



**Maine**  
Community Foundation

## **FACT SHEET / BACKGROUNDER**

### **One Year Later: The Role of Philanthropy in Responding to The Lewiston Tragedy \$4.7 million donated to victims and families; \$1.9 million donated to broader Lewiston-Auburn community**

As we mark the one-year anniversary of Maine's worst mass shooting, this fact sheet provides a recap of the process the used by Maine Community Foundation and 23 local Lewiston-Auburn community leaders to collect and distribute 5,241 donations from across Maine and the world to support victims, families, and the L-A community after the tragic mass shooting Oct. 25, 2023. This effort was just one part of a *continuum of care* provided by people in the community and beyond including first responders, health care providers, trauma counselors, local businesses, community organizations and government as well as family, friends and colleagues.

Immediately after the tragedy, Maine Community Foundation partnered with Jeff Dion, a victims' advocate who has worked on behalf of victims of mass shootings in more than 30 communities across the country. Dion's experience with best practices in response to mass shooting tragedies best practices, led to the creation of a transparent, locally led process for distributing resources. This included the announcement of two funds to which donors could direct their support, and from which the foundation would distribute 100% of contributions: the **Victims & Families Fund** and the **Broad Recovery & Organizations Fund**.

Decisions about the distribution of donations from both funds were made by two steering committees comprising 23 local and respected L-A community leaders. All funds donated went to 162 victims, their families, and people directly impacted and to 29 Lewiston-Auburn based organizations who met eligibility requirements determined by the local steering committees.

**As we mark this one-year anniversary, Maine Community Foundation and the local leaders involved in this philanthropic effort offer our gratitude to donors, our deepest condolences to every victim and family member, and our respect to the broader Lewiston-Auburn communities for the work they have done together to keep going, demonstrate resilience and get stronger.**

## TIMELINE, LINKS AND RESOURCES LEWISTON-AUBURN AREA RESPONSE FUNDS

Below is a timeline of the information and details released and reported from Oct. 2023-April 2024. Members of the Maine, regional, and national media played an important part in covering and disseminating this information to ensure victims, families, those directly impacted, and the broader community understood how to access available support and resources. While the information about funds disseminated to victim is necessarily private, this factsheet also includes a brief summary of the work qualifying nonprofit organizations did to support them and the broader Lewiston-Auburn community affected by this terrible tragedy.

- **Oct. 27, 2023:** MaineCF announces [two Lewiston-Auburn Area Response Funds](#): Victims & Families Fund and the Broad Recovery & Organizations Fund, so that donors could indicate which effort they wanted their philanthropy to support.
- **Nov. 16, 2023:** MaineCF holds press conference to announce initial \$1.8 million in contributions and the formation of the Victims & Families Fund Steering Committee. (Link to press conference livestream [here](#) and press release [here](#).)
- **Dec. 6, 2023:** The Victims & Families Fund Steering Committee holds a [public town hall](#) to gather public comment on how funds should be distributed.
- **Dec. 12, 2023:** Victims & Families Fund Steering Committee [finalizes protocol](#) for eligibility of fund disbursements.
- **Jan. 8, 2024:** [Process and requirements](#) for the Victims & Families Fund announced. This information was disseminated publicly and communicated directly to victims and family members via email.
- **Feb. 2, 2024:** Announcement of [contribution deadlines](#) to ensure timely disbursements.
- **Feb. 2, 2024:** Broad Recovery & Organizations Fund [finalizes criteria](#) used to determine eligibility for fund. The protocol states the eligibility for these funds:

*“...To be eligible for a grant from this fund, a nonprofit organization must be located in the L-A region and must have provided or are continuing to provide relevant services or support to people who were present at the time of the shootings at Just-In-Time Recreation and Schemengee’s Bar and Grill in Lewiston and/or support to people in the L-A region who suffered psychological trauma as a result of the shootings. Examples of relevant services or support may include, but is not limited to, the following:*

- *Mental health services such as therapy, counseling, and other trauma response treatments*
- *Emergency food and supplies*
- *Transportation, ASL interpretation, cultural brokering, and other forms of assistance in navigating support services*
- *Trauma-informed health and social-emotional wellness education and people focused support programming i.e., yoga, meditation, art, peer support, etc.*
- *Victims focused legal and social services.”*
- **Feb. 5, 2024:** Broad Recovery & Organizations Fund [applications process begins](#).
- **March 21, 2024:** Victims & Families Fund distributes [\\$4.7 million to victims and families](#).
- **April 22, 2024:** Broad Recovery & Organizations Fund [distributes \\$1.9 million](#) to 29 Lewiston-Auburn based organizations.

