



E·C·G·R·A
ERIE COUNTY GAMING REVENUE AUTHORITY

**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT
FOR
AUGUST
2020**

August 2020

MEMO

To: ECGRA Board of Directors

Re: Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund (Response Fund)

Executive Director's Status Report

Summary

The Response Fund was created by the ECGRA board of directors on 3/19/20. The first grant made from the Fund went to the Second Harvest Food Bank on 3/20/20 to address the pressing needs of food insecurity. The Response Fund was designed to be locally controlled, swift, and flexible. It incorporated these principles and produced results consistent with the expectations placed on it by the ECGRA board and Erie County Council. Here's some numbers on the Response Fund:

- ECGRA received 69 grant applications; **44 grants** were funded fully or partially
- Response Fund grant total: \$2.4 million requested; **\$688,234 funded**
- **Loan Fund Activity:** \$520,000 small business; \$100,000 Nonprofits

Introduction

During a disaster, one of the organizational types deemed essential by state governments are grantmaking agencies. The "essential" designation recognizes a) that grantmaking must continue to flow, b) grantmaking must flow to the right places, and c) grantmaking is an important part of innovative solutions amid crisis. But what role can they really play? The ECGRA – Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority – is a county-level grantmaker whose purpose is community and economic development. At its core, the ECGRA invests in people and place. Both are important during a crisis, since both involve the preservation of life and the quality of life for those living and surviving in the aftermath of a crisis.

Erie County's story begins in March 2020, as local officials begin to wrap their minds around the spread of COVID-19 across the United State and major metropolitan areas in Pennsylvania. Smaller counties like Erie are less dense in population, play host to satellite hospitals. However, in a global society, no place is immune to the spread of a highly contagious virus. A heavy advanced manufacturing town, Erie has international players making stuff for the world's industrial supply chain. A university town, Erie has students traveling for Spring break.

Set between New York and Ohio, Erie is a pass through in the tri-state area. Knowing that Erie County would not be simply passed by, local leaders acted before the virus hit its borders. Erie County Council joined with the ECGRA to create the Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund.

Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund

The Response Fund was the result of collaboration between Erie County Council and the ECGRA. They created the Response Fund proactively after witnessing news reports from larger cities concerning the spread of the disease, its effects on the population of those cities, and resulting behavior of citizens in those cities. The Response Fund had three components:

1. *Immediate Human Relief*
2. *Nonprofit Loan Fund*
3. *Small Business Loan Fund*

Each area of funding was designed to address the crisis for multiple stakeholders from multiple perspectives. Erie County had never experienced such a virus-based crisis that had the potential to kill so many people, cripple the county's quality of life, and devastate the economy. How can one respond to such a multi-tiered crisis?

Grantmakers are uniquely positioned in a crisis because they are regularly in touch with human service providers, nonprofit institutions that provide quality of life and community development services, and economic development agencies for small business. Communication with these sectors led to an early conclusion: capital was not flowing. Liquidity was problem for small business of which half in the US have enough cash reserve for 10-14 days. Nonprofits could not fundraise event-style because of social distancing. Philanthropy had slowed because the stock market had taken a massive hit. How could grantmakers wrap their heads around this?

One helpful source early on was *The Disaster Philanthropy Playbook*, which can be found online at www.disasterplaybook.org. Serving as a framework for the Response Fund, the **Immediate Human Relief** component was structured as a grant program focusing on four primary areas:

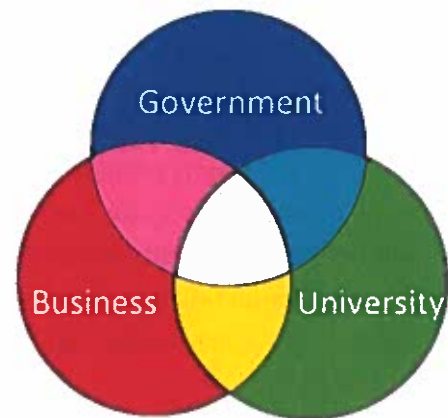
- **Food Insecurity**, Food Banks, Food Pantries, Food Delivery to the home bound. According to Second Harvest Food Bank, Erie County had 30,000 food insecure individuals prior to the crisis.
- **Homeless Shelters**, new requirements for the homeless amidst a pandemic included limiting shelter sizes, regulating social distancing for a mentally ill population.
- **Elderly Care**, telemedicine, protective personal equipment (PPE) for human service workers, sanitization supplies.
- **Child Care Centers** for essential workers that needed a safe place for their children so they could go to work at hospitals, grocery stores, and public safety entities. Like eldercare, the childcare people were struggling with protecting the health of both the

children and their workers. PPE became essential. New standards for sanitization were being pioneered. All on the fly.

