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Butzel Long Featured in Michigan Lawyers Weekly article, "Firm's charitable trust donates 15,000 meals to neighbors in need"

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As some in the community struggle to cope with health and economic hardships due to the COVID-19 crisis, one local law firm asked a simple question: What can we do to help?

Attorneys and staff at Detroit-based Butzel Long recently made a \$5,000 donation to Gleaners to help those in need. The donation was made through the Butzel Long Charitable Trust, the firm's philanthropic and charitable arm, and will provide 15,000 meals to neighbors in need.

Gleaners, which is headquartered in Detroit, distributes more than 45 million pounds of food to members of the community in need. Every dollar donated provides three meals, and 92 cents of every dollar donated goes to food and food programs. Paul Mersino, a shareholder with Butzel and trustee, said the city of Detroit and southeast Michigan have given much to the firm, so the firm strives to give back as well.

"We aren't able to give the multimillion-dollar donations that some foundations can, but our motto for the trust is, 'If you change one life, you've changed the world,'" he said. "It's my hope to one day build our coffers up so we can do bigger, better things."

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Gleaners is no stranger to the firm. It's an organization the firm has given to and worked with in the past. "Early on in the crisis, we sent a contribution to Gleaners that we had already earmarked; we pulled it forward and gave it to them immediately," Mersino said. "That was enough at that time to contribute 1,500 meals."

But the firm wanted to do more.

"We were able to give enough that contributes to over 15,000 meals for families," he said. "We're happy that we have been able to assist in some small part. The applause goes to Gleaners; they know who needs the meals, and how to get it to them." While the trust has been around since the 1980s, according to Mersino, it went somewhat dormant during the recession in 2008-2009.

"In the last few years we've attempted to reinvigorate and rebuild it," he said. "It's strictly through personal contributions from attorneys and staff."

As in years past, the trust laid out big charitable plans for the coming year. The pandemic has not deterred these goals.