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“We were built for this.” Those were Famicos Executive Director John Anoliefo’s words to his staff when the Coronavirus pandemic hit. The question was never “if” we would help or “when we would help” or even “do we have the money to help?” The question Famicos asked when the first wave of chaos hit was, “What do you need?” It’s the same question our foundress Sr Henrietta Gorris, CSA asked when she went house to house in Hough after the 1968 riot. The answers came fast: meat, fruit, soap, toilet paper, disinfectants. When the Stay at Home order was given, we could no longer run the Famicos bus that takes our senior residents shopping every week. How would they get these essential items, without endangering their health? Thanks to our existing partnerships with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, Garden Valley, and St Aloysius, we were able to take the monthly food distributions we normally have and turn them into weekly distributions. We were also able to find toiletries and disinfecting products, even while stores were running out of these same items. Famicos staff, volunteers, and the Famicos Board of Directors all worked together to sort and bag thousands of pounds of food and toiletries each week.

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Dear friends,

In all my years of service to Famicos Foundation, I don’t think I’ve ever seen a first quarter like this one that just ended on March 31. This coronavirus pandemic has affected every person on the planet, in some way or another. People have been shaken, and for good reason. At Famicos Foundation, we have seen some extraordinary challenges. But Famicos was built for this. We were born out of a crisis. We were born to provide food, shelter, education, and advocacy to those who need it most, when they need it most. Fifty years later, we are again providing these necessities to families in the neighborhoods we serve, including the Hough neighborhood where we began.

Just as our foundress Sr. Henrietta Gorris did during another time of crisis, the Hough riot, we immediately reached out to those we serve and asked them what assistance they needed. We re-purposed our bus to make no-contact home deliveries of food and toiletries. Instead of our normal once-a-month food distributions in Glenville, Hough, and St Clair - Superior, we increased these distributions to once a week. When we started this change in late-March, we didn’t have the funds to support it. We just knew that the need was there and that we were in a unique position to be able to quickly respond to that need. We then approached our partners and donors with the needs of our neighbors and our plan to meet those needs. Our partners & donors immediately swung into action to support us. At the time of writing this, we have already supported 4,000 families through this crisis with food, toiletries, and disinfectants. As always, I extend my thanks to our donors & partners listed to the right, as well as our Board, staff and volunteers for responding so quickly and generously in this time of great need.

While taking care of the immediate and basic needs of those we serve has been our focus since March, in the background we have been working hard on our hallmarks such as Property Management, Real Estate Development, and Homeownership. We are finding new ways to offer our services to more people in a more efficient manner, especially while we cannot physically gather together. You can read about the Famicos Cares: LegalWorks and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) tax preparation programs on pages 5 and 6, respectively. Construction on Circle North Homes, our 30 new lease-to-purchase homes, continues. COVID-19 has changed the world, Famicos included. We choose to see this as an opportunity for growth and innovation. When this pandemic is over, we won’t be starting over from scratch, we’ll be ready and we’ll be stronger.

John O. Anoliefo, Executive Director

DONORS & PARTNERS

We wish to express our heartfelt thanks to donors who contributed to our Coronavirus Relief efforts:

- CLEVELAND FOUNDATION Rapid Response Fund
- NEIGHBORWORKS AMERICA
- PNC FOUNDATION
- CITIZENS BANK
- HUNTINGTON BANK
- CHEMICAL BANK
- SISTERS OF CHARITY Good Samaritan Fund
- MYCOM
- SHERWIN WILLIAMS
- US BANK
- CLEVELAND CLINIC
- SERVEOHIO
- Charles Nock
- Mary Quandt
- Anonymous Donors

We also extend our gratitude to our partners who contributed in-kind gifts to our Coronavirus Relief efforts:

- GREATER CLEVELAND FOOD BANK
- MEDWISH
- NORA
- GARDEN VALLEY
- ST ALOYSIUS
- MCDONALD’S
- BLACK BOX FIX
"It’s physically demanding,” said Erica Burnett, Director of Community Building & Engagement (CB&E). “We have the toiletries in one location and food in another. Once all that is sorted and bagged, we have to load all the bags onto the bus for the distribution.” Due to social distancing recommendations, the public distributions that would normally take place inside the Hough Multipurpose Center, were done outside the Center, using the Famicos bus as a distribution center. “So once all those bags are gone, then we load the bus up again, to start making deliveries to the apartment buildings and houses the next day.” The CB&E department has coordinated the relief effort but staff across all departments were helping with the massive bagging and sorting effort.

