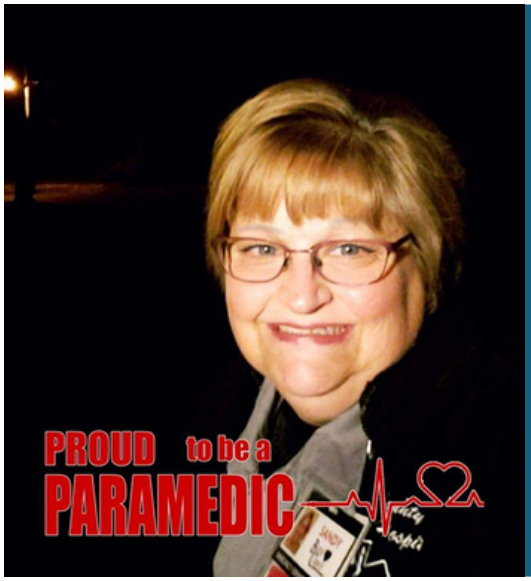
Reid Orlando, Pamela's Son

Rosa Luna
Environmental Services, California

"Rosa Luna was a super mom. Everything she did was for family. She absolutely adored her grandchildren and loved spending time with them. She was an avid gardener. She loved all kinds of music. She was a warrior that battled through life with love."

Dora Reaza, Rosa's Daughter





Sandy Bean
EMT, Missouri

"Mom had a big heart and loved caring for everyone. If anyone asked for advice on anything, mom would say pray about it. Her faith was strong and her heart was big."

Shauna Hackler, Sandy's Daughter



Tara Pendergrass
Nursing Home CNA, North Carolina

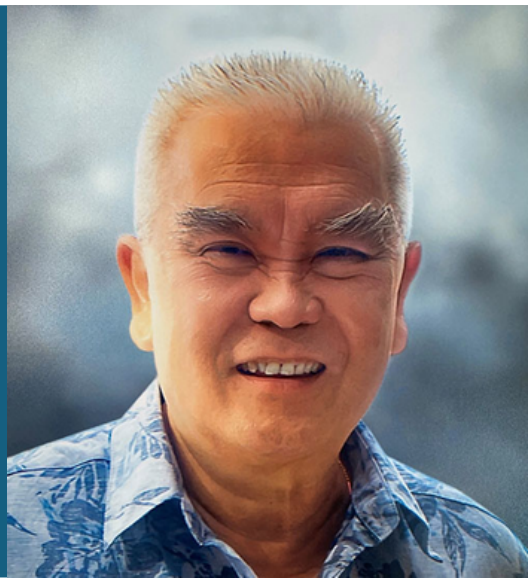
“Tara was a sweet and caring person that loved life so much. She enjoyed spending time with her family and friends. Tara enjoyed working with her elderly residents and understood the risks of contracting COVID on the job, but continued working throughout the pandemic anyway. She was always doing special things for them. When my Sweet Baby Girl passed away, all of the warm messages that the family received proved how many hearts she touched in her short 29 years.”

Jennifer Pendergrass, Tara’s Mother

Thong Minh Nguyen
EKG Technician, California

“Our father was an incredible example of human kindness and the hardest working honest man we’ll ever know. His heart was full of love not only for his family and friends, but for strangers as well. He loved his job and dedicated almost 35 years working as a Cardiovascular Technician. Heaven gained a Saint when we lost him a month before his 74th birthday.”

Dinh Kozuki, Thong’s Daughter



The Numbers

$31,517,967
awarded

Brave of Heart Fund: Phase 1

All Phase 1 grants were $15,000 to pay funeral and burial expenses or for their families' immediate living expenses.

- 65% of recipients experienced the death of a spouse, partner, or dependent.
- 35% experienced the death of an extended family member
- 708 grants were awarded, totaling $10,620,000

Brave of Heart Fund: Phase 2

These need-based grants were awarded to relieve emotional stress and provide financial resources for critical needs and family expenses:

  - Rent or mortgages
  - Food, clothing, transportation, and basic essential utilities
  - Daycare, childcare, and educational expenses
  - Outstanding medical expenses for the deceased
  - Counseling

- Phase 2 grants ranged from $1,033 to $60,000; the average Phase 2 grant was $34,773.
- 69% of recipients experienced the death of a spouse, partner, or dependent.
- 31% experienced the death of an extended family member.
- 601 grants were awarded, totaling $20,897,967.







64%

deceased healthcare workers were people of color

- Sixty-two percent of grantee families still have dependents in their households.
- More than 70% of healthcare worker decedents were 50 years old or older (reflecting larger mortality trends).
- Grant recipients are evenly divided between younger than 50 years and 50 years and older.
- Over half of healthcare worker decedents were male.
- About two-thirds of grant recipients are female.

909

individual people received grant funds

- 68% of recipients experienced the death of a spouse, partner, or dependent.
- Over one-third did not have life insurance benefits of any kind (either employer provided or private policies).
- Among the families of the grantees, close to 80% of healthcare workers and volunteers lost to COVID-19 were the sole or primary household earner.
- Most households now earn incomes of $50,000 or less after the losing their deceased family member’s income.
- For over a third, the Brave of Heart funding was the only financial support they received after the loss of their loved one.



Average grant amount of more than

$24,000

Phase 1 grants were $15,000.

The maximum Phase 2 grant size was $60,000.

The average Phase 2 grant size was nearly $35,000.

In Phase 2:

- About 10% received $60,000
- About 30% received $40,000 – $59,999
- About 30% received $30,000 – $39,999
- About 30% received $29,999 or less
- 79% of grantees received funding in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the grant process

14

different professional roles and job types were represented among the deceased healthcare workers

32% nurses

10% administrative

9% doctors

9% technicians

8% nursing or medical assistants

6% emergency medical technicians

5% custodians

5% caregivers or home health aides

3% cafeteria workers

2% orderlies

2% therapists

1% volunteers

1% pharmacists

Grants were awarded to residents of

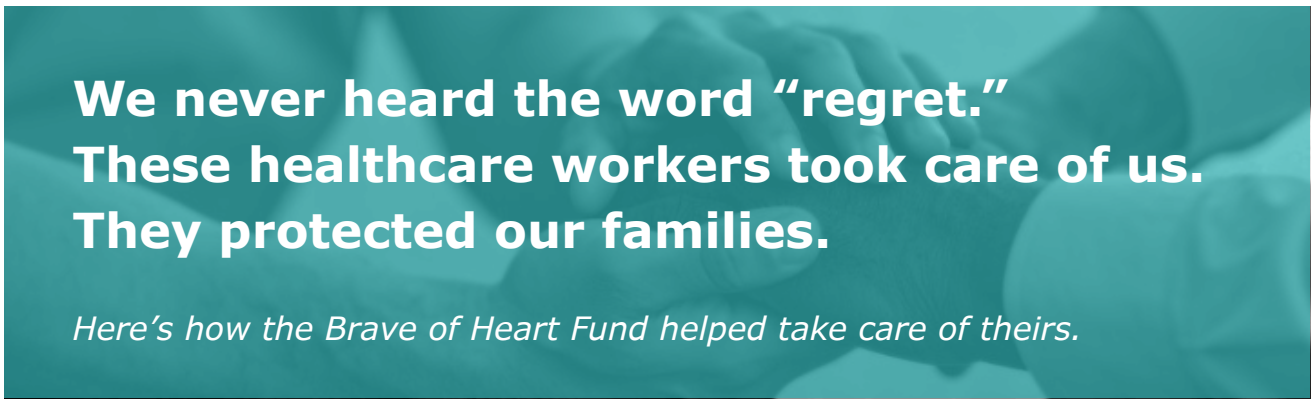
44

different states

Over 60% of all applications received and funds awarded were from 5 states: California, Florida, New Jersey, New York, and Texas.

