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TO: The Lakeland Foundation Board & Friends
FROM: Greg Sanders
DATE: March 20, 2020
SUBJ: The Lakeland Foundation Friday Update

My most recent Update included a message from Lakeland's president, Dr. Morris Beverage, detailing how the college's operational changes necessitated by the spread of COVID-19 are helping to maintain teaching and learning. Today, I'd like to ask you to consider helping our students meet their most basic needs.

Lakeland serves 6,524 students annually. What you may not know is that the majority of our students, 70%, qualify for financial aid and struggle to meet their basic needs. And nearly half of the students at our community college – a staggering 48% – live below the poverty level. The fact that these students still commit themselves every day to their academic pathways while facing challenges many of us may take for granted is an inspiration that will stay with me for a very long time.

Funding to buy food has become a high priority because so many of our students lack a financial or family safety net. The majority are from vulnerable populations and include single parents, veterans, individuals who were formerly incarcerated, students who have aged out of the foster care system, and/or first generation college students. The COVID-19 crisis is now exacerbating in so many ways the pre-existing inequalities and food insecurities of our students.

Last year, Lakeland began a program to confront the growing concern of student hunger on our campus. With the help of area foundations, individuals, and employee donations, the [Lakeland Cares Cupboard](#) was established, which receives support through The Lakeland Foundation's "End Student Hunger Now" Fund and is stocked with non-perishable and fresh food as well as personal care items. The Cares Cupboard is housed in our Financial Aid Office and students have already used it over 1,000 times since it opened. To further reduce food insufficiency, Lakeland began purchasing and distributing grocery store gift cards to our students in need.

Separately, The Lakeland Foundation recently committed \$10,000 to purchase grocery store gift cards that will be distributed directly to students via the college's existing [Student Immediate Needs Fund](#), which provides emergency support to students faced with unexpected financial hardship in a range of needs, including utility bills, medical bills, car repairs, even gas cards. If you are interested in supporting this fund, please [CLICK HERE](#). A gift of any amount at all would be greatly appreciated and will be put to immediate use.

As always, Lakeland will continue to collaborate with colleges, universities, nonprofits, and local governments in our region to help establish structures that effectively meet the needs of students across Northeast Ohio.

Be well and thank you for all that you do to support our community college.

Sincerely,

Greg

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