"On a typical week, we’d get a delivery of 6,000 lbs of produce from the Food Bank,” said Ward 7 Office Manager Shana Roberts. “If I had to guess, I’d say we will have distributed 50,000 lbs of food by the end of May.” At the time of writing this article, Famicos has already fed nearly 4,000 families, across three neighborhoods. For those who could not get to the Hough Multipurpose Center for the distributions without endangering their health, Famicos used the bus to deliver food and toiletries to their homes. “I have SLE (lupus) and am part of the medically vulnerable population,” one resident wrote on her relief request form. “I just want to say thank you in advance for whatever you can drop off.” Another resident shared, “Thank you for this program. Some of us seniors don’t have transportation to the store at 7 or 8 in the morning, and when we do, the shelves are empty of Lysol spray and disinfectants like wipes and sanitizer. You can’t even find rubbing alcohol to make your own.”

Famicos is able to buy these items at a discounted cost but the sheer volume of this relief effort could have been overwhelming. Grants from the Cleveland Foundation, NeighborWorks America, PNC Foundation, Citizens Bank and the other donors listed on the opposite page have made this relief effort possible. “Our goal is to keep this going every week while the Stay at Home order is in effect,” said Executive Director John Anoliefo. “We might even go beyond that, if the need is still there because people have lost their jobs due to the pandemic.” To request assistance, to donate, or to learn more about how we are responding to the Coronavirus, visit famicos.org/coronavirus-updates

Program Manager Brittney Smith, preparing to make home deliveries on the Famicos bus.
COMMUNITY FEATURE

Youth Job Resource Fair

Famicos’ Second Annual Youth Job Resource Fair drew 250 young people together at the Glenville Recreation Center in February. Middle school and high school students from seven schools gathered together to meet with 36 universities, colleges, youth organizations, corporations, and branches of the military. Youth attended talks on personal banking and financial health, explored career paths and summer employment opportunities, met with different recruiters, and received lunch to go. “The Youth Resource and Employment Fair is meant to give direct opportunities for the students who attend the schools within our service area,” said organizer Andrea Searcy, an AmeriCorps VISTA at Famicos. “We try to bring in resources that the youth may not be aware of and give them the opportunity to speak with those organizations. With the input of the students, teachers, and other staff we plan to offer this resource fair every year, improving with each one.”

Aetna Awards Famicos Foundation Community Heart Award

Aetna Medicaid has awarded Famicos Foundation with a Community Heart Award for outstanding work in promoting community-wide health education, access to fresh food, and exercise program opportunities. “Aetna Better Health is committed to addressing social determinants of health, such as food insecurity, to promote healthier communities. Our support of Famicos Foundation’s development of the Michael R. White Community Produce Garden will supply fresh produce for their community residents in Cleveland’s east side,” said Maureen Pero, an executive with Aetna Medicaid. “It is their dedication that earned them our Community Heart Award.” In January, Aetna made a generous $10,000 donation to Famicos for further development of the Michael R. White Community Garden and the Gateway 105 Farmer’s Market in Glenville.

“That particular garden is a bit unruly right now,” said Director of Community Building & Engagement Erica Burnett, “but we’re planning on getting it back to a place where it’s a sustainable source of fresh produce that will stock our food pantries and be sold at a low cost at our Farmer’s Market.” At nearly 3 acres in size, the garden has the capacity to produce anywhere between 5,000 and 10,000 lbs of produce per growing season. Famicos runs a regular food pantry in each of the three neighborhoods it serves (Glenville, Hough, and St Clair-Superior), several of its senior-independent living apartments, and several elementary schools as well.

