



Congratulations to the October Winners of the Stimulus Story Contest!

The story contest has ended, for now. Thank you to all who participated!

Creative Story Award Winner: Humam Shawqi

Powerful Story Award Winner: Kayla Jones

During the epidemic I have received help in the form of the stimulus check, and the extra \$600 in unemployment while it was available. If it wasn't for this extra help that we have gotten, I wouldn't have been able to keep a roof over my children's heads, food in their mouths, clothes on their (ever-growing) bodies, along with all of the other essentials that are needed for daily life and taking care of two young children.

My children's school closed, which made it impossible to even try to work or look for a job considering I had become a full time teacher of two (very stubborn and headstrong children) that are in 2 separate grades in school, while also being a caretaker for my husband who has severe PTSD and depression due to being a combat veteran. I couldn't be more grateful for the extra money that we got, it took the weight off of my shoulders even if just for a little while, letting me know my family was going to be okay for the time being and that we didn't have to struggle. I was able to focus my attention on my kids and their father who needed me full time because nobody was able to go anywhere or do anything and I was all they had.

I know that not everybody really needed the extra help, but for those of us who did, it was the difference between going hungry, potentially homeless, not being able to pay car payments and losing our means of transportation, etc... or having peace of mind. Knowing that you and your family are okay, having that stability that children so desperately need, and holding off the depression, anxiety, and other issues that come along with struggling financially. Thanks to that money we still have our home, car, and my children never had to go without what they needed.

Big Change Award Winner: Samarali Daniels

Before the pandemic I had lost my job in the nonprofit sector. When the pandemic started to hit, the only jobs that were available to me were service industry jobs. Our household has disabled folx in it, myself included. The pandemic meant that our medical treatments had to stop for a short time, making symptoms return/intensify.

Retail/service work wasn't a viable option for us. Our car was uninspected, uninsured, and unregistered. Leaving us with no transportation. When we got the stimulus payment we were able to get caught up on bills AND prepaid all our bills for 4 months. Our rent, insurance, internet, phones. We were also able to buy ppe, household supplies, medical equipment for my children that insurance doesn't cover, and personal medications we were fearful of not having the money for. Some we were unable to access pre-covid due to financial restrictions.

My family watched as our kin suffered in this state. Bipoc folx in Maine have the worst disparities of the country, and we have been ignored. Black folx are 10-20x more likely than whites to get the virus. This is why I also donated mask making materials to bipoc folx making cloth masks for Maine's bipoc community. We bought seeds for a mutual aid group growing food on donated land for those without here in Maine. We got disposable masks, hand sanitizer, toilet paper, and whatever we can to support those who were unable to get stimulus checks.

During this pandemic the stimulus money has provided us with the financial ability to pay the new food, resource, and living costs associated with the national shortages, price inflation, and just plain greed. Not only are things harder to find, limited quantities, new formulas of ingredients but they just flat out cost more! This had given us some/limited reprieve from the multiple crises of poverty, for a short time. This money isn't just about our family, but the countless folx who were supported by other poor folx in crisis. Many of who couldn't have offered mutual aid and instead, would need it.