The loan fund components for both **nonprofits and small business** were structured using an existing relationship with a Community Development Financing Institution (CDFI). Bridgeway Capital, a US Treasury regulated and Aeris Rated CDFI, had been working with ECGRA since 2014. Nonprofits that had a revenue-based service were directed to the loan fund for stability. Small businesses that would soon experience liquidity issues leading to solvency problems were directed to the loan fund.

Resilience as a Conceptual Framework

When a crisis hits, we often look to media sources to get our information. Politicians, government agencies, and NGOs pump out carefully crafted messages letting us know what's happening in the world. However, that's not the only level of action and information dissemination that counts. On the local level, every community has a mixture of organizations that play a role in a pandemic. Those organizations can be divided into three distinct sectors – public, private, civic. Sometimes known as the “triple helix” of community DNA, these sectors work in conjunction with one another, complementing efforts when appropriately aligned. Each has different motives, resources, obstacles, and objectives, but if they can align in a time of crisis, then a community gets the most out of these organization.



Resilience in Six Principles

1. **People** – Erie County Council & ECGRA, nonprofits, universities, municipalities, small business & industry.
2. **Systems Thinking** – Food insecurity, homelessness, daycare & elderly care, small business
3. **Adaptability** – the industry/university partnership to produce PPE
4. **Transformability** – COVID should transform our thinking on how to respond with resources
5. **Sustainability** – the Response Fund is a new source of continued planning and resource development that should be with us for years to come.
6. **Courage** – our collective future requires us to understand how ill prepared we were and how we could do better in the future.

The Grantmakers Role

Despite differences, these sectors can come together in a time of crisis to promote stability, safety, and innovation if they are properly understood and effectively incentivized. In fact, during a crisis is the time when they are most likely to collaborate efficiently, since time is of the essence. This is where the grantmaker comes into play. During calmer times, the grantmaker has a process for soliciting grant applications. This involves grant writing, grant review panels, careful back-and-forth with applicants answering questions, in short, a vetting process that leads to inquiry, communication, and ultimately deliberative behavior. In a time of crisis, the grantmaker's primary role shifts to one of information clearing house, resource provider, and matchmaker.

In short, grantmakers become important intermediaries between those who understand problems and those who can solve problems. They don't let sector differences, incentives, and bureaucracy stand in the path. The following examples illustrate the ECGRA acting as intermediary between sectors and agencies in order to solve the problems of immediate human relief and cash flow liquidity for both nonprofits and small business.

- **Examples**
 - Food Insecurity, food banks, pantries, distribution
 - Emergency Homeless Sheltering: a confederated system (HOME Team)
 - Emergency Childcare for essentials workers in the short-term and to restart the economy in the long-term
 - Digital Divide: Need for Residential Internet Access, especially for students
 - Small business liquidity & solvency
 - Civic institution viability
- **Lessons Learned**
 - You can't prepare, but you can react intelligently
 - Expedited voting procedures to act swiftly and comply with Sunshine Law in mind
 - Amplify existing relationships
 - Dual mission of saving lives and livelihoods (Public health & economic development)
 - Relationships between funders and elected officials
- **Recommendations**
 - Create the Disaster Response Fund permanently
 - Map out home delivery services needed in time of crisis
 - Work with Erie County to create an emergency shelter plan for the homeless
 - Incorporate small business behavior into a crisis response stimulus package
 - Educate nonprofits on the resources available during an economic crisis
 - Establish technology and broadband resources for every student in Erie County

