

# NEWS RELEASE

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## United Way Fox Cities

October 18, 2018

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## United Way Fox Cities Awards Innovative Grants

United Way Fox Cities has awarded \$389,118 in innovative and special request grants to four programs. Innovative Grants address an underlying cause of an identified community need. Projects are encouraged to include collaborative partners. Innovative grants address one of four United Way Fox Cities' goals:

- Children are free of abuse and neglect.
- Children are on track to reach their full potential.
- Individuals and families have financial stability.
- Foster a community of mentally healthy children, youth and adults.

### Page Turners Literacy Tutoring Program

The Boys and Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley received funding of \$75,000 over two years for their Page Turners Literacy Tutoring Program. The program seeks to reduce the disparities in third grade reading proficiency by providing individualized reading instruction to at least 125 kindergarten through third grade students who are ranked in the bottom 25-30% of reading proficiency. The program will be offered at five elementary schools and the Boys and Girls Club

locations in Appleton and Menasha. The school sites include: Badger, Columbus, Foster and Highland elementary schools in Appleton and Little Chute elementary school.

Todd Sutton, Continuous Improvement and Grants Manager for the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley said, “Unfortunately, not all children have high-quality early childhood literacy experiences. By the time children from low-income families enter kindergarten, they are 12-14 months below national norms in language and pre-reading skills. Thanks to the investment provided by United Way Fox Cities, students in grades K-3 attending Boys & Girls Clubs at seven locations throughout the Fox Cities will have a better chance to improve their reading skills this year. Our goal is to help each student achieve grade-level skill mastery so they can reach their full potential.”

### **Menasha Even Start Family Literacy Program**

The Menasha Joint School District was awarded \$74,118 over two years for the Menasha Even Start Family Literacy Program. The program helps at-risk families with young children to increase educational attainment and thereby improve their potential for economic stability. At the same time, their children receive early childhood education so they are on track for kindergarten.

Fox Valley Technical College offers classes in Adult Basic Education such as English Language Learning and General Education Development/High School Equivalency Diploma instruction. The Menasha Joint School District provides programming according to the age and developmental stage of each child. In addition to incorporating parenting education throughout the adult classes, the program offers Parent University twice each semester. Community partners such as Parent Connection, Mosaic Health, and FISC provide families with information and resources on a variety of parenting topics.

Nathan Werley, Menasha Joint School District Supervisor of the Community Learning Center, said "This grant award means that the Menasha Even Start Family Literacy program, in partnership with Fox Valley Technical College, can continue empowering parents in Menasha to continue their English Language Learner or high school credential by removing barriers such as childcare, language, and time. Through the continuation of this grant, Menasha Even Start can

continue providing crucial literacy and social emotional learning to these parents and pre-school children."

### **N.E.W. Mental Health Connection Qualitative Study of Teen Suicide-related Behaviors**

N.E.W. Mental Health Connection was awarded \$90,000 over two years for a qualitative study of Teen Suicide-related Behaviors. This research project is designed to provide qualitative information in order to identify the reasons why our youth are attempting suicide at twice the rate of the rest of the state and the nation. The research will also include an environmental scan of social media to better understand its role in self-harm and suicide-related behaviors. The project will be led by a research team from the Medical College of Wisconsin, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine.

Beth Clay, Executive Director of NEW Mental Health Connections said, "We know our 12-18 year-olds in Calumet, Outagamie, and Winnebago counties are attempting suicide at nearly twice the rate of state and national averages, but we don't know why. N.E.W. Mental Health will bring local youth together in partnership with researchers from the Medical College of Wisconsin to conduct a qualitative study that will help the community understand the "why?" behind this disparity, the driving factors behind youth suicide attempts, and take action to more effectively prevent youth suicide-related behaviors."

### **STAR – Scholars on Target to Achieve Results**

A Special Request Grant of \$150,000 over two years was awarded to the Boys and Girls Club Fox Valley for STAR - Scholars on Target to Achieve Results. Boys & Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley will function as the backbone agency for STAR, a program collaboration among school districts, post-secondary institutions and community partners to improve the academic achievement levels, graduation rates, and post-secondary participation rates of Black/African-American youth.

STAR Coordinators work with key contacts in each school district to help students navigate through their unique challenges, empower and encourage students to share their experiences, offer targeted supplement support and engage students in existing activities. The program also links students to existing community resources and opportunities such as youth development programs, leadership workshops, internships, and scholarship application services. A vital role

of the program is building supportive relationships so students feel more connected to positive role models.

Kayla McNamara, Director of Targeted Support Services for STAR Program & TRAC Services at the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley said "Academic success for all students has long-term implications for the health and well-being of our entire community. We will continue to work tirelessly to make sure Black/African American students graduate high school and have the opportunity to continue their education so they are able to live fulfilling and connected lives as adults."

United Way supported programs will impact one in three people in the Fox Cities in the coming year. Funds are invested in initiatives, community service programs, such as United Way 2-1-1, grants, and over 100 programs provided by United Way partner agencies.

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*United Way fights for the health, education and financial stability  
of every person in every community.*