	% of All Applications	% of $ Awarded
AL	1.9%	1.5%
AR	1.0%	0.9%
AZ	1.6%	1.7%
CA	10.6%	11.2%
CO	0.3%	0.2%
CT	1.1%	0.7%
DC	0.3%	0.3%
DE	0.1%	0.1%
FL	5.5%	5.5%
GA	4.2%	3.3%
IA	0.3%	0.1%
ID	0.1%	0.0%
IL	3.1%	2.5%
IN	0.6%	0.7%
KS	0.3%	0.2%
KY	1.0%	1.2%
LA	1.2%	1.1%
MA	1.3%	1.8%
MD	2.1%	2.4%
MI	1.8%	2.0%
MN	0.5%	0.4%
MO	0.5%	0.6%
MS	0.9%	0.7%
MT	0.3%	0.4%
NC	3.2%	2.8%
ND	0.3%	0.2%
NH	0.3%	0.4%
NJ	8.6%	9.5%
NM	0.5%	0.3%
NV	0.8%	1.0%
NY	24.8%	26.0%
OH	2.2%	1.9%
OK	1.4%	1.6%
OR	0.3%	0.2%
PA	1.8%	1.5%
RI	0.2%	0.2%
SC	1.7%	1.8%
TN	1.7%	1.4%
TX	8.4%	7.9%
UT	0.3%	0.3%
VA	1.1%	1.2%
WA	0.6%	0.6%
WI	0.3%	0.2%
WV	0.7%	0.7%

The Impact



We never heard the word "regret." These healthcare workers took care of us. They protected our families.

Here's how the Brave of Heart Fund helped take care of theirs.

A theme woven throughout the collective stories shared by these bereaved families is that their loved ones were "where they were supposed to be" during the pandemic. They acknowledged the risks, and that serious illness – even death – was a possible outcome as they continued to serve others and do their jobs in healthcare settings. We felt the immense pride these families held of their loved ones – and also, their profound grief.

The families of these deceased healthcare workers faced immediate and extraordinary personal, financial, and psychological losses.

- Over **80%** of grantee households lost their sole or primary income provider.
- More than **two-thirds** of Brave of Heart Fund grantees lost their spouse or partner.
- More than **60%** of grantee households have at least one dependent.
- **For over a third of the grantee families, the Brave of Heart funding was the only financial support they received after losing their loved one.**

The Brave of Heart Fund helped these families by:

1
Keeping them in their homes

2
Providing financial stability and basic life needs

3
Giving them psychological relief

4
Generating hope for the future

Keeping them in their homes

More than half of grantees saw their household incomes drop to under $50,000 or less.

The grants helped **two-thirds** of recipients pay their rent or mortgage, so they could remain in their current homes.

This grant came at a time when I was completely unprepared to deal with managing the financial aspects of our household. One of the things that I most admired about my husband was how he kept our family safe. We were never in fear of losing our home or missing a payment. He was an excellent provider. Being thrust into this new role where I had to step into his shoes was difficult for me.

Wife of a nurse, Rockland County, NY

The amount of financial stress that the grant removed from my life at the time of my husband's passing was incredibly helpful, as my household income dropped by 50%. It has given me time to address my living situation and find a way to stay in my home.

Wife of a nurse, Sarasota, FL

Thank you!! I lost my mother, and I will never get her back. I know for a fact that if it wasn't for this grant I would be on the street trying to figure things out. Because of Brave of Heart, I can breathe a bit better. I still need to get financially secure, but I couldn't have my mother's house without you.

Son of a nurse, The Bronx, NY

The grant relieved so much stress early on in the death of my husband. The grant money came faster than ANY other money. Faster than life insurance, faster than pension, faster than retirement.

Wife of an X-ray technician, Sacramento, CA

The Brave of Heart grant has allowed me to be able to sleep at night knowing me and my children can stay in the home my husband worked so hard for us to live in. I miss my husband every day. Once again, I thank God for the Brave of Heart Fund.

Wife of prison hospital correctional officer, Columbia, SC

Financial stability and basic life needs

The majority of grant recipients reported experiencing negative effects on their daily lives, like receiving a late fee on at least one bill* or being absent at work.

Prior to receiving a grant, about one-third of grantees skipped meals or downgraded their food choices. And, about one-quarter skipped medical care or delayed their own medical needs (including refilling prescriptions).

The vast majority of grantees credit the grant with helping them to avoid falling behind on bills. They were able to keep their utilities on, feed their families, receive the medical care they needed, and show up for their jobs.

*People of color were more likely than white grantees to have received a late fee on a bill and/or to have had utilities shut off prior to receiving the grant.

> **Brave of Heart Fund literally saved me and my children from bankruptcy. We could not have made it without the help. While we're so appreciative of the help we received from friends and co-workers, it would not have lasted even a month to cover bills and expenses. We would have been homeless. We also would not have been able to mourn properly from worrying constantly about where our next meal was coming from.**
>
> *Wife of a physician assistant, Richmond, KY*

> **Your generosity is overwhelming. I was looking forward to a bleak financial future and potentially losing my home, vehicle, and everything my wife and I had worked for, for 37 years. Now those fears are put to rest thanks to the Brave of Heart Fund.**
>
> Husband of a doctor, Daytona Beach, FL

> **The Brave of Heart Fund gave me hope and the assurance that others care about these dedicated and hard-working members of society (like my late husband). The grant has afforded me the opportunity to pay some of my bills and manage my living expenses. I am totally grateful to the Brave of Heart Fund for assisting my family.**
>
> Wife of a security officer, Westminster, MD

I would like to simply say THANK YOU. Having to deal with the loss of a spouse and worry about the household is a disaster. This grant will help me tremendously.

Wife of a doctor, Brooklyn, NY

Thank you so much. The grant was a godsend. I was able to take 2 weeks off work to grieve, and had the money to order a headstone. Without the grant I would not have been able to get the headstone until I had more income, and that would have felt awful. Like I was not honoring him.

Husband of a dietician, Jackson, MS

I have worked since I was 13, and have no issue working, but raising 7 kids and dealing with the emotions related to their dad's death has been overwhelming. The funds definitely alleviated stress and gave me the cushion I needed to get through this next year and help them. I'm just so very thankful.

Wife of an IT clinical analyst, Hackensack, NJ

This grant is such a blessing to those of us blindsided by the loss of our loved one to COVID-19. I am now a single mother to a 10-year-old child on a single income, and wait times for applying for benefits are 3-6 months backlogged due to the pandemic. I am eternally grateful to be a recipient of the BOH grant to help provide for and maintain my household.

Parent of a child whose father was a medical technician, Charlotte, NC

Just knowing y'all were out there was a balm. Money for a proper memorial was a true blessing, and allowed us to have the ceremony we desired without emptying our savings. Thank you.

Husband of home health aide, Edmond, OK

Brave of Heart Fund has given me and my family hope and peace of mind. They gave us a new lease on life during a time when I don't know when I'll return to work due to temporary shutdowns. I am really grateful for these relief funds.

Son of a home health aide, The Bronx, NY

The time when no one cared for us, Brave of Heart was there to support us. The funds were such a big relief to my family and helped us pay the household utility bills, house mortgage, funeral and cemetery expenses. Thank you very much.

Wife of cafeteria worker, Bowie, MD

Words cannot describe the depth of gratitude that we have. My mother's funeral took a great deal of money, and to receive it back was not only a blessing to us, but an honor to her. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your genuine commitment to seeing us through the entire process, and for your care and concern for our family.

Son of a medical technician, New Haven, CT

Psychological relief

Nearly one-third of all grantees responded "I don't know" regarding how they would have managed expenses associated with their loss if they had not received Brave of Heart funds. This sentiment is even more prevalent in lower income households, where presence of retirement savings or death benefits is also lower.

These funds helped grantees free up their personal mental bandwidth to figure out next steps. Additionally, those with dependents and children were able to direct more attention to these significant personal relationships.

