



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Rhode Island Foundation, United Way of Rhode Island Award Jonnycake Center of Westerly \$50,000 in COVID-19 Response Funding**

**Westerly, RI – The Jonnycake Center of Westerly** announced that it has received a **\$50,000 grant from the Rhode Island Foundation and United Way of Rhode Island to help with its COVID-19 emergency response efforts.** The funds will be used to assist in keeping the Center’s Food Pantry and Social Services operational and serving neighbors in need, and to help compensate for rising expenses and diminished revenue.

The Jonnycake Center of Westerly provides a continuum of services designed to lift individuals in need out of crisis and lead them toward a path of self-sufficiency. The Center’s primary services include its **Food Pantry**, which provided over 214,000 meals to the community in 2018-19; **Social Services**, which distributed over \$116,000 in emergency financial assistance in the last year; **Educational Initiatives**, including the “Real Jobs RI” program which teaches workplace and soft skills to local underemployed adults; and its public-facing **Thrift Store**, which provides over 50% of the funding necessary for the Center to stay operational.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Jonnycake Center of Westerly has dramatically modified its service model to focus on keeping its Food Pantry and Social Services operating. In accordance with state and federal guidelines, the Center temporarily closed its Thrift Store, temporarily stopped accepting unsolicited Thrift Store and Food Pantry donations, canceled public fundraising events, and reduced employee hours. The result has been that while the Center is able to feed and provide crisis assistance for low and moderate-income neighbors, the organization is facing an unexpected budget shortfall. With the amount of need from the community expected to increase in the coming weeks, and without a complementary ability to raise suitable funds, the Center is facing one of its greatest challenges in its 45-year history.

Thanks to the \$50,000 grant from the Rhode Island Foundation and United Way of Rhode Island, the challenge has been lessened significantly. The funds will be used to purchase food supplies for the Center’s Food Pantry; help neighbors seeking financial assistance for housing, medical bills, and other basic needs; and help offset the projected budget gap caused by having to close the Thrift Store and cancel public events.

“Thanks to this incredible grant, the Jonnycake Center of Westerly is in a strong place to continue serving the vulnerable in our community,” said **Lee Eastbourne**, Executive Director. “Our Food Pantry and Social Services team have seen an increase in new client signups related to the impact of the COVID-19 virus. As more neighbors are being furloughed or laid off, the need will continue to rise. The \$50,000 provided by the United Way of Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Foundation will go a long way towards ensuring that we can purchase plenty of food and provide adequate financial assistance in the near and long-term future. We extend our sincerest thanks to the Rhode Island Foundation and the United Way of Rhode Island for helping us help others.”

To learn more about the Jonnycake Center of Westerly, and to sign up as a client, call (401) 377-8069 or visit [jonnycake.org](http://jonnycake.org). To contribute financially to the organization, please visit [jonnycake.org/donate-2](http://jonnycake.org/donate-2) or call the number listed. Financial donations made before June 30 will be matched up to \$30,000 thanks to a private family initiative. Personal shopping services are available on a limited scale while the Thrift Store is closed to the general public. Please visit the Center’s website to learn how to use this service or to arrange a pre-scheduled dropoff for donations to the Thrift Store.

**About The Jonnycake Center of Westerly**

The Jonnycake Center of Westerly’s mission is to provide a continuum of services in cooperation with other agencies in our service area to assist people through crisis situations and work with each individual to find a path out of dependency toward self-sufficiency. For more information, visit [jonnycake.org](http://jonnycake.org), become a fan on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/jonnycakecenter), follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/jonnycakecenter) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/jonnycakecenter), or call (401) 377-8069.

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