



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Couleecap receives Governor's Award for Excellence in Community Action

(Westby, WI) Couleecap received the 2020 Governor's Award for Excellence in Community Action for their response to COVID-19, a series of programs collectively known as *Action is our Middle Name*. Lt. Governor Mandela Barnes presented the award to the organization at the annual Wisconsin Community Action Program (WISCAP) awards ceremony on Thursday, July 30.

Couleecap's COVID-19 Response Plan was launched mid-March to help people in Crawford, La Crosse, Monroe, and Vernon Counties. "We launched our plan with three principles in mind. To mobilize resources quickly, to make accessing those resources barrier-free, and to invest resources and effort into serving the most vulnerable populations," said Hetti Brown Couleecap Executive Director. "We are honored that Governor Evers has recognized the hard work and commitment of Couleecap's Board and staff."

The Governor's Award for Excellence in Community Action is in its 23rd year. One agency a year is selected based on their efforts to combat the causes of poverty in Wisconsin through innovation, collaboration, cost-effectiveness, and community impact. There are 16 Community Action Agencies in the state.

To accomplish these goals, Couleecap implemented several new programs, expanded others, and continues to develop innovative solutions to meet the needs of the community as the pandemic evolves.

- Couleecap leveraged relationships with local foundations, businesses, and donors to raise resources quickly for a **COVID-19 Emergency Financial Assistance Program**.
- Couleecap significantly expanded the services of **food pantries**. The organization extended pantry hours to five-days a week for curbside pick-up and added home delivery services for vulnerable populations who could not venture out of their homes or were without transportation.
- Couleecap partnered with local agencies in a **special effort to help immigrant families** who were unemployed, but unlike their neighbors, would not have access to state or federal unemployment benefits.
- Couleecap's **COVID-19 Small Business Relief Program** established emergency provisions for a rural business revolving loan fund, offering loans at 0% interest and deferred payments in Crawford, Monroe, and Vernon Counties.
- Couleecap provided grants, training, and technical assistance to small businesses, including minority-owned and low-income businesses in the City of La Crosse. Additionally, Couleecap worked with local partners to provide small business grants to 24 businesses through the **Launch La Crosse Small Business Recovery Fund**.



By the end of June, these efforts had distributed over \$220,872.00 to 397 households for emergency bill pay assistance, over \$153,722.00 to 43 businesses, and made regular food deliveries to about 150 households in addition to those served at food pantries.

Almost all funding for the Couleecap COVID-19 Response Plan is local. These local resources ensured that staff could respond quickly to people in need of crisis support. This was an important safety net for people until larger federal and state long-term programs and aid became available.

Couleecap's work continues and local people are still in need of assistance. If you are interested in supporting the work, you will find giving information on www.couleecap.org. Couleecap's latest effort is to expand assistance to immigrant families with the launch of our COVID-19 Immigrant Family Support Fund. This fund will continue to support the needs of local immigrant families who do not have access to state or federal unemployment benefits.

About Couleecap, Inc.

Couleecap, Inc. is a private non-profit 501c3 charitable organization. Couleecap helps people in need with housing, food, transportation, and more. Created in 1966, we are a community action program that fights poverty and promotes self-sufficiency in Crawford, La Crosse, Monroe, and Vernon counties. Learn more at couleecap.org, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).

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