My life has been hard since my father's passing, but Brave of Heart has been such a blessing. The money saved me from so much worry, as I am trying to do more for myself and my family. I can't thank you enough, I can't repay you, and I cry every time I think about how wonderful you have been.

Son of a custodian, Los Angeles, CA

This money was life-changing at the worst time in my life, and in my daughter's life.

Wife of a health care administrator, Los Angeles, CA

I was able to lay my husband to rest, and now the kids and I have place to visit him. I thank Brave of Heart for all the help during this difficult time and for relieving some of the stress.

Wife of a health systems IT manager, The Bronx, NY

Thank you for supporting and understanding that the loss involves more than just losing a physical person. There's loss of income, grief, the burden of now being a single income household, stress, stigma, and fear. So grateful!

Wife of a physical therapy assistant, Winston-Salem, NC

I am extremely grateful to have been awarded this grant. Without it I don't think I could have gotten through burying my loved one and picking up the pieces of my life afterwards.

Daughter of a nurse, Los Angeles, CA

In a world with so much pain and hate, I am so grateful to have had the help and support from such a wonderful program. Brave of Heart Fund helped me and my daughter in one of the darkest times of our lives. Thank you, thank you.

Daughter of a certified nurse assistant, East Windsor, NJ

The Brave of Heart grant has helped me and my family in many ways. I am able to concentrate on getting physically healthier and attending to the needs of my children with much less stress. I went from not knowing how I was going to provide for my family, to being able to do just that for at least a couple of years with careful planning. I am deeply grateful. Thank you!

Wife of EMT, Melbourne, AR







Hope for the future

Grantees feel more hopeful about their ability to move forward and recover, have reduced stress, and feel less alone after receiving these funds.

Over two-thirds of grantees report being somewhat, moderately, or very confident that their households are doing what is needed to meet their longer-term goals (like saving for retirement or future education).

The loss of my child, who was a nurse, was horrific. But the people at Brave of Heart made the light at the end of the long walk in the tunnel become clear and quick. I thank you with all my heart.

Mother of a nurse, The Villages, FL

This money was a lifesaver for our family when we were in the middle of a storm. It helped give us room to spend time together as a family and give my children the support they needed during this very hard and confusing time for them. I've had peace of mind knowing that I have a cushion to lean on, and the confidence to start the process of looking for a home for me and my kids.

Wife of a firefighter/EMT, Passaic, NJ

My love and many blessings go to staff and donors of the Brave of Heart Fund. Covid took away loved ones from thousands of people and left us financially and emotionally in despair. Your organization gave us some peace of mind, and showed us that in this world people still care. I would always be grateful to you and thank God that help still comes from angels.

Father of a medical technician, Simi Valley, CA

This fund has helped my family out in so many ways. Our lives will never be the same. There is no amount of money that can take away the grief, but it can give us hope for a better tomorrow as we learn to carry on without our loved ones. When I was thinking about our future and how to best move forward, Brave of Heart reached out and showed me that someone out there truly cares. All I can say is thank you all for giving me a chance to give my kids a future. I don't know what tomorrow might bring, but I do know that today is a lot better than yesterday.

Husband of a nurse, Fort Wayne, IN

Brave of Heart was a lifeline, and an absolute blessing that saved our family. It gave us hope, and allowed us to focus on healing and our grief instead of looming bills.

Wife of a medical technician, Lake Havasu, AZ

If only you knew how this grant has not only saved my family but my own mental state as well. I didn't know how I was going to do it. I knew God was going to provide but the concern was still there. At 51 years old I have a 3-year-old. Daycare is so expensive. Now she gets to go, and I can work without having to worry. Thank you all so much! Nothing can ever bring back my husband, but I can go back to school and get that bachelor's in business administration and my kids can have a life that doesn't including Mommy worrying about how the bills will get paid. How can I say in words how much I appreciate Brave of Heart Fund? There are no words.

Wife of a nurse, Summerville, SC

I have set the money I received from the Brave of Heart Fund aside as I make a financial plan for the future of my two children. As we recover from the grief of losing our loved one, I am encouraged to know I have time to make clear-headed decisions for education and retirement with the help of a financial advisor rather than scrambling to live paycheck to paycheck. Before the BOH fund, I had a 6-month plan. I am now able to make a 20-year plan.

Parent of two; children's father in healthcare administration, Boston, MA

You saved my life. I had no way out. I tried everything, and it all felt hopeless. You literally changed my life for the better. I thank God every day for The Brave of Heart Fund and E4E Relief. When the rug was pulled from under me, you helped to bring a solid place to stand. Thank you for everything. I'm eternally grateful.

Wife of a medical technician, Jersey City, NJ

Thank you. It helped in starting over.

Wife of an EMT, San Antonio, TX

The Partners

E4E Relief had the distinct privilege to serve as the charitable partner and administrator of the Brave of Heart Fund, alongside founders New York Life and Cigna. The astounding generosity and vision of these founding donors, and the thousands of corporate and individual donors who joined them, will be remembered by the grantee families whose lives have been forever changed by the pandemic and the loss of their loved ones. They also profoundly impacted our collective team members, who worked tirelessly to bring this philanthropic effort to life.

At the heart of New York Life is a commitment to be there for our customers when they need us – whether today or decades into the future. We have delivered on that promise for over 175 years by investing wisely, growing a portfolio of strategic businesses, and remaining true to our mission as a mutual company, accountable only to our customers, not to outside investors. For our customers, that means having the confidence that comes with knowing they can build a better future for themselves and those they love.

At a time when our lives were turned upside down, working to create the Brave of Heart Fund provided us with a true sense of purpose. Knowing that we would be able to do what New York Life does best – provide financial security for people in their greatest time of need – gave us the motivation to allocate the funding, set up the verification team internally, engage our workforce and promote the Fund as widely as possible. That we were able to help more than 900 families is a testament to the humanity and efforts of our people and partners.

Heather Nesle
President, New York Life Foundation

In times of tragedy and disaster, most people that are not directly impacted feel helpless. COVID-19 was no different. I was thankful that my company helped to create the Brave of Heart Fund because it not only made me proud of where I work, but it provided a way for me to help in a small way. I hope the funds demonstrate that we are grateful for the bravery of healthcare workers that died and help to alleviate some of the financial stress their families have endured.

Lacey Siegel
Corporate Vice President, External Communications, New York Life

Our mission was to provide financial support to the individuals who lost a family member to COVID by risking their lives while helping others. We accomplished that goal but more importantly, in doing so we also honored the many healthcare workers who lost their lives to COVID by shining a light on their bravery. The fund's success was thanks to the dedication and collaboration of the many individuals across the country in Service, our Foundation, and our partners at E4E and Cigna. I'm so proud to have been part of this effort.

Ciro Frulio
Corporate Vice President, Claims & Benefits, New York Life

Supporting the Brave of Heart was one of the most rewarding and proudest moments in my career at New York Life. Our team demonstrated the New York Life values in a unique and personal way, allowing us to support families of healthcare workers during one of the most difficult periods in their lives. Healthcare workers put taking care of patients ahead of the concerns for their personal health. It was very humbling experience to be able to provide some financial assistance to the families they left behind.

Stephanie Frawley
Vice President – Claims, New York Life

This is such a sad time for so many, but it is nice to have been able to give them a little silver lining to help them get through such a touch time in their lives. These are the things that make me proud of what we do and what NYL stands for. So blessed to be part of this team and a part of giving back to those in need!

Andria Ortiz
Parent of a child whose father was a medical technician, Charlotte, NC

BOHF has supported so many families during a challenging time, both financially and emotionally. My proudest moment as a BOHF project member was to read grantee comments and stories, the greatest testimony to how BOHF has positively impacted so many lives. It has been an honor to be able to support this program and to be a part of the noble cause.

Kalpna Gaule
Strategic Capabilities, New York Life



At Cigna, we're more than a health insurance company. We are your partner in total health and wellness. And we're here for you 24/7 – caring for your body and mind. As a global health service company, Cigna's mission is to improve the health, well-being, and peace of mind of those we serve by making health care simple, affordable, and predictable.

