



Contact:

Laura O'Connor
VVK PR + Creative
202-360-2559
Loconnor@vvkagency.com

Exhale – The Family Caregiver Initiative Announces 11 New Grants Across Southeast Michigan

Leveraging more than \$2 million in grant funding, the program will bring together teams of 50 local organizations to create respite opportunities for family caregivers of older adults

DETROIT, MI, October 8, 2024 – Exhale – The Family Caregiver Initiative announced today funding for 11 new respite programs across Southeast Michigan made up of partnerships among 50 organizations. Nearly \$2.2 million will be distributed to support collaborative projects that are reimagining respite (temporary relief) and offering innovative solutions that give family caregivers the opportunity to breathe a little easier.

Grants were awarded to 11 lead organizations that partnered with other local organizations to develop projects that will increase access to respite services and enhance families' wellbeing in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw, and Wayne Counties. **Read about each team at ExhaleForCaregivers.org.**

“Each project team has their own creative idea that will allow family caregivers an opportunity to rest, recharge, and attend to their own wellbeing,” said Misha Stallworth West, program officer for caregivers of older adults, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. “With more than 1.7 million family caregivers in Michigan—44 percent residing in Southeast Michigan—the need for respite projects is significant.”

These new respite projects will launch in early 2025 and include support groups, educational workshops, respite expos, community engagement activities, and more. For example, one team is hosting a support group and workshops about financial management, meditation, and family dynamics. Another team is funding caregivers to attend relevant camps and retreats.





“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 – and their loved ones’ – quality of life, and also benefit their loved ones,” said Neel Hajra, chief executive officer, Michigan Health Endowment Fund. “That’s why we’re excited to help dozens more organizations in Southeast Michigan expand and strengthen the network of respite supports.”

The projects are kicking off on the heels of the first two Exhale cohorts, which began in 2020 and 2022 with 90 partner organizations that created 16 successful caregiver respite projects in Western New York and Washtenaw County, Michigan. Exhale evaluators at The New York Academy of Medicine’s Center for Evaluation and Applied Research distributed a survey to 96 caregivers who were recipients of the first cohort’s projects and found that 98 percent of caregivers reported having new resources to support them and felt better supported because of increased access to respite services. Ninety-four percent of respondents reported having new opportunities for taking a break from caregiving because of an Exhale project.

The evaluator’s qualitative findings included testimonials that spoke to the impact of the projects on the well-being of family caregivers of older adults. One caregiver in Washtenaw County said: “In the beginning, I was really hesitant to say it was for me, a break from family....I feel like the break makes me a little bit more patient with my mom when we do spend time together, so then, that helps my wellbeing.”

The Exhale model lends itself to collaboration and partnership, which can be instrumental to projects’ successes. One grantee stated: “I think all of the partnerships in this are so positive and robust. Everybody’s really invested in us being successful, and so, that alone helps with sustainability, because you don’t have just one person figuring out how we keep this going, you have multiple, all the partners looking at, ‘Okay, this is really good, how do we continue to build, how do we grow, and then, how do we expand, and then how do we keep it going?’ ”

Earlier this year, in preparation for this program, Exhale hosted information sessions, which attracted more than 200 participants. These sessions led to a series of workshops where participants received training in creative problem solving and other areas of technical assistance, as well as stipends for participation. Participation in the workshops led to new collaborations and partnerships, enabling organizations to put together their project ideas and plans.





In Southeast Michigan, Exhale is made possible by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, the Michigan Health Endowment Fund, the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation. 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 the seven counties of Southeast Michigan through the generous support of the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, the Health Foundation for Western and Central New York, and the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation. To date (prior to the 2024 awards), 90 partner organizations have created 16 successful caregiver respite projects in New York and Michigan. Read more about them and the 2024 grantee cohort at ExhaleForCaregivers.org.

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 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 mihealthfund.org.