	Organization	Project Name	Amount Awarded	Date Awarded
Grant 1	Second Harvest Food Bank of NWPA	Emergency Food Relief Boxes	\$168,000.00	3/20/2020
Grant 2	Emergency Shelter System	Emergency Shelter Funding for the Homeless of Erie County	\$12,500.00	3/21/2020
Grant 3	North East Food Pantry	Emergency Food Acquisition	\$1,000.00	3/22/2020
Grant 4	Erie Family Center	Diaper Depot	\$7,500.00	3/22/2020
Grant 5	YMCA of Greater Erie	Licensed Childcare for Life-Sustaining Personnel	\$16,000.00	3/26/2020
Grant 6	Mercy Center for Women	Emergency Homeless Shelter-related costs due to COVID-19 regulations	\$9,525.00	3/25/2020
Grant 7	The Upper Room	Costs associated with increased regulations due to COVID-19	\$5,000.00	3/25/2020
Grant 8	Meals on Wheels	Food distribution for homebound elderly	\$2,000.00	3/26/2020
Grant 9	Penn State University	Face Shield Manufacturing	\$6,700.00	3/28/2020
Grant 10	Community Shelter Services	Emergency Sheltering Increase due COVID-19	\$30,750.00	3/30/2020
Grant 11	St. Patrick's Haven	Men's Shelter Costs	\$2,500.00	3/30/2020
Grant 12	Erie City Mission	Homeless Shelter and Kitchen	\$39,085.00	4/1/2020
Grant 13	Safe Journey	Rural Domestic Abuse Shelter	\$9,000.00	4/1/2020
Grant 14	Erie DAWN	Domestic Violence Safe Housing	\$10,000.00	4/1/2020
Grant 15	Gannon University	Healthcare Operators Protective Equipment	\$23,000.00	4/2/2020
Grant 16	Sarah A Reed Children's Center	Technology Costs related to social distancing/remote therapy	\$11,000.00	4/6/2020
Grant 17	HVA Senior Living Alliance	Technology Costs related to Telemedicine for Seniors	\$6,800.00	4/6/2020
Grant 18	Erie United Methodist Alliance	Homeless Shelter-related Costs	\$2,365.00	4/7/2020
Grant 19	St. Martin Center	Childcare Center Preparation Costs	\$7,300.00	4/7/2020
Grant 20	Bethany Outreach Center	Emergency Hygiene and Food Distribution	\$7,600.00	4/16/2020
Grant 21	MECA Senior Center	Sanitizing Center for Reopening	\$1,850.00	4/16/2020
Grant 22	Penn State University	Expansion of Face Shield Project & N95 Level Face Masks	\$46,500.00	4/16/2020
Grant 23	Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network	Staff Costs to shift the burden from lost volunteer base	\$25,400.00	4/16/2020
Grant 24	Millicreek Counseling & Mental Health Advocacy	Telemedicine	\$2,500.00	4/16/2020
Grant 25	Urban Erie Community Development Corporation	Temporary Supplemental Food Box Preparation and Delivery	\$56,408.00	4/20/2020
Grant 26	The Salvation Army, Corry	Refrigerator, hygiene, sanitization related things	\$9,500.00	4/25/2020
Grant 27	Penn State University	Mental Health Mobile Application	\$10,121.00	4/26/2020
Grant 28	Christian Cupboard (Girard Food Pantry)	Food Pantry Supplies	\$3,000.00	4/29/2020
Grant 29	Ella Cochran Food Pantry of Harborcreek	Food Pantry Supplies	\$1,000.00	4/29/2020
Grant 30	Northwestern Food Pantry (Albion)	Food Pantry Supplies	\$5,000.00	4/29/2020
Grant 31	Union City Food Pantry	Food Pantry Supplies	\$2,000.00	4/29/2020
Grant 32	Waterford Food Pantry	Food Pantry Supplies	\$5,000.00	4/29/2020
Grant 33	Harborcreek High School	Ear Savers	\$1,000.00	5/4/2020
Grant 34	Elmwood Food Pantry	Food Pantry Supplies	\$2,000.00	5/4/2020
Grant 35	Edinboro Community & Economic Development Corporation	Food Relief packages and Supplies	\$9,370.00	5/4/2020
Grant 36	Erie Family Center #2	Diaper Relief	\$13,000.00	5/4/2020
Grant 37	YMCA of Greater Erie #2	RNs, Food cost, food prep, childcare sanitization supplies	\$22,960.00	5/4/2020
Grant 38	Sacred Heart Food Pantry	Food and personal items	\$2,000.00	5/12/2020
Grant 39	ServErie	Community Corp Outreach Team	\$8,710.00	5/12/2020
Grant 40	Youth Leadership Institute of Erie	Technology to continue leadership program remotely	\$13,960.00	5/12/2020
Grant 41	Project Face Shield	PPE Purchase for Public Safety and Nonprofit Sectors	\$2,000.00	4/21/2020
			\$2,000.00	4/27/2020
			\$4,000.00	4/30/2020
			\$2,000.00	5/8/2020
			\$1,600.00	6/2/2020
			\$1,880.00	6/4/2020
			\$2,000.00	7/13/2020
			\$2,000.00	7/22/2020
			\$5,320.00	8/3/2020
Grant 42	Sarah Reed Senior Living	Food Equipment (Heating Carts)	\$5,200.00	5/29/2020
Grant 43	International Institute of Erie	Pre-School Childcare & Summer Program	\$17,210.00	5/29/2020
Grant 44	Project Face Shield for Educators	Face Shields for Public School system	\$22,120.00	6/4/2020
			\$688,234.00	



