



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT THANKS THE LAVIN FAMILY FOUNDATION FOR  
DONATING \$2.3 MILLION TO SUPPORT LOCALLY-OWNED RESTAURANTS AND  
CHARITIES**

*The Lavin Family's #FeedItForward Initiative Provides Meals to Those in Need While  
Also Financially Helping Local Restaurateurs and Caterers Impacted by COVID-19  
Pandemic*

**CHICAGO** – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today thanked the Lavin Family Foundation for their generous support of locally-owned restaurants and charities during the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, the Lavin Family Foundation has donated more than \$2 million to charities and nonprofits, empowering numerous organizations across the area to engage over 50 independent restaurants and caterers, providing meal provisions through the months of April, May and beyond.

“We are truly all in this together, and on behalf of myself and a grateful Chicago, I want to thank the Lavin Family Foundation for its generosity and wonderful commitment to supporting our City, our communities and our families during this difficult time,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “The actions by the Lavin Family Foundation are not only supporting the countless Chicagoans working day and night to fight this disease and families struggling during this challenging time, but their support is helping to lay a foundation for our strong recovery.”

The Lavin Family Foundation launched the “Feed It Forward” initiative in mid-March to support Chicagoans during the COVID-19 pandemic. The “Feed It Forward” effort provides much-needed meals to numerous charities across the Chicagoland region by partnering with independent, locally-owned restaurants and caterers. Through this initiative, the Lavin Family Foundation is able to support restaurants and their staff by funding food preparation and meals that are then provided to families and communities across Chicago. In April, the Foundation expanded its generous support and answered Mayor Lightfoot’s call to action to provide meals to feed the City’s third-shift workers at local hospitals. Through this innovative philanthropic approach, the Lavin Family Foundation is establishing a



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reliable stream of meals for families, communities and front-line workers, and is helping to keep our locally-owned restaurants open and in business.

“During this challenging time in our great city, we’re truly humbled and privileged to help support so many local restaurant owners impacted, while simultaneously providing nutritious meals to so many Chicagoans in need through our care of more than 50 incredible nonprofits,” said Carol Lavin Bernick, president of the Lavin Family Foundation. “We hope our family’s innovative and creative approach to giving back further inspires and empowers others to do the same by getting involved in their neighborhoods and communities, donating to one of their favorite charities or supporting other locally-owned restaurants in a similar fashion to help extend the impact of the Feed It Forward initiative.”

Mayor Lightfoot stopped by Our Lady of Guadalupe School at 9050 S. Burley Avenue to help Big Shoulders Fund distribute meals to families in the community funded by the Lavin Family Foundation. Big Shoulders Fund has been serving food to the community at Our Lady of Guadalupe School since March 31<sup>st</sup>. They currently provide more than 1,000 meals each week to families in need. With the support of the Lavin Family Foundation, the Big Shoulders Fund has partnered with 32 community restaurants to distribute more than 20,000 meals at 20 Big Shoulders schools that are located in some of the hardest hit areas of the pandemic. Roma’s Village Bar and Grill, located at 92<sup>nd</sup> and Commercial, prepared today’s meals at their restaurant offered in single serve and family-style options.

“As with any philanthropic initiative created by Carol Lavin Bernick and her family, the ‘Feed It Forward’ Program has not just created ripples of impact, but a tidal wave,” said Josh Hale, President and CEO of Big Shoulders Fund. “Inspired by the family’s generosity, many others are now giving to this effort and helping us to expand the reach of this program. We’re so proud to work with the Lavin Family Foundation and a community of individuals who are rising to meet the challenges of our current climate and to create opportunities that have a real impact in the lives of our fellow Chicagoans.”

“I am very thankful to Big Shoulders Fund and Our Lady of Guadalupe School for this partnership, since it has provided me with the opportunity to serve my community, and keep my restaurant open,” said Zoila Perez, owner of Roma’s Village Bar and Grill. “Because of this wonderful program, my restaurant stayed open, I have been able to support my immediate family and also help other relatives who are struggling financially. These are really difficult times for everyone in our community and we are happy to be able to help.”



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Individuals, businesses or other philanthropic institutions can join in this effort by visiting any one of the many charities that are part of the “Feed It Forward” initiative to learn more and to help support these charities’ efforts including (but not limited to):

1. Big Shoulders Fund: <https://bigshouldersfund.org/take-action/donate/>
2. Boys & Girls Clubs of Chicago: <https://www.bgca.org/ways-to-give>
3. Catholic Charities: <https://www.catholiccharities.net/DonateNow/GeneralDonations.aspx>
4. Housing Forward: <https://www.housingforward.org/donate>
5. Lakeview Pantry: <https://www.lakeviewpantry.org/donate/>
6. Mercy Home: <https://www.mercyhome.org/giving/>
7. SOS Children’s Village: <https://www.sosillinois.org/giving/>
8. Sunshine Gospel Ministries: <https://www.sunshinegospel.org/giving/>

The Lavin Family Foundation’s Feed It Forward initiative was created and intended to work for any restaurant, nonprofit or donor interested in making it happen together. The Foundation encourages interested parties to find a local restaurant and charity to partner and create a meal plan within a set budget to support more Chicagoans in need.

For more information and updates on the City’s response to COVID-19, text COVID19 to 78015, email [coronavirus@chicago.gov](mailto:coronavirus@chicago.gov) or visit [Chicago.gov/coronavirus](http://Chicago.gov/coronavirus).

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**ABOUT LAVIN FAMILY FOUNDATION:**

The Lavin Family Foundation was created over 50 years ago by the family that founded the Alberto Culver Company to fund groups working in health care, education and programs designed to better family life. Today the Foundation, directed by the second and third family generations under the banner of “Innovative Philanthropy at Work”, has continued and deepened that focus while creating new, entrepreneurial initiatives that extend its passion and reach beyond traditional funding channels. Other examples of their innovative practices are exemplified through Enchanted Backpack, CC’s Wish List and the CAST Water Safety Foundation.

**ABOUT BIG SHOULDERS FUND:**

Big Shoulders Fund is an independent charitable organization that serves its network of 75 Chicago area schools, providing a quality, values-based education to nearly 20,000 children. In addition, as a result of a fully funded charitable donation,



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it has extended its programming to 20 schools in Northwest Indiana, reaching an additional 6,000 children. Inspired by the late Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, Big Shoulders Fund was founded in 1986 by Chicago business and civic leaders, raising nearly \$400 million to date, creating wider access to a network of schools for underserved, low-income students and increasing the capacity of the schools through academic programs, scholarships and enrichment, leadership development, and operational strategy and improvements. The success of these investments is demonstrated by stronger communities and the fact that 94 percent of Big Shoulders Fund students graduate high school, 85 percent of graduating scholars enroll in college the year following high school, and alumni graduate from college at twice the national rate, with African American and Latino alumni graduating from college at nearly 3x and 4x the national average, respectively. Equally important, alumni are employed, volunteer, and donate at rates higher than their peers. Big Shoulders has earned a four-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest evaluator of nonprofit, for 13 consecutive years, a distinction held by less than one percent of nonprofit organizations nationally.