As we've seen in the past, trying times bring out the best in us, as individuals and communities. Our nation's health care workers and volunteers embody this every day, as they answer the call of duty with bravery and selflessness. We are proud partners with New York Life and E4E in supporting the families of these American heroes who give so much while treating others. Through the Brave of Heart Fund, we seek to bring greater peace of mind to these families, by helping to relieve the emotional and financial burdens they will face in the aftermath of this health crisis.

David M. Cordani
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Cigna

Every doctor, nurse, pharmacist, and health care worker on the front line of this pandemic made and continues to make incredible sacrifices. Day in and day out, they care for their communities and put the health of others ahead of their own. For some, that meant sacrificing their own life in order to heal others. Unfortunately, the pandemic took so much from so many, and for those health care heroes who lost their own lives to COVID-19, we grieve with their families. We hope that through the financial support and emotional resources of The Brave of Heart Fund, those families who experienced loss have some peace of mind.

Susan Stith
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Cigna

E4E Relief provides charitable grants to help compassionate companies support employees in need. Global climate change and economic conditions worldwide have catastrophic disasters and financial hardships on the rise. Many companies are considering how they will respond when a disaster impacts the well-being of their employees, communities, and business.

With nearly two decades of experience serving a broad range of clients, we deliver expert counsel and an objective, streamlined process for providing grant awards to employees during times of unanticipated hardship and disaster.

We believe Employee Relief Funds are good for business because they assist employees in crisis, who return to work healthier and more productive.

Being a part of E4E Relief has given me the opportunity to really make an impact to those in need through the Brave of Heart Fund. At a time when the nation was going through so much uncertainty, our team was able to stand up in partnership with NYL and Cigna to provide some breathing room and financial relief to the families of healthcare workers that risked their lives for us day in and day out during the pandemic. I have seen first-hand how we can all come together regardless of our backgrounds to love and support one another.

Ebonie Hope
Vice President – Program Delivery, E4E Relief

When we were establishing the Brave of Heart Fund with NYLife and Cigna, all of the people involved were quarantined at home, feeling helpless to aid in any way in the fight against this pandemic. It was in the early days, and no one knew the lasting impact that Covid would have on our lives, and on those of frontline healthcare workers. Although we were stuck at home, we had a strong desire to help those doing the real battle and risking their lives to help others. Brave of Heart allowed us to play a small part in helping healthcare workers and their families, at a critical time so early in the pandemic.

Evan Wolkofsky
Deputy General Counsel and Vice President, Foundation for The Carolinas

I hold the voices and stories of the grantee families of these lost frontline healthcare workers as sacred. It felt like everything else in the world froze as I was taking in the grief, love and pride of these families who will remember the pandemic differently than any others in the world. In every conversation, it was evident that while they were grieving all we wish we could have known that may have protected their loved ones, they believe these people were doing what they loved. Their commitment to their work was as life giving as it was costly in the end. It was a great privilege to offer any relief to the families.

Ashley Oster
Vice President, Marketing & Partnerships, E4E Relief

It wasn't a singular moment, but over the last 2 years, the pandemic has hit every industry, every company, every community, and every family. Like so many other devastating events throughout history, something inherently good can come from something bad. The Brave of Heart Fund is one of those good things. It is an honor to be a part of the team who rallied to ensure these families, who lost their loved ones in service to others, had hope in the darkest of times.

Davida Rivens
VP & Director, Product Management & Sales, E4E Relief

Once I started working on the Brave of Heart Fund, the magnitude of the pandemic became real for me. Those lives that were lost became friends, and their families became my family. I grieved for their lost lives and the ones they left behind. And I will never forget them. The Brave of Heart Fund truly helped keep the spirit of the healthcare workers alive and reminded me, in such a scary time, of the good in humanity.

Margaret Linn
Special Projects Coordinator, E4E Relief

I feel incredibly proud of the work E4E Relief was able to do through the Brave of Heart Fund. I am especially proud of the Voices of the Brave of Heart series that was produced to raise awareness. It is an honor to have had the opportunity to help tell the stories of the healthcare workers and their families who selflessly paid the ultimate price to save the lives of others. I'm glad to be part of an organization that stepped in to help shoulder some of the burdens for those families whose worst fears came true.

Abigayle Clymer
Marketing Specialist, E4E Relief

Amid the over 900 families that the Brave of Heart Fund was able to assist, is one that is particularly special to me – the family of my high school friend, Miriam Ullman. We spent time at each other's homes, and shared many laughs, tears, and fond memories. Mimi, as we affectionately called her, was fully vaccinated. But, due to other health conditions, she couldn't fight off the virus and ultimately succumbed to COVID-19. After talking with her sister, I learned that Mimi had been a receptionist at a health care facility in New Jersey. The sadness of losing Mimi was made just a small bit brighter, knowing that the Brave of Heart Fund would be able to assist her family. Whenever I think of her, I will always be reminded of the hundreds of families we were able to help.

Trudy Lindsey-Dinkins
Program Delivery Manager, E4E Relief

It's been so impactful for me to work directly with affected families, and then help facilitate the 'passing of the baton' to other organizations to continue the good work. Several of our organizational grantees are hopeful that programming and resources to support families and healthcare workers will continue to be offered for years to come. While the Covid pandemic has been such an unthinkable tragedy, Brave of Heart has truly been a light in the dark.

Ellen Minaudo
Grants Specialist, E4E Relief

The Brave of Heart Fund has been a bridge and a lifeline to families during a very tumultuous time in their lives.

Rick Stevens
President, Christian Hospital & Northwest HealthCare; Brave of Heart Fund Advisory Committee

Being a part of the Brave of Heart project felt like the opportunity of a lifetime. I feel truly honored and humbled to have helped make an impact in the lives of those who were so deserving.

Jessie Campbell
Senior Grants Specialist, E4E Relief

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THE BRAVE OF HEART FUND

Aligning with the spirit and intent of the fund's core purposes, the Brave of Heart Fund provided strategic grant funding to non-profit organizations, equipping them to do what was needed, when it was needed the most.



Powered by

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Scholarships

Provide scholarships to the families of frontline healthcare workers who lost their lives in the fight against COVID-19

Learn More

Over $10 million

in scholarships has been awarded to eligible students

Non-profit Grants and Programs

Support the emotional well-being of healthcare workers

Learn More

Build resiliency for families who lost a primary caregiver to COVID-19 through **grief and bereavement support**

Learn More

Promote diversity in the healthcare workforce by supporting education and training

