

NEWS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Hi Friends,

One of the attributes that makes me most proud to be a part of the ESOP and Benjamin Rose team is this: We are at our very best when things are at their worst. We innovate. We collaborate. We find a way. Reflecting on 2020, it would be easy to resign to a feeling of helplessness, given the seemingly insurmountable challenges we've faced this year.



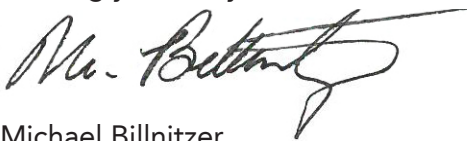
A global pandemic has stolen precious health and souls from us. The economy, both globally and locally, has been decimated, leaving far too many who cannot fend for themselves bereft of basic needs, trying to survive on incomes that were already below poverty level. Sheltering in place has led to deeper isolation for the most vulnerable among us, our older adult population. Predators crawled out from their holes to prey upon and victimize those most in need of help.

But the ESOP team did not give up. Instead, they innovated to reach isolated older adults by pivoting our service-delivery model to virtual platforms. As a result, we are partnering with funders, other non-profits, and senior-living facilities to bring Internet connectivity, devices, and training to combat loneliness and financial vulnerability among our older adults.

They created a zero-interest and fee-free loan product coupled with virtual one-on-one counseling to provide a safe and sustainable financial alternative to predatory and payday lenders.

These are just two of the ways ESOP has responded to COVID-19 in 2020, and we are preparing to announce even more innovative and collaborative programming in the beginning of 2021, including zero-interest loans for homeowners at risk of foreclosure coupled with financial counseling and an expanded homeownership workshop series. We look forward to sharing more details with you in the coming weeks. As 2020 comes to a close, I'm very proud to highlight some of the work this team has accomplished during a very difficult year.

Wishing you and yours health and happiness this holiday season.



Michael Billnitzer
Executive Director, Empowering and Strengthening Ohio's People (ESOP)
Vice President, Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging

A Lasting Legacy: Union Miles Mural of ESOP's Founder, Inez Killingsworth

The legacy of ESOP's founder, Inez Killingsworth, shines on! The ESOP team was honored to celebrate the unveiling of a mural commemorating Inez with her family, the Union Miles Development Corporation, and the artist, Mister Soul. Visit the intersection of Miles Avenue and East 131st Street to see the powerful mural and remember an incredible woman.



The ESOP team saw firsthand how Inez helped so many. Do you have a story or memory of Inez you want to share? Send us an email at esopcalls@benrose.org or share on our Facebook page.

Don't Get Left Out in the Cold

Unfortunately, utilities shutoffs are resuming just as winter hits. But ESOP can help keep the heat and lights on. Give us a call at (216) 361-0718 if you know someone who's in danger of losing their utilities.

ESOP's Alternative to Pay Day Loans

If you know an older adult age 55+ who's stuck in a payday loan or could use some 0% interest assistance to get caught up, ESOP's Senior Small Dollar Loan can help. Clients have used the loans to:

- Pay off payday loans
- Catch up on back rent
- Make deposits and cover moving expenses
- Purchase needed furniture after a move

Find out how seniors can stop using payday loans at esop-cleveland.org.



Help for Property Tax Trouble

ESOP has several ways to solve delinquent property tax troubles.

1. We work with you and the County Treasurer's office to set up a payment plan you can afford.
2. Our Senior Property Tax Loan for people age 55+ offers up to \$7,500 for those who may not qualify for a payment plan.
3. We can explore Homestead Exemption for people age 65 years and older or who are disabled.

Call us at (216) 361-0718 to learn more about ESOP's property tax solutions.

Did You Know?

ESOP has helped more than 55,000 people in Ohio save their homes from foreclosure.

We're Ready for Our Closeup, Westerly!



Residents of Westerly Apartments are seeing a few new faces from ESOP on their closed-circuit TV. ESOP is presenting our Senior Financial Education Workshops to Westerly Apartments, a senior living facility in Lakewood, through December.

Not a resident of Westerly Apartments but want to get in on the financial fun with our Senior Financial Education Workshops? We are always adding new dates, and you can still join us! If you manage a senior facility and want to learn how ESOP can share our virtual financial education workshops with your residents and community members,

contact Antoinette Smith, Director of Housing and Financial Counseling, at asmith@benrose.org or (216) 373-1850.

Take the 'LEAP' to Start Saving

Would you like to get \$500 and jump start your goal to save?

Older adults age 55+ may qualify for our Learn and Earn Account Program Plus (LEAP+), a matched savings program where participants can earn up to \$500. See how to start saving at esop-cleveland.org/FinancialWellness.



Join Us on Second Wednesdays

Learn how ESOP and Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging work together at a Virtual Second Wednesday event.

Join us the second Wednesday of every month from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. to hear about programs and subsidiaries from Benjamin Rose President and CEO Orion Bell. More about Second Wednesdays and other events can be found at www.benrose.org.

Empowering and Strengthening Ohio's People (ESOP) is a subsidiary of the Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging. We help adults in all stages of life achieve and maintain financial wellness and housing stability. Learn how to support ESOP at www.esop-cleveland.org/donate.

Contact Us: esopcalls@benrose.org • 216.361.0718

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