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Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation and the Michigan Health Endowment Fund Make \$3.7 Million Investment to Bring Exhale - the Family Caregiver Initiative to Southeast Michigan
Interested Exhale participants can now register for December and January program launch events

Detroit, MI, November 13, 2023 – Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation and the Michigan Health Endowment Fund announced today a \$3.7 million commitment to expand [Exhale](#) - the Family Caregiver Initiative in Southeast Michigan.

Exhale funds and supports innovative, collaborative projects that are reimagining respite and increasing respite opportunities for family caregivers of older adults. The program has operated since 2019, primarily working with organizations and businesses in New York state, and will now make grants, totaling \$3.7 million, to organizations, communities, and businesses located in Wayne, Monroe, St. Clair, Oakland, Macomb, Livingston, and Washtenaw counties. The decision to launch the program widely in Southeast Michigan is on the heels of Exhale's [most recent cohort](#), which includes three grantees in Washtenaw County: Chelsea Senior Center, The Regents of the University of Michigan, and Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels.

“Exhale’s growth over the past four years has been tremendous, thanks in large part to the organizations that are coming together to reimagine respite through strategic partnerships and creative ideas,” said Amber Slichta, vice president and programs and learning, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. “Project teams, including those in Washtenaw County, are helping to improve family caregivers' well-being, which can lead to better health and lower costs of care.”

For example, Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels provides in-home caregiver respite, chore support, home modifications, and clinical occupational therapy (for older adult care recipients); The Regents of the University of Michigan started the Washtenaw Support Network for Caregivers, which provides a variety of respite opportunities, including in-home care, day care, educational programs, outings, care consultations, and more; and Chelsea Senior Center hosts Ease the Day, an onsite social model of respite, which includes meaningful and purposeful physical, cognitive, and social engagement, in Chelsea – a town with more than 30% of its residents over the age of 65.

[A 2021 scan of family and informal caregiver supports](#) conducted by the University of Michigan’s Center for Health and Research Transformation estimated that Michigan is home to more than 1.7 million family caregivers, with 44% residing in Southeast Michigan.

“When caregivers are asked about the help they need most, they consistently rank respite among their top priorities. Increasing opportunities for caregivers to take a break will improve their quality of life,” said Neel Hajra, chief executive officer, Michigan Health Endowment Fund. “That’s why we’re excited to join with the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation to launch the Exhale initiative in Southeast Michigan to help organizations in the region expand and strengthen the network of respite supports.”

Exhale is an opportunity for organizations, communities, and businesses of all sizes to work together to create innovative, community-based solutions that provide caregivers with an opportunity to breathe a little easier. Through a short series of workshops, organizations based in eligible Southeast Michigan counties and interested in developing caregiver respite projects and increasing access to respite services will receive free training in creative problem solving, the opportunity to connect with other organizations, and support throughout the grant application process. Each organization will receive a \$500 stipend for workshop participation. Upon completing the workshop series, participants will be eligible to apply for Exhale funding. The workshop series begins January 25, 2024.

Exhale is hosting two virtual information sessions to kick off its 2024 Southeast Michigan program. These sessions will provide attendees with an overview of the Exhale program; information about the grant application process, including eligibility requirements; and the opportunity to hear from current Exhale grantees. They will be held on Tuesday, December 12 from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. EST and Monday, January 8 from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. EST.

The opportunity to expand Exhale throughout Southeast Michigan is made possible by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation and the Michigan Health Endowment Fund, with additional outreach support provided by the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan. Exhale is managed by The Philanthropic Initiative (TPI) with support from Teresa Lawrence, president, International Deliverables. Exhale was first established in the Southern Tier region of New York in 2019, and since has expanded across the nine counties of Western New York, and Washtenaw County, Michigan through the generous support of Ralph C. Wilson Foundation, the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York, and the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation. To date, 90 partner organizations have created 16 successful caregiver respite projects in New York and Michigan. Read more about them at ExhaleforCaregivers.org.

Registration is now open for the [workshop series](#), the [December 12 information session](#), and the [January 8 information session](#). Learn more about Exhale at ExhaleForCaregivers.org or contact Lisa Simon at LSimon@tpi.org.

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About Exhale

Exhale - the Family Caregiver Initiative, funds innovative collaborative projects that are reimagining respite and increasing respite opportunities for family caregivers of older adults. Respite, a period of rest

or relief, can play a key role in reinforcing caregiver well-being and effectiveness, leading to better health, social-emotional outcomes, and lower costs of care for family caregivers and older adults they care for. Read more about Exhale at ExhaleForCaregivers.org.

About Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation is a grantmaking organization dedicated primarily to sustained investment in the quality of life of the people of Southeast Michigan and Western New York. The two areas reflect Ralph C. Wilson, Jr.'s devotion to his hometown of Detroit and greater Buffalo, home of his Buffalo Bills franchise. Prior to his passing in 2014, Mr. Wilson requested that a significant share of his estate be used to continue his life-long generosity of spirit by funding the Foundation that bears his name. Based in Detroit, the Foundation has a grantmaking capacity of \$1.2 billion over a 20-year period, which expires January 8, 2035. This structure is consistent with Mr. Wilson's desire for the Foundation's impact to be immediate, substantial, measurable and overseen by those who knew him best. For more information visit www.rcwjrf.org.

About the Michigan Health Endowment Fund

The Michigan Health Endowment Fund works to improve the health and wellness of Michigan residents and reduce the cost of healthcare, with a special focus on children and older adults. For more information about the Health Fund and its grantmaking, visit www.mihealthfund.org.