Learn More

$12.6 million

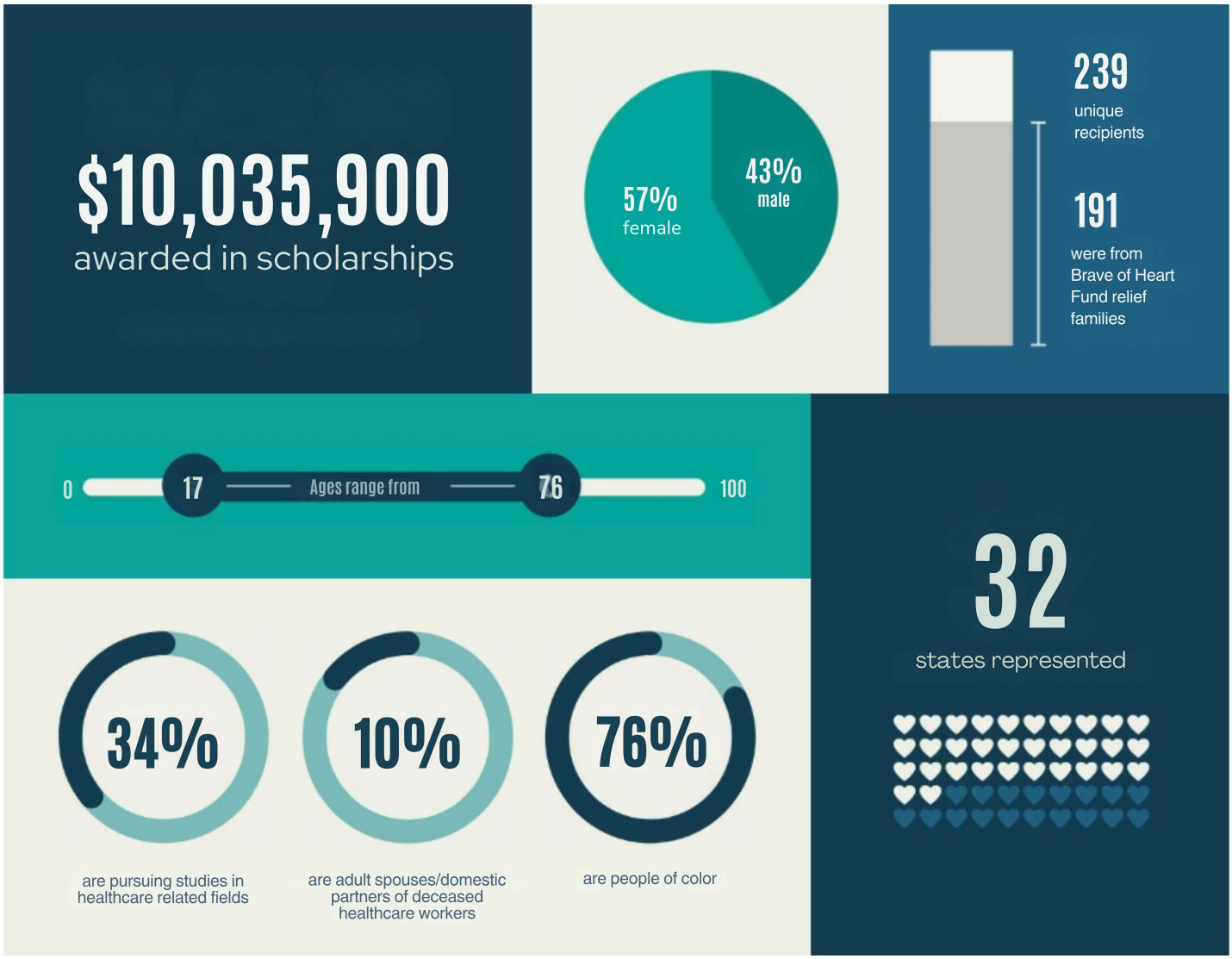
has been awarded to the healthcare community as it replenishes its ranks and rebuilds for the future and to support families impacted by COVID-related losses.



1 Scholarships

The Brave of Heart Fund was established to provide charitable grants and emotional support services to families of frontline healthcare workers, volunteers, and support staff whose lives were lost in the fight against COVID-19. It also supported these bereaved families via scholarship funding for their spouses, domestic partners, and children. These scholarships honor the hard work and sacrifice of their loved ones as their families adjust to reality without them.

They took care of us.
They protected our families.
And so we took care of theirs.



Many people struggle with addiction issues in my community, and we don't have enough resources to help them. My daughter is in school, too, and it's been so good for her. We hope to open a practice together and bring more care to our community after experiencing our own deep loss of my husband and her father.

Melody

Spouse of a healthcare facility director, studying Counseling

The Brave of Heart Scholarship solidified a way to cut back on my work hours and focus on studies. After losing my husband, and seeing how remarkable the nurses were, I knew that I wanted to go into patient care. I want to spend the working years I have left giving families the care they deserve when they are not well and in pain. I'll even get to do my clinicals at the hospital where my husband was treated.

Krista

Spouse of a physical therapist, studying Nursing

My world turned upside down when I lost my mom. She was my biggest academic supporter and I felt completely off track. This scholarship has given me the opportunity to step back from the financial stress associated with continuing my education and allows me to focus on my academic success and personal well-being. I am eager to pursue my career goal and hopefully one day I will be able to assist individuals in a medical setting.

Payton

Daughter of a healthcare director, studying Biomedical Sciences, aspiring Physician Assistant

These past few years, I have lived my life inspired by my father's words, "I fix people for a living; I can do anything." It inspires me to be a good son, a friend, a father figure to my brothers, and someone who would do anything and everything in my power to help those I care for. I am very grateful for the opportunity to chase my dream and to maybe become a physician that can be a ray of hope for my patients.

Gabriel

Son of a physician, studying Osteopathic Medicine

Brave of Heart Scholarship eligibility:

- Applicants must be a spouse, domestic partner, or child of a healthcare worker, volunteer, or support staff whose life was lost in the fight against COVID-19
- Applicants need to have plans to enroll in an accredited program at a vocational and technical school, community college, 4-year college or university, or graduate school (if pursuing healthcare studies)
- Individuals enrolled in part-time coursework, returning to school for continuing education, or exploring a new field of study are eligible
- Individuals do not have to be previous recipients of Brave of Heart Fund grants; previous recipients of Brave of Heart Fund grants are eligible



2 Support the emotional well-being of healthcare workers

Brave of Heart Fund grants assisted with efforts across the country to promote the emotional well-being of frontline healthcare workers and equip them to overcome challenges created or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. These include:

- Piloting workplace and community programs providing support and resources to help medical professionals and allied health workers build resiliency and enhance their emotional well-being
- Engaging healthcare leadership in creating change within their organizations
- Breaking down systemic barriers preventing healthcare workers from accessing the support they need
- While we are inspired by and honored to report the outcomes and statistics below, the need for continued work in this space was a consistent theme from all grantees and their programs.

$3 million
awarded

7
partner organizations

9,460
healthcare workers received direct services to build skills or manage their mental and emotional wellness

Individuals in
19
states served by these grants



26,179
healthcare workers were provided with resources to assess their mental and emotional well-being, build resilience skills, or otherwise enhance their mental and emotional wellness

Partner organizations and grantees include:

RECIPIENT ORGANIZATION	MADE POSSIBLE BY BRAVE OF HEART GRANT FUNDING
Center for Workplace Mental Health (American Psychiatric Association Foundation)	• Interviewed and engaged with experts nationwide to understand the scope of the issues and barriers specific to healthcare workers, and highlight effective and innovative strategies being implemented to increase their access to care. • Developed Frontline Connect, an online toolkit and video resource library for the healthcare sector with proven strategies and best practices to make mental health services and supports more accessible to the workforce.
Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation	• Developed a Licensing & Credentialing Strategy Tool Kit, providing a road map for insurance companies, hospitals, and state medical boards to evaluate and change overly invasive mental health questions on applications, which serve as a barrier to mental health access and are the key driver of suicide among healthcare professionals. • As of November 2023, successfully supported 26 state medical boards and 12 health systems, including 75 hospitals and 59 urgent care centers, in changing invasive and stigmatizing mental health questions in their licensing applications to earn recognition as Wellbeing First Champions. Actively working with additional states and health systems to do the same. • Secured state legislation in two states, Virginia and Illinois, establishing state-wide requirements to change or remove mental health questions in applications. • Partnered with the CDC to launch the Impact Wellbeing national campaign which direct all US hospitals to use the Foundation's toolkit. • Initiating similar effort to analyze and address mental health questions in nursing licensure applications.