NEWS*NEWS***NEWS***NEWS***NEWS***NEWS***NEWS**

ECGRA Investment in Bridgeway Capital Creates Opportunity for African American Entrepreneurs

Erie Urban Entrepreneur Program Provides Much-Needed Access to Capital; Spurs Community Development, Growth

CONTACT: Kate Philips
pahilips@parkerphilips.com
215.850.4647 | mobile

ERIE, PA (July 24, 2020) – The Erie Urban Entrepreneur Program, financed by the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) and managed by Bridgeway Capital (Bridgeway), is helping prepare entrepreneurs to succeed and generating economic activity among Erie County’s African American entrepreneurs.

With funding from ECGRA, Bridgeway helps entrepreneurs of color develop and launch business through its Erie Minority-Owned Business Accelerator (EMOBA). EMOBA is designed to provide developing businesses a strong foundation to launch and grow.

The program, modeled after a pilot project launched by Bridgeway in Pittsburgh, was conceptualized by ECGRA in 2016 when its leadership saw a need for more programs to support African American entrepreneurs in Erie. Bridgeway is currently preparing to welcome its second cohort of entrepreneurs into EMOBA.

“Bridgeway Capital is excited to welcome the second Erie Minority-Owned Business Accelerator cohort,” said Cathryn P. Easterling, Director of the Bridgeway Capital Erie Office. “While in a pandemic, businesses are still planning, growing, and projecting. Their hard work is representative of the Erie community’s resiliency.”

“This program provides excellent opportunities for emerging and existing minority-owned businesses and truly addresses the barriers that many minority-owned business face when navigating

entrepreneurship. I look forward to working with these diverse businesses in the second Erie Minority-Owned Business Accelerator cohort and to see their maturation and impact within our region."

Krystal Robinson, a participant in EMOBA's first cohort, has been working intensively to build a business that increases access to healthy food in Erie. Krystal entered EMOBA with an idea—she wanted to share her passion for healthy food and cooking with the Erie community. Through the accelerator, she gained access to a network of business development professionals who guided her to develop a business plan and marketing strategy.

"I was able to fully conceptualize my company, Taste and See: All Things Fruits & Vegetables, and step into the Erie renaissance effort by working with Bridgeway Capital," said Krystal Robinson, CEO, Taste and See: All Things Fruits & Vegetables. "Being a part of Erie's Flagship City Food Hall will enable me to share my passion for nutrition while also receiving developmental support. I want to help Erie look good and feel good because it eats good."

EMOBA program participants will engage in nine months of extensive mentoring and one-on-one tailored assistance focused on business planning and strategy development. Erie entrepreneurs are excited for this opportunity; Bridgeway has received 35 applications for the EMOBA program set to begin in late August 2020.

"The key revitalizing factor is small, urban businesses beginning to provide jobs for the neighborhood, particularly young people; an entrepreneur providing fresh food for her community, a barber inspiring young people to continue their education, a high-quality child care center within walking distance of home—that's the community development we are trying to spur," said Perry Wood, Executive Director, ECGRA. "Krystal's story is evidence that the EMOBA is working, and we strongly encourage anyone interested in learning how to create and grow a business in Erie's urban core to apply."

The Erie Urban Entrepreneur Program offers a streamlined process, including a loan checklist with more relaxed lending standards. Bridgeway markets directly to the community, launching the program out of Erie City Hall, to ensure potential business owners feel no barriers to entry. Bridgeway also provides credit counseling services to help borrowers boost their credit rating when necessary.

[More information on EMOBA can be found here.](#)

Here is a link to a YouTube video about Krystal and her business: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-ZZv75CP50&feature=youtu.be>

The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority views Erie County's inner city as a regional force in the economy and recognizes that there is an unrealized potential of inner-city markets and entrepreneurs. To apply for funding through the Erie Urban Entrepreneur Program at Bridgeway Capital, borrowers should call Cathryn Easterling at 814-451-1172.

