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Give, if you can, to ease the pain in our age of coronavirus | David Ramsey

From the Coronavirus in Colorado | Full Coverage April 2020 series

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A supermoon rises behind the state Capitol in Denver last week. From California to Colorado to Georgia and New York, Americans are taking a moment each night at 8 to howl to thank the nation's health care workers and first responders for their selfless sacrifices during the coronavirus pandemic.

Thomas Peipert

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In the age of coronavirus, need is expanding.

Meanwhile, cash is evaporating. The future is blurry. The temptation to be careful with money is strong.

This leads to uncomfortable moments. Should I contribute to the many in need? Or should I worry for my future and keep my money at my bank?

Gary Butterworth serves as CEO of the Pikes Peak Community Foundation, created in 1928.

The foundation distributed \$200,000 after the Waldo Canyon fire and \$400,000 following the Black Forest fire. Those catastrophes struck specific slices of the Colorado Springs area.

The current catastrophe strikes everywhere. Since coronavirus shut down much of Colorado Springs, and much of America, the foundation has raised \$1 million to help those who are hurting, with more than \$650,000 distributed.

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The grant committee will meet — by Zoom, of course — at 11 Wednesday morning to consider another round of grants.

“When everybody is impacted, those who have the ability to share and give, they are even more critical,” Butterworth says. “We will only be as strong as the way we can serve the most vulnerable.”

Butterworth understands those moments of choice when it comes to charity. He’s struggled with a few of those moments in recent days.

“I can do more,” he says. “I think of myself for example. I’m impacted by the uncertainty, but I know and trust that there’s a reciprocity and a need to help.

Certainly, there are those who are suffering more than I am and they need that help.”

I talked with leaders of two organizations that were given money in the first round of grants from the Pikes Peak Community Foundation.

Ann Rush and husband Daniel Crampton head Status: Code 4, Inc., which provides counseling and trauma therapy to first responders. The grant has helped Code 4 move its services online.

At any time, the labor of first responders is stressful. They treat girls, boys, women, men who are in agony and, often, near death.

But in normal times, Rush says, those first responders can compartmentalize their lives. They can step into their homes, commune with their

families and leave the agony behind, if only for awhile.

Today, compartmentalization no longer works.

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“With this COVID situation, there’s a new fear that they will bring this home to the family,” Rush says. “These guys still have to perform their duties, but now it never stops.”

Crampton is a retired paramedic. He understands the stress of the job. That stress is going up.

“First responders are more socially isolated,” he says. “They don’t have their regular outlets to be able to cope with the stress of the job.”

Sally Rothstein serves as regional manager of Project Angel Heart, which delivers prepared food to 250 clients in Colorado Springs.

“This money,” she says, “provides meaningful dollars during a time of uncertainty.”

The grant is only part of the community response. Dozens of other Springs residents have helped, too.

They deliver the food. They donate freely.

“The community is completely showing up for us,” Rothstein says. “It was a huge and immediate rapid response to a big ol’ question mark that was before so many of us.”

That big ol’ question?

Would the coronavirus emergency endanger Project Angel Heart’s ability to provide medically tailored meals for clients? Those clients are among the most vulnerable to the virus.

Springs residents, Rothstein says, answered the big ol’ question. The meals are still being delivered. The needs are being met.

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And so, the uncomfortable moment remains out there.

Will you give in this time of need?

Butterworth understands the complexity of the question.

“It is a weird feeling when everything comes to a grinding halt,” he says. “And it seems weird, odd to be fundraising. Everyone is stunned and everyone is uncertain, and the uncertainty breeds a pause on everything.”

Still, it's not the time to pause on giving. Needs are expanding, even as money is evaporating.

If you can, write that check or click that contribution button to the charity of your choice.

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