## Lewiston-Auburn Area Broad Recovery & Organizations Fund: How Nonprofits Supported Victims, Families, and Broader Community Recovery Efforts

*The Lewiston-Auburn Area Broad Recovery & Organizations Fund was created on the advice of national mass-shooting victims' advocates. Donors gave \$1.9 million in contributions to the fund between October 2023 and February 2024. Following an open application process, the Broad Recovery & Organizations Fund Steering Committee reviewed all applications and [awarded 100% of the fund's contributions to 29 area nonprofit organizations](#) that met the application requirements. Each nonprofit organizations recently shared a brief description of how it used the \$65,522 grant.*

**AK Collaborative:** funding helped the AK Collaborative, a collective of nonprofits dedicated to supporting immigrant, refugee, asylum seeker, and BIPOC communities in Lewiston and Auburn, provide necessary services to communities with unique challenges, particularly those from war-torn countries grappling with the trauma of gun violence. Additionally, funds will support future planning for emergency preparedness in Lewiston. These capacity-building efforts will allow the collaborative to continue to provide culturally relevant counseling.

**Central Maine Medical Center:** With funding, Central Maine Medical Center facilitated counseling for all 3,200 employees beginning October 26. This counseling was not a budgeted expense, and the cost far exceeds what insurance covers. This included 1-on-1 counseling for every team member, extended counseling for those who needed extra support, department group counseling and more. It is critical that care providers and team members receive mental health support, as they continue to care for our patients in the community.

**Community Clinical Services:** Community Clinical Services provides medical, dental and mental health services in Lewiston-Auburn. Following the shooting, CCS immediately shifted its normal operations to tragedy response, recognizing that trauma's effects are both immediate and long-term, direct and indirect. Many of its counseling staff team members provided direct grief and trauma services where there were identified needs. In addition, CCS kept its phone lines open for its mental health services so that anyone calling in for support would be immediately connected to care team members.

**Community Concepts (The Maine Resiliency Center):** The Maine Resiliency Center has served over 300 individuals who were directly impacted by the shootings, including those who were present, those injured, families of individuals lost, first responders, and other affected individuals in our community. In part through this funding, the MRC has provided a source of connection, support, and community for individuals who have experienced trauma due to this event, including facilitated support groups, access to community-based mental health services, individualized resource navigation and a host of educational, wellness and engagement activities.

**Empowered Immigrant Women Unite:** Many immigrants who have faced persecution, violence, and displacement in their home countries are especially vulnerable to the psychological toll of mass violence events. With funding, Empowered Immigrant Women Unite redirected its focus toward trauma support and community-healing-tailored initiatives for the immigrant community, prioritizing these as primary objectives. The organization forged collaborative partnerships, and enhanced outreach efforts.

**Gateway Community Services Maine:** In response to the shooting, Gateway Community Services Maine increased the volume of services provided and created new initiatives. This funding allowed for the establishment of youth support groups with certified counselors, initiated food delivery services for those affected, collaborated with community partners to host Zoom peer support events, and much more. These activities were a departure from typical operations, necessitating the fund's support.

**Generational Noor:** Funding to Generational Noor was instrumental in expanding its efforts to promote healing and recovery through increased mental health resources – particularly for youth impacted by the tragedy (directly and indirectly). Generational Noor provided group counseling, peer support and workshops that address grief, trauma,

and coping strategies in a culturally sensitive manner. Additionally, Generational Noor organized several dialogues focused on mental health and the effects of gun violence, allowing for the processing of trauma.

**IFKA Community Services:** IFKA Community Services used the funds to support ongoing healing and recovery efforts in the Lewiston community, which experienced widespread trauma. IFKA provided direct support to those affected by the tragedy, helping them access counseling services, peer support programs and trauma-informed care.

**Lewiston-Auburn Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce Foundation:** The LA Metro Chamber worked with the Maine Resiliency Center and Attorney General's office from October 28-March of 2024 to provide direct support to those present at the shootings. The Chamber continues to work with those impacted to steer the efforts to plan and host the commemoration event and create a permanent memorial. The Chamber added team sessions to process the staff's own trauma, so that they could properly support others who were traumatized; the Chamber also recruited administrative support, created new systems, and purchased new software to increase secure communications. These activities were both relational and administrative in nature and created 40-50 hours of new work each week.

