



Will Power

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE PIONEERS ASSISTANCE FUND

AUGUST 2020 SPECIAL EDITION: COVID-19 RESPONSE

EMERGENCY GRANT FUND

For more than 80 years, the Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation has been committed to helping those who work in theatrical entertainment. Since the days of the Will Rogers Memorial Hospital, if you work in the industry, we are here for you — it is a philosophy we live by.

On March 30, 2020, the Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation announced the creation of the COVID-19 Emergency Grant. The mission of the COVID-19 Emergency Grant was two-fold: to help as *many* people as possible as *quickly* as possible, and to show theater workers we care about them. The National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO) generously donated \$1 million, matched by \$1.4 million from Will Rogers' reserves, for the initial \$2.4 million available to create the Emergency Fund. At the time of the announcement, an estimated 100,000 movie theater employees were laid off or furloughed (without pay) as a result of the pandemic.

The one-time stipend was designed to provide financial assistance to displaced movie theater workers during an unprecedented time. Our dedicated team of social workers processed applications from more than 8,000 theater employees who were out of work. In total, Phase I provided grants to nearly 7,000 people and spent more than \$2 million assisting exhibition.

As the closures continued and government assistance was taking longer than many had hoped, it was evident our industry was still in trouble. The Pioneers Assistance Fund committee determined that a second phase of the COVID-19 Emergency Grant was necessary. Phase II expanded its eligibility criteria to not only

include exhibition, but also to include distribution as well as vendors exclusive to either sector. Phase II also shifted from a flat amount stipend, to varying amounts based on need. We brought additional social workers on board and our expanded team of social workers went through each application to determine eligibility, individual circumstance, and overall need. Phase II is currently ongoing and to date has provided grants to nearly 1,000 individuals for a total of \$500,000.

6,921 GRANTS IN
PHASE I
Total spent = **\$2.1 million**

970 GRANTS IN
PHASE II
Total spent = **\$500,000**

\$2.6M IN GRANTS
TO DATE

More than \$2.6 million through nearly 8,000 grants awarded to assist individuals for each of the fifty US states, as well as people in American Samoa, Guam, Saipan and Puerto Rico.

“

MANY BIG THANKS from Missoula, MT, for your generous grant. It exactly paid for my rent in May which gave me the peace of mind to focus on home-schooling my eight year old.

”

Thank you so much for thinking of us in the theatre industry during this difficult time. I am **TRULY GRATEFUL** for the grant which will go to feeding myself, my parents and my sister's children who are staying with us during this time.

“

I don't have words at this time to show how happy I am for this grant from Will Rogers Pioneer Assistance Foundation. I didn't have a chance to apply for the COVID-19 Phase I. **TODAY YOU MADE MY DAY** because the money will come at the right time. I am so happy to be a part of this family for 14 years and I will stay for a long time.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

Thank you to our exceptional leadership for being a guiding light through this difficult time.

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REDUCING THE EFFECTS OF ZOOM FATIGUE

Have you noticed that you feel more drained than usual after video meetings? Every meeting has the potential to leave you feeling bored, but video chats seem to sap more energy than normal. Video chats will likely remain common until scientists develop a vaccine for COVID-19. Luckily, you can do a few things to reduce the unwanted effects of Zoom fatigue:



Set rules for your meetings, including how to indicate you have a question or when you want to interject.



Build breaks into chats lasting more than 30 minutes.



Don't multi-task during video chats.



Only use video chats when necessary.

A HISTORY OF HELPING OUR OWN

The movie industry is like no other. The Pioneers Assistance Fund is indebted to this community for the resounding support during these unprecedented times. From the moment we announced our relief efforts, there was no doubt that companies and individuals would rally around us to support film industry members in need.

Our friends at Lionsgate hosted a four-week streaming series, *Lionsgate Live: A Night at the Movies*, hosted by Jamie Lee Curtis. Each week featured a donation appeal for the Pioneers Assistance Fund, made by celebrities such as Margot Robbie, Selma Hayek, Bill Pullman and countless others. The first screening, *The Hunger Games*, garnered over 10,000 viewers and donations from over 350 individuals. The entire series, including donations from individuals and generous donations from Google and Lionsgate, generated a grand total of over \$200,000 for the Pioneers Assistance Fund. A special thank you to Popcornopolis for donating a portion of the proceeds of popcorn sales tied to the series.

Other film industry partners, such as the Faro Foundation, rallied to support our efforts. Kernel Season's, Cinema In Flux, Malco Theatres, Alamo Drafthouse and Film Row hosted third-party fundraisers. Dolby, a long-time supporter of the Pioneers Assistance Fund, also made a generous donation to support our relief efforts. Most recently, Sony Corporation and Sony Pictures Entertainment donated \$1 million out of their Sony Global Relief Fund for COVID-19.

As we have often said, it takes an industry.



“People are marvelous in their generosity if they just know the cause is there.”
- Will Rogers

HOW YOU CAN HELP

A NOTE FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Many of you have asked me how you can help the Pioneers Assistance Fund during this time. One of the greatest ways we can all help is to put ourselves in someone else's shoes, just for a moment.

Imagine you live paycheck to paycheck. Every dollar earned and spent has been planned and accounted for by the time it reaches your bank account. Now picture a global pandemic jeopardizing your health, everything you own, and your ability to work. We need your support more today than we ever have before.

While we cannot predict the future, we expect applications for assistance to continue coming in record numbers in the coming months. A gift from you will ensure our fellow industry members have somewhere to turn, to help their lives get back on track. We are honored to have served this community for more than 80 years and we are dedicated to ensuring that the Pioneers Assistance Fund continues long after this pandemic is over.

To paraphrase Will Rogers, three months ago we said 'things can't go on like this and they didn't, they got worse.' I humbly ask you to consider making a donation to the Pioneers Assistance Fund today. Your donation WILL make a difference.

Thank you for your support.

Chris Aronson

Pioneers Assistance Fund Committee Chair



**BRIDGING THE GAP DURING UNEMPLOYMENT, ILLNESS AND ACCIDENTS.
FINANCIAL GRANTS | SUPPORTIVE COUNSELING | ALWAYS CONFIDENTIAL**

For more information, visit wrpioneers.org or call **888.994.3863** to learn more about our program that provides assistance to industry veterans who work in distribution, exhibition and trade services.



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