Mental Health America (MHA)	Completed 5 pilot projects testing approaches to support the mental and emotional well-being of healthcare workers with varying levels of depth and investment: • Training program to build healthcare worker resiliency skills • Training for CarePath™ Coaches to support frontline healthcare workers and their families • Implementing a warmline for healthcare workers in distress • Conducting educational sessions on workplace wellness • Developing and disseminating a mental health access handbook to non-medical healthcare workers • Widely disseminated pilot project findings to the MHA Affiliate Network, comprised of 143 affiliates nationwide, MHA's Annual Conference attendees, MHA's social media network, and MHA email distribution lists, with more than 40 organizations and affiliates expressing interest in replicating one of the approaches.
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)	Tailored NAMI's 1:1 peer support training curriculum for use with emergency physicians. Piloting the tailored program in partnership with the American College of Emergency Physicians in 2024. Developed several mental health resources for healthcare professionals, including crisis cards with information about emergency support, a "how to talk to a peer" fact sheet and NAMI's public policy statement on medical licensure Supported four affiliates in piloting mental health education and support programs for healthcare and other frontline workers, including mental health screenings, peer wellness support coaching, and a frontline wellness webinar series.
National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics (NAFC)	Conducted comprehensive training sessions, both in-person and virtually, aimed at bolstering the emotional and mental well-being of frontline workers via free and charitable clinics within their communities. These initiatives were designed to enhance provider coping mechanisms, foster resilience, and promote a healthier workplace environment. Moreover, these sessions facilitated invaluable opportunities for peer exchange centered around mental health topics. Distributed crucial mental health resources to healthcare providers, ensuring they had access to the necessary support and information for their well-being.

The Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare	Developed and launched the Healing Healthcare Initiative, which supports and empowers healthcare leaders with resources and tools to ensure that their organization, workforce, and patients can continue to thrive. It provides healthcare leaders with a trauma- and resilience-informed approach to workforce well-being and enables them to address new challenges, align and integrate existing workforce initiatives that otherwise would occur in separate, siloed departments, and receive support themselves.
Vibrant Emotional Health	Developed a national program to provide training and support for hospital executives, leadership, and management to promote mental health among their staff, including group support to healthcare workers with a focus on grief and bereavement support. Built out a tailored a menu of mental health training specifically for healthcare workers, enabling the organization to secure additional grant funding to continue to provide trainings for healthcare workers. Piloted a hospital wellness event focused on mental, emotional, and physical health to help create a culture of wellness within the hospital.

Themes across programs

Our non-profit partners and their programs addressed emotional health and wellness challenges among healthcare workers across the spectrum, from burn out and exhaustion to full mental health crises. To meet their unique project and organizational goals, our grantees leveraged varied implementation tactics and strategies, levels of support, and delivery methods. Although our grantees' objectives varied greatly, and the breadth of their work was large, consistent themes emerged across their collective experience.

Mental health support needs to be normalized

Healthcare workers often need permission to make well-being a priority and reminders about why it's critical; that "it's okay not to be okay." Stigma around mental health remains, and complete confidentiality is extremely important to this employee population. A key part of the work ahead is normalizing the concept of seeking out and asking for support, building trust, and ensuring healthcare workers have a deeper understanding of their rights and the rules of the workplace.

Systems are strained

Capacity constraints and staffing shortages make it difficult for individuals and healthcare systems to make their own emotional well-being and mental wellness a priority. This is an overwhelming issue, and healthcare systems have difficulty analyzing their own systems to assess opportunities for improvement.

Role of leadership

Executives, once exposed to what wellness can look like, are interested in learning more and offering more to their staff. Healthcare leadership sharing their own lived experiences can make mental health and emotional well-being easier for employees to talk about and view their work environment as a safe place. It helps start the conversation. But anyone can be the catalyst for major change within an organization. Both top-down and bottom-up approaches have been extremely successful.

Communication

Many healthcare workers do not understand their rights or the rules. They desire and appreciate tools to improve their emotional well-being, mental health and resilience, but communication about services, supports, and policy change about mental health is critical to employees accessing a better level of care. Employees need to hear messages repeatedly to believe them and take action, and through varied communications methods (digitally and in print, inside and outside the workplace, etc.).

Importance of cultural competency and sensitivity

Cultural competency is highly important for supporting and treating all individuals, including healthcare workers. They want to be cared for, supported, or guided by those who understand their work-life culture and want their therapists to understand where they are coming from in terms of lifestyle, barriers, biases, etc.

Equip healthcare workers and leaders with tools, training, and knowledge

Training and tools matter – not just for clinicians or therapists seeing healthcare workers, but for internal employees who lead employee resource groups, or for managers and peers to help them better recognize when an employee might be struggling and need help. Healthcare workers and leaders know that mental health and emotional well-being are issues and need to be addressed, but many struggle and fall behind because they do not know where to start. They need tools to assess their own needs, tips to handle stress and burnout, etc.

Mental health and wellbeing are crucial in the healthcare field, and this grant served as the catalyst for the NAFC's prioritization of emotional wellness on a much broader scale. Inspired by Brave of Heart, the NAFC put mental health center stage at our Annual Charitable Healthcare Symposium, instituted new organizational policies, and sought out partnerships that furthered this mission.

Ariana Gordillo De Vivero, MA

Director of Strategic Initiatives, NAFC

We recognize that culture change in healthcare has to start with leadership, and they need the support to drive culture change. This grant has helped us support system change work for the first time, to help leaders develop a deeper understanding of the overall mental health and wellbeing of their employees, aimed at trauma prevention rather than responding reactively to burnout.

Elizabeth Hickman

Chief Operating Officer and Interim CEO, Schwartz Center

It is hard to overstate how important and impactful the Brave of Heart Fund grant has been for the healthcare community. Everyone is flocking to this issue and we couldn't have done this work without this funding. It was a transformational gift that helped catalyze a movement across the country and elevate the significance of the issue and the practicality of change. The work continues to give hope to healthcare workers in the midst of mass departures.

J. Corey Feist, JD, MBA

Founder and CEO, Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation





3

Build resiliency for families who lost a primary caregiver to COVID-19 through grief and bereavement sxupport

The Brave of Heart Fund supported efforts across the country to provide children and the families of individuals, especially frontline healthcare workers, who lost their lives to COVID-19 with the resources needed to recover from their losses and promote their long-term emotional well-being. These include:

- Creating near-term capacity for family bereavement programs
- Developing resources available to all families regardless of geography
- Training for professionals interfacing with children and families experiencing crisis, trauma, and loss
- Supporting the systems serving bereaved children

While we are inspired by and honored to report the outcomes and statistics below, the need for continued work in this space was a consistent theme from all grantees and their programs.

$3.1 million
awarded

7
partner organizations

3,294
children and adults

received direct grief and bereavement support through in person and virtual 1:1 counseling, grief support groups, grief camps, family hikes, and more

LOCATED IN 40 STATES



5,679
mental health professionals,

educators, and community service providers received professional development to support children experiencing crisis, trauma, and loss

LOCATED IN 31 STATES



4,071 unique visits to online bereavement resources and support



Coming to CZC with other members of the Covid Community meant the world to my girls and me. A Covid Loss has additional layers of trauma and grief that others who haven't experienced can't fully understand. Being with others who have lived our nightmare helped us to not feel alone.

Jerri Vance

Comfort Zone Camp Parent

This was extremely helpful for the population I am working with currently. I am a new social worker and this is a modality I can really see myself utilizing for years to come.

Professional Development Participant

TAG Center (Trauma & Grief Component Therapy Training)

The Brave of Heart Fund grant enabled the Dougy Center to develop resources for Covid-bereaved children, something we would not have otherwise had the capacity to do. These resources work to provide the over 340,000 who had a parent or caregiver die of COVID-19 feel less isolated in their grief.

Brennan Wood
Executive Director, Dougy Center

The Brave of Heart grant enabled Eluna to expand our national in-person program through the launch of Camp Erin Online. We hired a dedicated clinician and increased our capacity to make grief support services and community accessible to more families. Being able to serve families in their own homes, especially those grieving following a stigmatized death or those experiencing social anxiety, neurodiversity, and other barriers to support, is incredibly impactful.