####



July 24, 2020

Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA)
Perry Wood
5340 Fryling Rd suite 201
Erie, PA 16501

Dear Mr. Wood:

For 60 years, Stairways Behavioral Health has assisted individuals with mental health care and addiction needs at any stage of life in their recovery by providing comprehensive rehabilitation, treatment, arts, and supports essential for living, working, learning and participating fully in the community. We take great pride in providing progressive and compassionate care.

Over the last several years, however, we have seen drastic changes in our marketplace that led to serious disruptions in our revenue and an increase in our expenses. We worked hard to keep our core services intact, even as we recognized the need to make cuts elsewhere in order to strengthen Stairways for the long run. For example, due to a change in funding we had to close Crawford County outpatient programs a year ago. We have also completed administrative restructuring, re-bid our vendor contracts to create savings and more recently, we adapted programming because of the pandemic and reorganized/improved efficiencies in many of our programs.

Despite these many changes, they were not enough to balance our budget for the 2020/2021 fiscal year as we try to position Stairways to be a stronger agency for years to come. Regrettably and after much deliberation, a decision was made to close the BLOOM campus. While we have long believed in the value of art therapy and the positive impact those programs have had on our clients, our payers simply do not reimburse us for these services at a level that covers our costs. With each passing year, BLOOM continued to operate at a loss which we can no longer afford to subsidize while COVID-19 added additional constraints on our ability to offer the programs at BLOOM. Please know that this was a very difficult but necessary decision that Stairways' Board of Directors had to make, and it was not done lightly.

As a loyal donor of our BLOOM program, I wanted to reach out to you so that you were aware of this unfortunate turn of events. I deeply appreciate your commitment to the Stairways and BLOOM missions for these many years. We recognize that these difficult decisions made now will ensure that Stairways will be here for generations to come for the thousands of clients who rely on us for their mental health and drug and alcohol services. We hope you will, too. Thank you for your commitment to the Stairways and BLOOM missions. Please feel free to reach out to me via email at rldowling@stairwaysbh.org should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,


Robin Dowling
Executive Director





SARAH A. REED
Children's Center
 For a brighter tomorrow



July 29, 2020

Dr. Perry Wood
 Executive Director
 Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
 5340 Fryling Road, Suite 201
 Erie, PA 16510

Dear Perry, *Perry,*

Thank you for the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority's continued support of the children and staff at Sarah A. Reed Children's Center!

The very special contribution of 30 face shields was received and processed on July 29, 2020, and will be put to immediate use by our children and staff throughout our agency. Please convey our heartfelt thanks to your colleagues at ECGRA and the team at Bliley Technologies for the difference they are continuing to make in the lives of those we serve, especially during these challenging and uncertain times.

While many businesses and organizations have closed temporarily due to COVID-19, we have been working harder than ever to continue our programs and find new ways to meet the critical demand that exists in our community for children's mental and behavioral health services. This includes the **2020 Summer Reading & Math Program**, which is operating remotely this year and providing a variety of reading, math and educational activities to the 62 children who are currently enrolled in our 24-hour Residential Treatment Program. As you'll see from the enclosed report, the children are practicing social distancing this year and using Chromebooks to engage in online learning from their residence halls rather than receiving in-person education at the former Ridgefield Elementary School, as we had done in past years. We greatly appreciate ECGRA's strong support of our technological initiative, which is helping to equip our students, therapists and teachers with the technology they need to stay connected, stay safe and keep learning.

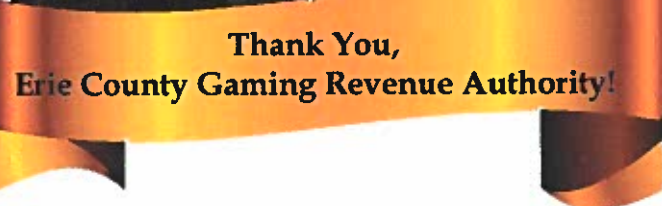
Perry, I can't wait to walk you around campus once it's safe to do so and show you the impact that ECGRA is continuing to have on our agency and those we serve! **Thank you for standing with us during this time and helping to shine the light of hope for children and families in our community.**

Sincerely,

Gary L. Bukowski

Gary L. Bukowski, MA, CFRE
 Associate VP of Development
 Sarah A. Reed Children's Center
 2445 West 34th Street • Erie, PA 16506
 Phone: (814) 835-7602
GBukowski@SarahReed.org

Thank you and your Board's continued support of U.S. Here at Sarah A. Reed Children's Center!



cc: Tammi L. Michali, Executive Assistant

No goods or services were received in exchange for this contribution
 Please retain this document for your tax records.
 Sarah A. Reed Children's Center is a Sanctuary® Certified Treatment Facility



