



Congratulations to the August Winners of the Stimulus Story Contest!

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Creative Story Award Winner: Hilda Jones

When the true scope of the pandemic first hit, and society shut its doors, I was at somewhat of a loss. First, I self-isolated; I'm an at-risk senior who lives alone, and it was the sensible thing to do. I'm fortunate to be safely retired with a modest but comfortable income, a family who loves me, adequate health insurance, and a home.

But I worried all the time about my neighbors and friends who might be suffering. I've tried to share my resources wherever and whenever I can, but I knew whatever small contribution I could make would be a drop in the proverbial bucket, given the scope of the disease and its aftermath, and the economic devastation that was inevitable. I knew too many people had been living on the knife's-edge for too long, and that this could tip them over the edge altogether.

My relative safety seemed unimportant in the face of nearly overwhelming need. So the stimulus payment was, in fact, the answer to my prayers. It allowed me to "cast my bread upon the waters." I had the assurance that even though it was a temporary solution, there would be at least a short space of time when a young family might be relieved of the gnawing insecurity of hunger, or an elderly contemporary of mine might be able to buy their medicine after all.

There seems to be no end in sight, although I hope that the fall brings new energy and hope to the nation. We know that the consequences of the pandemic will be with us for untold months and years to come, and that the need to help one another will only grow stronger. I hope the stimulus will yield returns tenfold, and will be swiftly repeated.

Now is not the time to hold back or deny assistance, and it certainly is not the time to weigh anyone on the scale of "need." Each of us needs all the rest; everyone is my neighbor.

Powerful Story Award Winner: Jeni Nganzobo

I am an international freshman student at the University of Maine at Machias. It is my first time to study overseas knowing that there are more opportunities for us as international students.

I came to the United States in late December and I was looking forward to something new and adapting to a new culture. During March I came from a basketball match then I found out that the country was not in good condition because of how fast the virus (COVID-19) was spreading and we were sent emails to go back home.

I don't have any blood relatives here, which was very stressful because me and my sister did not know what to do or where to go. I had to contact my family friends for us to stay with them for the next few months. Me and my twin sister had to stop work and that is the source of our income. As international students we are not allowed to work, so we had no option but to leave the campus.

The city of Machias was like a ghost town, which is scary and depressing. Hearing about the stimulus check, we were so excited but then I did not meet the requirement to get one which is unfair. Why I say so it is not because of me only but there are people out there who are suffering more than those who file for tax.

The government only depends on those who file tax, what about those who don't even work or those who don't have a source of income. I tried to apply for another stimulus check but nothing good came out. As an international student we also need help because we are staying in your country and also we do contribute to the economy.

My family are in Africa and the condition there is not as good as here. I spent five months without work, our education is at risk and we also need something to be done about it. As a student who depends on work to pay my college fees, I want to voice out what I feel so that something can be done about it. Even if we don't qualify to be part of the federal fund, we would like to get more information on what fund to apply for.

Big Change Award Winner: Joan Willoe

I have been living solely on Social Security Retirement and Disability income, which only provides a little over \$800 per month. Given this small monthly income, I can barely keep my home running, with most of

my income going toward property taxes, homeowner's insurance, utilities and necessary house maintenance.

This leaves me virtually no money for expensive health expenses. I have not been able to replace my eyeglasses for over ten years--my prescription was outdated and the frames were held together with tape.

With the \$1200 stimulus check, I was able to get a new, updated prescription and new eyeglass frames in May. I had clear vision for the first time in a very long time. All those years I thought my eyes were physically deteriorating, when in fact I needed new glasses. My quality of life has vastly improved!