



MEDIA RELEASE

Portage Health Foundation
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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[Hancock, MI] The most recent weather event has caused disastrous results for several communities throughout Houghton County. The Portage Health Foundation has been part of the relief effort since the day of the storm - our Board of Directors and office staff immediately engaged and began listening to the needs of our response crews and our community. We also worked to collect as much relevant input to help us determine how we can best respond. Since then, we have taken action in a number of ways.

First, we immediately set up the PHF's Houghton County Flood Relief Fund that Monday morning. This effort was coordinated with the Emergency Response Team and was done to ensure that there was a vetted, local, 501c3 public charitable foundation prepared to receive, hold and distribute funds for this community. To date, we have received over \$200,000.00 in private and corporate contributions and continue to work with several corporate donors who are still working on accessing aid for this community. We have pledged 100% - every penny that has been and will be donated - to be used for this relief effort. In fact, a considerable amount has already been redirected to the clean-up and relief effort.

Secondly, we immediately coordinated with local hardware retailers to facilitate needed equipment so the Volunteer reception center could dispatch workers with needed personal protective equipment and tools – sumps, vacuums, dehumidifiers, and other equipment necessary to do the job. **We have expended nearly \$50,000 in equipment support this past week.** This would not have been readily possible without the help of the Campioni family and all of their employees. They helped secure equipment and aided in getting it to the locations without any hesitation or reservations.

We have been working hard behind the scenes over the past 10 days with companies like Superior National Bank, 3M, Enbridge Energy, Boss snowplows, ATT, Dow Chemical, Range Bank, UP

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The Portage Health Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that receives and contributes charitable donations which support the health needs of the community through enhanced philanthropy and community collaboration throughout Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw and Ontonagon counties.



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Supply Company, River Valley Bank, and countless other companies – locally, regionally, and nationally - to bring additional volunteer and financial resources to this community.

Our collective efforts have been focused on immediate and long-term relief and have resulted in considerable contributions to date. We cannot understate the hard work of the volunteers, the folks at Evangel Church who have coordinated volunteers and the overall response by all the road and utility crews. Including aide from the National Guard.

In addition to the immediate establishment of the fund and allocation of the financial resource to aid the dispatch of volunteers, we have been working on a plan that takes the PHF from being “reactive” to the flood, to being “RESPONSIVE” to the needs of our community.

As you can imagine, we are balancing the need to be urgent to help our community and the necessity of being intentional and competent with the management and distribution of funds. We are working to do so in a way **that provides the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people and**, in the end, is defensible.

I can tell you, that when I have watched these things unfold on the news over the years, I, like most people, have criticized some of the delays that occur in getting aid to the community. As we work through this process, it is apparent that we need to be cognizant of our role as a steward of these resources and to take the emotion out of the decision-making process and make sure these monies...your monies...are spent in a way that accomplishes what we want them to accomplish – getting people back into a safe home as quickly and as responsibly as possible.

In that vein, the Portage Health Foundation has created an action plan that we are calling **Flood with Love** that will guide our allocation of funds to this effort. We have identified four additional areas that the Portage Health Foundation can and will immediately play a role.



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First, the mental health of our community as we deal and often times reel from the effects of this storm need to be met. We have partnered with Dial Help of Houghton Michigan to help us with this effort. If you need help, please [call Dial Help](#). They can offer 24/7 crisis support via phone, texting, instant messaging, walk-ins, or outreach visits; will help with connecting to vital services and resources, system navigating and follow-up contacts to ensure that individuals were able to connect with professionals, provide personalized emergency and or temporary assistance and redirect you if you need other help related to this storm. They will try to answer questions and be a central and sustainable call center. In support of this, **the PHF has allocated an additional \$50,000.00** to make sure they and their partner organizations are able to meet the community's immediate needs.

Second, we know that there are many homes which have been damaged by this storm – according to the report that I have been provided 617 homes have been impacted to some degree or another. We also know that 8 homes are considered to be a complete loss. Additionally, we know that the environmental damage to private property is severe and not only presents a considerable financial burden to families, but presents a public health risk if unaddressed and unabated and restricts many families, yet, who have been unable to adequately repair driveways and regain access to and from their homes. This two-part approach to home and site restoration is critically important to minimize future health risks and help get our families back to some sense of normal.

The Portage Health Foundation has developed a plan that will include working with the **UP Home Builders Association** and other trades association(s) to vet and coordinate licensed and insured contractors to help homeowners assess damages, provide estimates, and access Portage Health Foundation funding to complete projects necessary to get as many families back into safe homes as quickly and responsibly as possible. We have reviewed our plan with representatives from the Attorney General's office and have approval from the PHF Board of Directors to begin this process. Next steps in moving this forward are now underway as we work with our partner organizations to finalize the action plan and application process.



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This is important...so we can work uninterrupted and get this done as quickly as we can, we ask for a bit more patience and as folks to please refrain from coming to or calling our office with questions about this program of support. **We will be making an additional notification to the public, holding informational sessions, and be fully available to answer questions as soon as our application has been reviewed and we are able to accept applications.** We anticipate this will take place by early next week.

For this effort, we have set a target of approximately \$3.2 million dollars in aid. This will be provided with existing and targeted private and corporate donations and direct investment by the Portage Health Foundation.

As we stand back up from this storm it is important that we recognize that as a community we are vulnerable...it is unfortunate, but we are already seeing incidents of people's desperation being taken advantage of. Our process is one that provides vetting of contractors, transparency of work to be done, documented payment and processing, and even some costs controls to mitigate price gouging. It is intended to be a coordinated effort that will employ local contractors and contribute these financial resources back into our local economy.

Finally, we know that there has been much devastation to other aspects of our community... playgrounds, trails, parks and other recreational assets that contribute to our community's quality of life. These also provide a significant driver of our regional recreation and tourist economy. We are working to convene the necessary leadership to begin assessing what the damages are and how we will leverage our corporate partnerships to help us rebuild this facet of our community.

In total, we are estimating PHF aid in the amount of \$3.8 million dollars to help our community recover from this recent storm.



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Please know that all of us here at the Portage Health Foundation know our friends and families are hurting and are being faced with the realization of tremendous and overwhelming losses – some are unimaginable. **We are all feeling it!** But we know that we can't stay in that space.

We also need to someday see that weaved into all of this devastation there has also been incredible miracles...there could have been so many more homes damaged, people hurt, and lives lost. There has been so much love bestowed on this community...and that is the miracle – the flood of love that we have also experienced.

I ask that each of you please consider and give some Grace to all of the people that have responded to this community...the work that has been exhausted, the love that has been shown and the sacrifices that have been made to aide one another. Our hearts and prayers go out to the victims of this storm and especially to the Markham family. This community is suffering together, but we also all just want the same thing...to be whole again.