In its new location at Ashbury and East 105th Street, the Gateway 105 Farmer’s Market will now have shelter, heating, cooling, and electricity. The market sells fresh fruits & vegetables, baked goods, and occasionally handmade crafts. The Coronavirus outbreak has caused a delay in opening the market this season but the enclosed structure should allow the market to remain open later in the year. The market accepts EBT, WIC, Senior Coupons, Produce Perks, and Rx Vouchers. Updates on the Farmer’s Market can be found at famicos.org or on Famicos’ Facebook.
James Levin has practiced criminal defense law in every court in Cuyahoga County. Six years ago, he was defending a murder suspect on a case. When it came time to testify in court, all 22 of the witnesses he had lined up failed to show and a mistrial was declared. The next day, he returned to the Sunoco station where they would hang out to find out why they didn’t show up. It turned out that each of the 22 people had minor warrants out and were concerned about potential repercussions to walking into a court, even if it was just as a witness. That was the day Mr. Levin got the idea to start LegalWorks, in partnership with Famicos Foundation. “There are 70,000 open warrants in the City of Cleveland right now,” said Levin. “Relatively minor legal issues, like a minor misbehavior from years ago, or a warrant issued because you never paid your traffic tickets, these things can prevent you from getting the job you really want or the promotion that pays better.” LegalWorks is a non-profit partner that does all its work pro bono (free). Most of their work is done sealing records. When legal records of a criminal conviction or arrest are sealed, they are removed from public record. “We can usually file a motion to seal a record in 7 days,” says Levin, “It’s a pretty simple process but it can have a big impact on someone’s life.” One client, after being turned down for a job he applied for because of a criminal record, tried to have the record sealed. He went through Legal Aid but was told that the file “got lost”. Four years later, after being turned down for yet another job, the person approached Famicos Cares: LegalWorks for help. Mr. Levin and his team of volunteers were able to locate the record and have it sealed. “Now he’s working at Amazon, making more money,” said Levin. “I had another client who had a theft record. When she was a teenager, she was sexually harrassed by a family member. She hit him with a frying pan and she was charged with domestic violence. With a domestic violence on her record, it meant that nothing could be sealed. Her record prevented her from getting any job at all. I was able to get the domestic violence record changed to a disorderly conduct record, and then have both records sealed. She’s now working in a supervisory position for the county.”

Famicos Cares: LegalWorks had 225 records sealed last year. They also assist with other minor legal matters. They can help you get your driver’s license back if it’s been suspended. They can help resolve arrest warrants, draw up your will and advance directives, or assist with inheritance, housing and foreclosure matters. LegalWorks has a Spanish-Speaking attorney available as well as someone who specializes in child support.

Famicos Cares: LegalWorks is accepting clients and meeting with them by phone or virtual meeting. To make an appointment, please call Famicos at (216) 791-6476 ext 271 or email info@legalworksneo.org
The Coronavirus pandemic has forced service agencies to think outside the box when it comes to how to deliver those services to the public, while maintaining safety and social distancing. One of Famicos’ most popular services is the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Tax Preparation program, run in partnership with the Cuyahoga EITC Coalition. Typically, the Tax Lab at Famicos Foundation prepares around 3,000 tax returns for free each year. The program was already in full-swing when the pandemic hit. “Because this program provides such a vital service across the Greater Cleveland neighborhoods, people who are used to getting their taxes done here every year were very concerned when we suddenly had to close our offices to the public,” said Programs & Services Manager Sadie Sandlin.

“We knew there were people counting on us,” said EITC Volunteer Coordinator Andre Ross, “we knew we had to figure something out and figure it out fast.” Even though the IRS has extended this year’s filing deadline to July 15, many people still wanted to get their returns done to be sure they got their stimulus check. “If you’re already getting income from the government, you don’t need to do anything, you’ll get your stimulus payment automatically.” For others though, the stimulus payments may be based on your 2018 or 2019 return.