Bethany Gardner, MA
Director of Bereavement Programs, Eluna

Partner organizations and grantees include:

RECIPIENT ORGANIZATION	MADE POSSIBLE BY BRAVE OF HEART GRANT FUNDING
Comfort Zone Camp	Provided a safe space and support for people who lost a loved one to COVID-19 and who need support and skills to cope with their loss via in-person and virtual camps and support groups.
Dougy Center	Developed an online toolkit in English and Spanish featuring over 40 free resources focused on supporting children and families after a death from COVID-19, with specific resources for first responders and healthcare workers. It includes podcasts, age-appropriate activity printouts, tip sheets for caregivers and grievers, and more. Produced an activity workbook, available for free download, for kids grieving a death from COVID-19, and a grief journal for teens, both available in English and Spanish. Disseminated all resources through a newly developed national directory of agencies supporting first responders and healthcare workers
Eluna	Provided support to youth and families who experienced the death of someone significant in their lives due to COVID-19, as well as those whose grief journey was disrupted by the pandemic, through a specialty resource hub, in-person grief support family camps, and a new online grief support program offering workshops and monthly groups accessible nationwide. To view a video about Camp Erin click here.

Partner organizations and grantees include:

RECIPIENT ORGANIZATION	MADE POSSIBLE BY BRAVE OF HEART GRANT FUNDING
National Alliance for Children's Grief	Supported 13 established bereavement providers to reach those in their local community impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic via bereavement groups, grief camps, direct counseling, and sharing resources among those supporting grieving children. **Bo's Place** Houston, TX **Experience Camps** Westport, CT **Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss** Mountainside, NJ **M Health Fairview Ridges Hospital** Burnsville, MN **New Hope Grief Support Community** Long Beach, CA **Roberta's House, Inc** Baltimore, MD **Supporting Kidds** Hockessin, DE **Tamarack Grief Resource Center** Missoula, MT **The Cove Center for Grieving Children** Cheshire, CT **The Grief Center of Southwest Colorado** Durango, CO **Tidewell Foundation** Sarasota, FL **Tomorrow's Rainbow** Coconut Creek, FL **Wild Grief** Olympia, WA
National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement	Empowered and supported educators in five school districts serving approximately two million students to: • Provide universal support to grieving students and those recovering from the crisis of the pandemic • Normalize such assistance and equip staff to identify children with family members who died from COVID-19 • Build capacity of school mental health providers and other educators to support these students dealing with crisis and loss in the aftermath of the pandemic • Help school administrators and other leaders create supportive environments for students dealing with crisis and loss • Assist educators in enhancing their professional self-care

Partner organizations and grantees include:

RECIPIENT ORGANIZATION	MADE POSSIBLE BY BRAVE OF HEART GRANT FUNDING
Trauma and Grief (TAG) Center at the Hackett Center for Mental Health	Provided free, evidence-based assessment and treatment for bereaved youth with psychological distress due to COVID-19 deaths through the Lucine Center. Trained school- and community-based clinicians in Trauma and Grief Component Therapy, an evidence-based intervention designed to reduce youth maladaptive grief, PTSD, and suicide risk.
Tuesday's Children	Established a framework for trauma-responsive and bereavement-informed youth mentoring to meet the long-term needs of the unprecedented number of children who have lost a parent, primary caregiver, or family member to COVID-19. Through customized guidance to mentoring and bereavement care partners, this project shares resources, trainings, presentations and offer speaker series sessions to build the capacity of community service providers to address unprecedented needs for long-term and adaptive support for grieving children.

Themes across programs

Our non-profit partners worked directly with children and families to serve their grief and bereavement needs, and also bolstered the systems and professionals who are already engaged with this work. Their approaches varied, and underscored the complexities of providing services where and when people search for them, as many families and individuals do not seek grief support until significant time has passed after their loss. While programs and services were delivered to a variety of populations in differing ways, consistent themes emerged across our grantees' collective experiences.

Virtual programming offers benefits

While bereavement organizations pivoted to virtual programming during the pandemic, in many cases our grants allowed organizations to intentionally invest in and design programs for an online environment. They found that programming intended for virtual delivery can augment the overall offerings of bereavement programming. This is especially true for rural communities or for individuals who have physical difficulties accessing programs. It can also help alleviate uncertainty and hesitation around attending programs, increase access, and allow people to participate in less public ways while still receiving services and support.

Importance of cultural competency and sensitivity

The following complexities underscore the critical need for cultural competency when supporting families who have experienced a COVID-related death:

- Prior experiences with inequity and discrimination can compound grief and loss for people of color.
- The pandemic carried a disproportionate impact on families of color.
- Many youth who experienced a COVID-related loss have also been exposed to prior traumas.

These complexities add a layer of necessary trust-building, support, and sensitivity to fully address grief.

Increased urgency and demand for services, particularly in schools

Organizations supporting families in their grief and bereavement are facing unprecedented demand. The number of children becoming newly bereaved due to parent death increased 46% between 2019 and 2021. While COVID is not the sole contributor to this increase, over 300,000 children lost a parent or caregiver because of it.* Our nonprofit partners expressed that communities are in crisis, schools are struggling to support staff, and staff is overwhelmed. School districts are also more frequently requesting training on professional self-care and leading during a crisis.Both top-down and bottom-up approaches have been extremely successful.

Importance of offering an array of approaches

Even in similar communities, needs can sometimes require different solutions. Each person's grief journey looks different and they may need different types and levels of support along the way.

Shared experience contributes to building community

The opportunity to connect with others who have common experiences in their loss, particularly for those who experienced loss during the pandemic or as a result of a potentially stigmatized cause such as COVID-19, can create a helpful sense of community. Organizations serving families have continued opportunity to explore how to foster connections through shared experience.

Understanding the nuances of loss during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the challenges of grieving someone who died due to COVID-19, can also create more compassion for survivors. These include:

- Losing someone who was required to show up for work in person during the pandemic
- Lack of understanding regarding the complexity of the loss; that their person went to work without complaining and made the ultimate sacrifice; "they are heroes"
- Not being able to say goodbye or comfort their person in a meaningful way (e.g., having to say goodbye "through glass," not having a funeral)
- Misclassification of death type
- Strangers downplaying or having strong opinions about the death
- Lack of access to services when they were needed the most

Stigma surrounding a COVID-related death

Stigma around COVID-related deaths remains for surviving members of families, and their grief needs to be validated. Broadening programs and support to be inclusive, rather than COVID-specific, can increase participation of COVID-affected populations who might be reticent to self-identify due to this stigma. This is particularly interesting in juxtaposition with the learnings around the benefits of a shared community, and speaks to the need for varied approaches to reach as many people as possible with needed supports.



4

Promote diversity in the healthcare workforce by supporting education and training

Addressing disparities in healthcare requires systemic change with a longer-term approach rooted in extensive planning and foundational work. Our partners' efforts focus on building that foundation. Currently, innovative approaches to help facilitate this level of change are being created and tested, and a broad continuum of work will ultimately be implemented. Full results will not be realized for several years.

Through these partnerships, the Brave of Heart Fund supports efforts across the country to diversify the future population of healthcare workers and remove barriers to entry and advancement for those currently underrepresented in patient-facing roles, particularly nursing and primary care.

$6.5 million

was awarded to two partner organizations whose work focuses on creating and maintaining a more diverse healthcare workforce pipeline.

Our grantees' work in this area envisions a future with a more diverse healthcare workforce and better healthcare outcomes.

Achieving the Dream

Achieving the Dream used Brave of Heart grant funding to establish the Accelerating and Diversifying Nursing Pathways at Community Colleges Initiative and is leading 10 community colleges in using innovation to drive change in the nursing pipeline by:

- Increasing diversity in nursing program enrollment
- Increasing retention of nursing students
- Creating pathways to living wage nursing positions

Learn More

NATIONAL MEDICAL FELLOWSHIPS

With Brave of Heart grant funding, National Medical Fellowships (NMF) established the Health Equity Leaders Program and is creating the framework for an emerging Health Equity Institute, as cornerstones of their work to pursue a bold vision announced in 2022 to achieve lasting health equity. These initiatives are designed to grow and strengthen the ranks of healthcare professionals, individuals and organizations committed to health equity and to establish NMF as a nationally recognized thought leader in the discourse of achieving it.

