This holiday season is unlike any other due to the persistence of COVID-19. Americans continue to observe physical distancing and are not seeing family or friends as frequently as before; community gathering places are shut down or operating remotely in many cases; and many are experiencing financial hardship due to the economic downturn brought on by the virus. With COVID-19 straining communities, the needs are greater than ever, and fuel and petrochemical manufacturers across the country are stepping up to offer their support and help meet those needs in the local communities where they operate and beyond.

LyondellBasell, for example, donated $1.3 million to support the COVID-19 response efforts of the Global FoodBanking Network and United States local food banks.

“The pandemic has disrupted various facets of our lives and millions of people, many who have not needed relief before, are depending on our food banking organizations to keep food on the table,” said Lisa Moon, President and CEO of The Global FoodBanking Network. “LyondellBasell's support will help ease the strain food banks are currently feeling and help us reach more people facing hunger during this difficult time.”

Phillips 66 donated $1 million to 48 local food banks across the U.S. and in the U.K., with $200,000 going to five organizations in Houston. The donations are on top of the $500,000 donated by Phillips 66 to the Houston Food Bank earlier this year.

“This is a gift from the people of Phillips 66 to those that are taking care of our most vulnerable,” said Phillips 66 Chairman and CEO Greg Garland.

But it’s not just money the industries are giving. It is also the gift of time. In addition to donating a total of $81,000 in support of 21 charitable organizations across their operating area, Motiva Enterprises hosted a “holiday giving event” in partnership with Port Arthur ISD, distributing $15,000 worth of holiday meal gift cards to more than 150 families in need.

Employee volunteers from the Valero Energy Houston Refinery spent #GivingTuesday packing over 10,000 boxed meals at the Houston Food Bank, while employee volunteers from Cheniere Energy recently assembled 1,000 gift bags for the #MealsonWheels seniors of the Interfaith Ministries of the Greater Houston Area.

And 132 employees at the Phillips 66 Wood River Refinery donated frozen turkeys to the Crisis Food Center – turkeys that they had received as holiday gifts from management.

And that’s after the $50,000 the refinery donated to four local food pantries and the $20,000 they gave to the Boys and Girls Club of Alton to close the gap created by United Way funding losses.

Here are just a few more of the many examples of the contributions fuel and petrochemical companies across America have made to local organizations dedicated to helping families and individuals who have been impact by the pandemic:

- Marathon Petroleum Corporation donated $600,000 to 25 children's charities in northwest Ohio;
- Phillips 66 donated $100,000 to the Catholic Charities Mary Martha Outreach in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, to support their food pantry, which serves upwards of 2,000 families per week;
- The Phillips 66 Lake Charles Refinery gave $30,000 to the Second Harvest's Food Bank to support communities in Southwest Louisiana; and
- Valero Energy donated $75,000 to the YMCA of Memphis as part of the 2020 Valero Benefit for Children campaign.

Fuel and petrochemical companies have also been investing in our nation's post-pandemic future by making donations to schools and organizations that are preparing the youth of America for a high-tech future.

First, to make sure the schools they return to are safe for both students and staff, Phillips 66 gave the Houston Independent School District (HISD) $200,000 donation to "outfit schools with state-of-the-art electrostatic cleaning supplies and equipment," according to the HISD.

And once students return to the classroom fulltime, a number of them will directly benefit from the following:

- A $30,000 donation from Chevron Richmond to Stege Elementary School in Richmond, California, dedicated to "supporting technology needs for all 250 students in the K-6th school."
- A $35,000 grant from Phillips 66 to Sand Springs, Oklahoma, Public Schools "which will be used to purchase additional Chromebooks for elementary students within the district."
- A $75,000 contribution from Valero Energy to the Education Fund for Greater Memphis Classrooms, dedicated to "support four schools with technology to stay on track to excel."
- 10 touch screen laptops donated by Chevron Phillips Chemical to the Woodlands Children Museum in Houston to be used for the Robotics Workshop, "allowing young engineers to explore the basic fundamentals of building and mechanical principle." And
- A $5,278.80 gift from Phillips 66, Mid-Continent Region to the Perryton Junior High Robotics "Wizards of Technology" Team up as they plan to compete against robotics teams from other schools in the region in the spring.

Closer to home, we at the American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers also feel a strong responsibility to offer assistance to those in need during these trying times.

One AFPM employee, Eileen Scherzinger, recently volunteered to become a "Lasagna Mama" for Lasagna Love, a nonprofit that provides prepared meals for families facing food insecurity. She soon became a regional leader for the organization, signing up volunteers to cook meals and finding families who needed assistance.

Keenly aware that there are families struggling in our D.C.-area community, AFPM employees also sought to assist and encourage neighbors in the community by participating in the Salvation Army's Angel Tree, a personalized holiday assistance program in which sponsors purchase new toys and clothing for children (Angels) in need.

Through their combined contributions, the AFPM team brought holiday joy to 50 local children in the form of gifts like learning tools (LeapPads, tablets and headphones); bikes, scooters and basketballs; dolls, toys and craft kits; and warm winter coats, socks and boots.

In such a challenging year, the outpouring of generosity from individuals across the fuel and petrochemical industries is especially heartening. We're proud to work with people so passionate about supporting those in need and making a positive impact in their communities.

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