**Lewiston-Auburn Youth Network:** Lewiston Auburn Youth Network worked, in the wake of these unprecedented tragedies, to address an increase in the volume of service to address the needs of impacted populations. With the funds, LA Youth Network has been at the forefront of recovery efforts – attending community forums, holding additional safety forums, doubling the organization's communication and outreach efforts, building awareness and community engagement. LA Youth Network has been providing emergency food and supplies, transportation, cultural brokering and other forms of assistance in navigating support services.

**Maine Inside Out:** With funds from the Maine Community Foundation, Maine Inside Out (MIO) has been able to increase engagement with system-impacted young adults living in Lewiston, offering peer support and paid leadership opportunities for community-led projects to promote healing and belonging through original theater and art. Participants have planned and hosted open mics, were part of the coalition of partners planning for the citywide Juneteenth festival which included a community grief ritual, and are also part of MIO's creative ensemble which is continuing to develop and tour an original play, "Broken Clock," about gun violence, grief, family, trust, and time.

**Maine MILL:** In the days after the shootings, Maine MILL immediately adapted daily operations to create and implement a plan of action as the sole repository for memorial items left outside the shooting sites and around the city. Maine MILL emerged as a leader for the community's cultural response, working with the City of Lewiston and local partners to collect more than 1,000 unprotected items left by community members. The museum has documented, stored, and respectfully displayed memorial items in a newly created exhibit space within the museum's gallery space. This space is now freely available to the public for reflection, remembrance and healing, and the objects on display within the space will rotate. Maine MILL is also beginning to conduct oral histories of those directly impacted by the shootings, as well as first responders and community leaders. The MaineCF funds were used to support these efforts.

**Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition:** Following the shooting, and with the fund's support, Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition increased: health services, the frequency of its community group meetings, the number of individuals on the Peer Health Navigators' caseload, and emergency and reentry support budgets, to respond to the onslaught of emergency aid and reentry transition support. These services continue to be in demand and will continue, as they positively impact MPAC's recipients of services.

**New Beginnings:** New Beginnings provides services to very low-income teens and young adults in the Lewiston-Auburn region who are experiencing or at high risk for homelessness, exploitation, abuse, and/or human trafficking. Following the shooting, with the fund's support, New Beginnings offered chaplaincy services for youth and staff who were impacted by the mass shooting since Dec. 2023, at our Drop-In Center for homeless youth in Lewiston.

**New Mainers Public Health Initiative:** New Mainers Public Health Initiative implemented several approaches to address impacted populations' diverse needs with the fund's support. The organization swiftly developed and distributed educational materials, including info cards in multiple languages, offering empathetic messages, emotional support and guidance on accessing mental health resources. Additionally, NMPHI provided safe listening sessions and equipped individuals with coping skills. Recognizing the increased demand for support services, NMPHI also expanded its service volume, ensuring timely access for community members to counseling and emotional support, particularly for immigrants who are susceptible to retraumatization after fleeing violent conflict in their home countries.

**Safe Voices:** Funding was instrumental in allowing Safe Voices to respond to the ongoing effects of the mass shootings within the Lewiston community, through Safe Voices' work with the Maine Resiliency Center and with survivors whose needs increased in the weeks and months following the shooting. Funding supported expanded 24-hour helpline staffing and for those who worked as advocates at the Maine Resiliency Center. Additionally, it allowed staff to utilize the organization's Employee Assistance Program to access counseling at no cost to them.

**St. Mary's Regional Medical Center - Nutrition Center:** St. Mary's Regional Medical Center's Nutrition Center acted quickly to ensure expanded food access during the early days after the shooting when access was uncertain. The Nutrition Center also coordinated to have service providers, including counselors, available during its open "food pantry store" hours. The Nutrition Center's response has been integrated into its operations with a goal of providing a space that is reliable, safe, and welcoming, knowing that many people have been retraumatized by the shootings. The fund's support allows for these ongoing food access, youth engagement, and community gardening programs to continue with a trauma-informed approach.