Learn More

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ENROLLMENT

Colleges are thinking differently about how and where they market programs to attract more diverse applicants. Colleges are implementing changes that increase program capacity, structure or duration to increase the number of students enrolled each year. Innovations include:

- Virtual simulation to replace a portion of clinical labs
- Revised admissions requirements
- Redesigned admissions processes
- Community partnerships to increase opportunities for practical experience

RETENTION

Colleges are implementing more focused student support services to better address the challenges students face and increase their sense of belonging. Colleges are thinking differently about credit for prior learning, high school bridge programs and other acceleration strategies to minimize pre-requisite course requirements. Innovations include:

- Student mentor program
- Summer bridge course
- Credit for prior learning policies and processes
- Redesign of course retake, incomplete and reentry processes

PATHWAYS

Colleges are creating new, direct pathways from entry-level credentials to living wage nursing positions. Innovations include:

- Pathways for high school students
- CNA and LPN to RN specific curriculum

To watch a video about Achieving the Dream click here

Our nation's colleges must transform their programs and policies to create more equitable access to and through our institutions that will lead to family-sustaining careers and future economic mobility for our students while filling significant community needs. The Accelerating and Diversifying Nursing Pathways initiative, funded by the generosity of the Brave of Heart Fund, is helping meet the demand for highly trained nurses in municipalities in nine states and is informing ATD's work and the work of our network colleges as we seek to drive equitable institutional transformation. We are already seeing more students on the pathway to better jobs and increased economic mobility in local labor markets as trained healthcare workers in our communities. But just as importantly, the initiative is helping us identify high-impact practices throughout the student experience that will continue to lead to a valued credential and careers for students from backgrounds that are often underrepresented in high demand STEM fields.

Dr. Karen Stout
President & Chief Executive Officer

Achieving the Dream

Year 1

Foundation Setting

- Approval by accreditors and legislatures for expanded simulation and new programs
- Built additional simulation facilities and curriculum
- Developed new marketing and outreach strategies
- Established and expanded strategic partnerships
- Recruited faculty, academic advisors and support staff
- Redesigned admissions requirements and processes

Years 2-3

Leading indicators of success

- Expanded capacity in Nursing Programs through simulation, clinical sites, new programs, and policy changes
- Increased BIPOC and first-generation enrollment in nursing programs and high mobility healthcare pathways
- Sustainable hiring of representative faculty, academic advisors and support staff
- Increased completion of early momentum metrics through both academic and non-academic supports (e.g., bridge programs, key gateway courses, policy changes)
- Increased sense of belonging among students
- Increased program retention

Ongoing

Longer-term outcomes

- Stronger pathways to equitable employment outcomes for BIPOC and first-generation students
- Increased entrance into and completion of high-mobility nursing programs
- Increased success in passing licensure exams
- Increased student placement into secure careers that lead to social and economic stability

National Medical Fellowships (NMF) established the Health Equity Leaders Program and is creating the framework for an emerging Health Equity Institute as cornerstones of their work to pursue a bold vision announced in 2022 to achieve lasting health equity. These initiatives are designed to grow and strengthen the ranks of healthcare professionals, individuals and organizations committed to health equity and to establish NMF as a nationally recognized thought leader in the discourse of achieving it.

Health Equity Leaders Program (HELP)

Each year, HELP provides financial and mentorship support for students Underrepresented in Medicine (URM) and guides these students in designing and conducting community-based health equity research projects. The program affords students the opportunity to become advocates and leaders in health equity and contributes to the creation of a healthcare workforce pathway that champions equal opportunity for aspiring professionals and equitable healthcare access for Black, Indigenous, Latine, People of Color communities.

In its inaugural year, HELP awarded 30 scholarships of $10,000 each to URM health professions students. This marks the initial step towards a goal of granting 90 scholarships over three years. Mentors and partner sites working with students also received small financial awards for their invaluable support throughout the year.

Through their participation in HELP, the first cohort of students:

- Deepened their understanding of community needs
- Learned to be adaptive and flexible in community-based research
- Built relationships with their mentors, sites, and the communities they served
- Developed an appreciation for the role of trust in health equity work
- Gained firsthand experience working with populations who distrust the healthcare system because of past experiences.

The students listened. They developed trusting relationships with patients and communities. They learned what it means to "show up." The HELP scholars made a difference today – and will become critical contributors to health equity tomorrow.



Brave of Heart's investment in National Medical Fellowships has been a transformative force in the organization's work to advance health equity. The Health Equity Leaders Program not only provides scholarships to emerging health equity leaders in medical school, nursing school and physician assistant programs, but also prepares and empowers them with a deep understanding of health disparities. The program's built-in mentorship and experience with site partners provides scholars with opportunities to put learnings into practice has greatly enriched the students' experiences.

Michellene Davis, Esq.
President and Chief Executive Officer

NATIONAL MEDICAL FELLOWSHIPS

Reflections from HELP Scholars

Connections and relationships	"I learned that collectively we can accomplish much if we are not so worried about who gets the credit. I also learned that as healthcare professionals and people of color, we are responsible for helping to bring up the next generation."
Equity	"I learned that in all we do we must strive to ensure there is equity in practice. The communities we serve must be represented in our research because they have an immense value."
Building Trust	"Community based research is hard, especially with the population I work with. They are so used to being taken advantage of and people not caring in earnest about them. But once you show that you are real and won't bail on them, then you become part of their family."
Value of financial support	"Community based research is hard, especially with the population I work with. They are so used to being taken advantage of and people not caring in earnest about them. But once you show that you are real and won't bail on them, then you become part of their family."

100% of HELP scholars responding to a survey indicated the program has increased their cultural competency, humility, and understanding of effective health equity promotion strategies and practices.

95% of HELP scholars responding to a survey indicated they will continue health equity activities during and beyond their academic programs

NATIONAL MEDICAL FELLOWSHIPS

Health Equity Institute (HEI)

NMF is building the foundational infrastructure for an emerging Health Equity Institute to pursue its vision for a more just, equitable, and inclusive health system.

Efforts are underway to build organizational and community capacity for actionable health equity leadership practices, programs, and policies to advance equitable and accountable healthcare systems change for improved health outcomes for Black, Indigenous, Latine, People of Color communities. Leveraging NMF's network of exceptional alumni, currently enrolled scholars, Board members, strategic partners, and emerging healthcare leaders enables NMF to develop, adopt, and deploy social innovation solutions to pressing health equity challenges.

Efforts underway include:

- Understanding current state, root causes, and support needs related to NMF scholar and alumni lived-experience,
- Collaborating with NMF research partners to create and develop health equity tools, research, and resources for dissemination across networks,
- Leveraging learning, knowledge transfer, and novel approaches to shift health equity narrative and practice to build power within Black, Indigenous, Latine, People of Color student, scholar, alumni, faculty, and mentor communities, and
- Developing pathways for impact at the institutional and policy levels. because of past experiences.

> The Brave of Heart grant was a catalyst for increased investment from other funding sources and visionary philanthropy. With these partnerships and collective endorsement of the critical need for our work, NMF has been able to raise its sights and is forming an even more ambitious plans to deploy research, training, convenings, advocacy, and knowledge dissemination to effect lasting and equitable change in healthcare.
>
> **Michellene Davis, Esq.**
> *President and Chief Executive Officer*

The project aims to serve several audiences. The primary audience consists of healthcare practitioners and leaders across the U.S., who will utilize the resources and tools developed and shared by NMF to champion and deliver on health equity goals within their organizations. A secondary audience includes policy makers across the country to help them understand the importance of providing support for these efforts. Finally, this project will ultimately help patients in Black, Indigenous, Latine, People of Color communities through improved outcomes, as these efforts result in a more inclusive, equitable, and accountable healthcare system in the long-term.