



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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The Provident Bank Foundation Awards Community Grant to NJ 211

(Cedar Knolls, NJ) The Provident Bank Foundation has awarded a \$5,000 Community Grant to NJ 211, a non-profit, statewide information and referral service that connects people in need to existing services that can help. Live assistance, which is multilingual and confidential, is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year. The organization maintains a database of over 8,000 resources and manages a website that offers access to this database and hundreds of informational pages. All services are provided to the public at no charge.

The primary purpose of a Community Grant is to address an organization's need for strategic general operating support in an effort to bolster the organization as a whole. This grant program is a tool for strategic philanthropy, which can give an organization the means and flexibility to increase efficiency and impact. Samantha Plotino, executive director of The Provident Bank Foundation, further explains, "We believe general operating support matters because effective projects and programs are only possible if the organization is running in a healthy manner; and so, the Community Grant aims to help organizations carry out their missions by providing unrestricted grants."

"We are so grateful for the support we have received through The Provident Bank Foundation. They have come to our aid at a critical time, not only for our organization, but for the residents of New Jersey," says Melissa Acree, executive director of NJ 211. She goes on to explain that in March 2020, when the pandemic first took hold in our area and most businesses closed, NJ 211 stayed open. "There was no question in my mind as to what we must do," she explains. "There was so much need." What happened next, took effort."

For the safety of all, eighty percent of the staff had to be equipped to work remotely. As the organization scurried to accomplish this, the number of calls they received grew by the hour. "In March of 2019, we received 28,917 calls. Compare that to March of 2020 when the total climbed to 58,270." In response to this tremendous increase in volume, the organization increased its staff by 39% and trained volunteers as well. When the NJ Department of Health asked NJ 211 to activate the Covid-19 Information Hotline, they also utilized NJ 211's automated texting system to quickly inform the public of safety measures and new developments relating to Covid-19 testing, employment, state restrictions, vaccination sites and more. "Since the pandemic began," Ms. Acree shares, "we've sent a total of over 5.1 million text alerts to those who have subscribed."

Of course, with all that has transpired, general operating expenses increased as well. “As we continue to meet the challenges of our time, the Community Grant from The Provident Bank Foundation, along with support received from other organizations, ensures that NJ 211 can be relied on to answer the call.”

NJ 211 can be reached by phone (simply dial 2-1-1), by text (send your zip code to 898-211), online chat (at www.nj211.org) or email (info@nj211.org).

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About NJ 2-1-1

The statewide information and referral service began in 2002 when the United Ways of New Jersey spearheaded efforts to give people-in-need an easy way to find health and human services by encouraging the Board of Public Utilities to designate the NJ 2-1-1 Partnership as the sole administrator of the three digit dialing code. Statewide coverage began in 2005. **In 2020 alone, the NJ 2-1-1 Partnership provided resource assistance to over 1,101,018 people who contacted 211 and visited our website.** With roughly 3,000 agencies in the organization’s resource database and over 8,000 programs and services listed, NJ 211 provides the public with front door access to non-profit, government and faith-based services, as well as disaster response information. Follow us on Twitter @NJ211, FB <https://www.facebook.com/nj211partnership/> and Instagram @nj211partnership.