**Somali Bantu Community Association:** Somali Bantu Community Association pivoted in several ways during the shooting and in its aftermath to supply community members with accurate information, address fears and retraumatization and reestablish a sense of safety for immigrants and refugees who came to the US with prior exposure to violence and warfare. Many of these people are fearful that such an event could recur and/or be racially motivated. This funding allowed for translation and delivery of up-to-date information as staff worked diligently to dispel rumors, address residual fear and connect community members to services to deal with anxiety, depression and renewed trauma associated with this event. SBCA continues to work with its community to restore its sense of safety and healing after it was wholly disrupted.

**Sweetser:** Sweetser was on the ground immediately after the shooting, providing direct support to members of the community. The organization increased hours of staff already working in the Lewiston area and redeployed staff from other geographic areas. Sweetser also supported both community groups who were impacted and first responders. Sweetser is also focused on long-term healing, with more than 26,000 phone calls to their free support line; more than 14,000 children, adults, and families served – and 1,854 served in Androscoggin County alone last year. The funding helped to make this important work possible.

**The Root Cellar:** The Root Cellar partnered with SIL International's Trauma Healing Institute to initiate Healing Groups following the shooting. The model for these groups for adults and youth was born out of refugee camps and has been used in 100+ countries and 68 languages. With the fund's support, The Root Cellar's trainings will be ongoing and will be offered to formally initiate a citywide project as a new resource for Lewiston-Auburn.

**Tree Street Youth:** Tree Street Youth increased its hours of service in the immediate aftermath of the shooting. Following its "Love Lewiston" day of healing, TSY responded to critical, emergent needs due to elevated social-emotional needs, and expanded the hours in which staff could supervise youth at the center for families with increased needs. TSY has also seen significant increased numbers in its elementary and PreK programs; funding helped to meet these expanded needs of the community.

**Tri-County Mental Health Services (Spurwink):** Spurwink was awarded the funding after its acquisition of Tri-County Mental Health Services. Funds received supported a wide range of mental health supports to survivors and the community in response to the mass violence event. This included the deployment of Critical Incident Stress

Management (CISM)-trained staff to provide CISM interventions to internal and external groups and individuals impacted at schools, adult ed and other nonprofits. Funding also allowed for the provision of support services at the Ramada Inn, Lewiston City Hall and the Lewiston and Auburn libraries in the weeks following the tragedy – and Spurwink staff continue to support ongoing recovery efforts to this day.

**Trinity Jubilee Center:** Trinity Jubilee Center maintained its operations at its shelter, soup kitchen and resource center after the shootings and during the lockdown. TJC helped to ease the vulnerability and anxiety of homeless people who were stuck outdoors during the lockdown and provided food to low-income families whose children could not access school meals. In the months since, and with this funding, the Center has deepened partnerships with mental health agencies including Spurwink and Andwell, who now meet regularly with clients in the Shelter. Center staff will continue to facilitate these referrals and visits for as long as needed.

**United Way of Androscoggin County:** United Way of Androscoggin County immediately stopped all other organizational efforts, including its annual campaign, to handle a large increase in calls for support and to navigate resources via 2-1-1 (available 24/7). UWAC invested its resources for basic needs including mental health and crisis support. This funding allowed UWAC to stay connected with the community and pause its organizational business plan in the name of community support and outreach.

**United Youth Empowerment Services:** Through the fund's support, United Youth Empowerment Services continues to address ongoing gun violence and other issues of concern within the immigrant and refugee community. UYES hosted a community-wide forum that included a chance for community members to share concerns, questions, and experiences in a safe space with community leaders and appropriate interpretation for non-English speaking community members who couldn't access information in real-time through news outlets during a traumatic and frightening event.

**YWCA Central Maine:** The YWCA's use of this funding focuses on providing support and services to people who were present during the mass shooting, including through its daily childcare programming as well as its aquatics department. YWCA has offered its community space for gatherings as well as scholarships for programming for those impacted as a way to come together and maintain a sense of community and wellness. The YWCA provides a safe place for social-emotional learning as well as health and wellness programming and social support for families impacted by the shooting.

**Lewiston-Auburn Area Housing Development Corporation:** Lewiston-Auburn Area Housing Development Corporation used the funds to purchase supplies to support its food insecurity program following the shooting. And to ensure the remainder of the funds are used in a manner that has the most community impact, LAAHDC is currently using some of its own resources to pilot ideas, while discussing additional opportunities that could be a major benefit for the long term. Funds are expected to be spent by the end of 2024.

*\*Grant reports from Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Maine and the Maine Association for the Deaf are pending.*

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