“We’ve created a virtual tax lab,” said Ross. “We now have three different options to offer our clients.” The first, known as the “virtual live” option, let’s you schedule a live session with a tax lab volunteer through a Zoom call. The volunteer will prepare your return with you over the course of the call and you will have a finished return by the end of the call. “If you want the fastest route,” said Ross, “that’s the option I’d go with.” The second option is a “virtual drop off”. With this option, you would create a user profile, then securely upload your documents. Once submitted, a volunteer will prepare your return within 72 hours. The final option is “facilitated self-assistance”. Here, you would go online to the IRS website and file your own taxes, while a tax lab volunteer guides you through the process over the phone. No matter which option you choose, you would begin the process by visiting refundohio.org. The options will be explained in more detail and you will see a list of which documents you’ll need to provide.
Famicos Foundation’s newest development project is **Chester 75 Apartments**, which will be located on the corner of Chester Avenue and East 75th Street. This 54-unit building will feature a combination of studio, 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom, and townhome apartments, with a shared fitness facility on-site and a rooftop deck. Construction will start later this year and completion will be sometime in 2021.

The $13-million development is part of a larger neighborhood plan for Hough. “Although this is a ‘market-rate’ building, the price-point for rents will be affordable for moderate-income folks, like say nurses or techs at the hospitals” said Khrys Shefton, Director of Real Estate Development. In particular, the building is meant to attract millennials, who either choose not to or who can’t afford to become homeowners right away, to Hough. “How is someone who is 25 years old supposed to be introduced to Hough? We hope this building starts to help answer that question in a positive way.” Chester 75 Apartments will join several other private development projects in Hough such as Upper Chester/Innova, Axis at Ansel, and Paradigm near Wade Park Ave. “The more the merrier,” said Shefton, “The CDC is there when no one else is. Once we get the momentum started, we love to see other developers come in. The more development that comes in, the faster the neighborhood turns around.”

**Retail at Glenvillage Opens**

**Glenvillage**, a small-business incubator and part of Mayor Jackson’s Neighborhood Transformation Initiative, had its grand opening in January. Glenvillage is located on the first floor of Glenville Circle North Apartments, just one block away from the Glenville Arts Campus on East 105th Street. **The Madison**, Famicos’ own apartment building on E 105 St, was the first building in Glenville to feature first-floor retail with apartments above. As part of the $65 million Neighborhood Transformation Initiative, a pitch competition was held to see which small businesses would win a spot in Glenvillage and start-up assistance from the City of Cleveland. Of the nine retail spots in Glenvillage, six went to winners of the pitch competition. All nine businesses are minority-owned. The popular Cajun-Creole sandwich shop **Black Box Fix** anchors the retail space on one end. Other food options include **Pipe N Hot Grill**, **Cleveland Cold Brew Coffee & Cafe**, and **Vitamin Kandie Cafe**. Conveniently, Glenvillage also includes **Premier Barber Lounge** and two boutiques, **Living Rich** and **LaMocha**.

**Need home repair?** Seniors are encouraged to contact one of our home repair specialists to see how we can help you safely stay in your home:

- **Mark Smith (for Glenville)**  
  (216) 791-6476

- **Fatimah Shabazz (for Hough)**  
  (216) 721-5595

- **Charlie Townsend (for St Clair - Superior)**  
  (216) 268-2138
AVAILABLE PROPERTIES

NEW CONSTRUCTION
Lease-to-Purchase Homes
Located in Glenville
3 bdrms 1.5 bths 1,329 sqft
Starting at $655/month

Brand new, modern appliances, open floor plan. Basement, single garage, low-maintenance yard, porch. Some ADA-compliant homes are available. Close to VA, UH, and Cleveland Clinic hospitals. These are 15-year lease-to-purchase homes that are income restricted at 60% of area median income.

famicos.org/circle-north-homes

THE MADISON
Open floor plan, huge kitchen, granite counters with large island, plank flooring throughout, in-suite washer & dryer, stainless steel appliances, walk-in shower, on-site assigned parking, first-floor cafe. Close to UH, CWRU, VA, and Cleveland Clinic. Easy access to highways and downtown.

famicos.org/the-madison

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