Joint Commission
 on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations



Brian J. Polito, CPA
Superintendent of Schools

Teresa Szumigala
Assistant Superintendent

Board of School Directors

John C. Harkins
President

Tyler Titus

Vice President

Gwendolyn Cooley

Darlene Feeney

Angela McNair

Sumner Nichols

Lori A. Pickens

Rosemary C. Sheridan

Thomas A. Spagel

Angela G. Jones
Secretary

July 29, 2020

Mr. Perry Wood, Executive Director
Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
5340 Fryling Road Suite 201
Erie, PA 16510

Dear Mr. Wood,

Thank you for ECGRA's donation of 1200 face shields to Erie's Public Schools.

The school district's number one priority is the health and safety of our students and staff and your generous donation of face shields will help us provide the extra support needed in our schools as we navigate these unprecedented times.

Again, thank you for your donation and support of Erie's Public Schools.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Polito, CPA
Superintendent of Schools

Erie's Public Schools
148 West 21st Street
Erie, PA 16502-2834
P: 814.874.6000
F: 814.874.6049
www.eriesd.org



August 7, 2020

Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
Ms. Tammi L. Michali
Office Manager
5340 Fryling Road, Suite 201
Erie, PA. 16510

Ms. Michali,

With all the deepest gratitude, I am so honored that the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority chose the Erie County Technical School as a recipient of a number of face shields. During this trying time of the COVID-19 pandemic, your donation to the school will assist our administration in creating a safe environment for all, especially the instructional staff. The face shields will be assigned to the instructional staff, and any other staff that may desire the PPE. As you can only imagine, the staff will be extremely surprised and grateful for this kind gesture and your recognition of the essential job that each of them perform daily.

Please know that Mrs. Sharon Kresse, our school nurse will continue to be the contact for the Erie County Technical School for any additional health care related donations that the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority may be willing to share with our school. Again, during this trying time, any support for our staff and students would be extremely appreciated.

Again, I appreciate you thinking of the Erie County Technical School and our staff! I am wishing you and the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority continued success. God bless you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Joe Tarasovitch'.

Joe Tarasovitch
Principal

17 applicants to share \$50K in UC Renaissance Grant funds

BY JORDAN SCHRECKENGOST
jordan@thecorryjournal.com

UNION CITY — Exterior improvements will be made to 17 properties in Union City Borough through Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) Renaissance Block Grant Program.

The mission of ECGRA's program is to revitalize neighborhoods and main corridors, combat blight and boost buy-local efforts, according to its website, www.ecgra.org.

"It is a grant from ECGRA to help fight blight and/or to prevent properties from becoming blighted," UC Borough Treasurer Cindy Wells said. "They select spe-

cific block areas of the town to focus on with the thought that by fixing up one house it might inspire somebody to fix up another house and get it to spread throughout that area."

The areas chosen in Union City were South Street, West High Street, East High Street and the avenues.

Through the program, property improvements can be made to doors and windows visible from the street; roofs, soffits, gutters and downspouts; exterior lighting; porches, stairs and steps; painting; siding and shutters; chimney and masonry; and driveways.

There is a one-to-one match required, and the maximum grant amount awarded to a single appli-

cant is \$5,000.

Union City Borough Council approved all 17 applications they received and those property owners will share a total of \$50,820 in Renaissance Grant funding this year.

"These were all the ones that were submitted. Council decided to approve all of them because we were given \$60,000 for a two-year program with the option of spending it all in the first year," Wells said. "They felt that with the economic circumstances because of COVID-19, if we had 17 applications this year that we're able to provide the funding for, and the residents had the funding to do these projects, then they wanted to get them done,

because nobody knows what next year is going to be like."

Now that the 17 applications have been approved, the next step is for the property owners to hire contractors to begin the improvements.

"The property owners get their contractors and complete the work, then they submit copies of paid invoices and we reimburse them," Wells said.

Local officials are looking forward to seeing improvements to properties within the borough, especially since some of this year's applicants are located in the same vicinity.

"Out of the 17, some of them are very close proximity to one another," Wells

said. "It makes a bigger impact when they're right there in the same neighborhood."

Applications will be taken for the remainder of Union City's renaissance funds in 2021.

"There will be an application period open next year after the first of the year and they can apply for the remaining funds," Wells said.

There are no income requirements for the Renaissance Block Grant Program.

The borough will announce when the application period opens for the remaining funds and it will be included in the Union City Journal-Express and The Corry Journal.