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United Way Announces Funding Awards to Support Distance Learning Programs

Rochester – United Way of Olmsted County board of directors has awarded \$75,000 in grants to programs that provide high-quality distance learning support for K-12 students from low-income households. This investment in our community is an important part of United Way of Olmsted County’s commitment to reimagining and rebuilding a more equitable, resilient community after the COVID-19 pandemic.

As schools continue another semester of distance learning, experts warn that the COVID-19 pandemic will amplify educational disparities. Barriers related to technology access, learning accommodations, and instructional support are falling disproportionately fall on students from low-income households, as well as those who identify as Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and/or immigrant or refugee; students with disabilities; and/or families who live in rural areas.

Five organizations providing high-quality educational supports will receive awards. They include distance learning programs operated by Boys and Girls Club of Rochester, Next Chapter Ministries, Somali American Social Service Association, Spark, and Sports Mentorship Academy. Collectively, the programs will support more than 200 students engaged in distance or hybrid learning with Olmsted County schools. Each program serves a majority students of color.

Emily Johnston, Vice President of Community Impact at United Way, says, “United Way is proud to partner with high-quality programs that are ideally situated to support students whose educational aspirations are most likely to be interrupted by systemic inequities. We’re already seeing inequities exacerbated by the pandemic, but these partnerships reflect our collective commitment to living united and not leaving anyone behind.”

Distance Learning Support grants are a collaboration between United Way of Olmsted County as the funding partner and Cradle 2 Career as the implementation partner. “I am excited to see how the community is responding and anxious to measure the results of these efforts and emerging partnerships,” says Julie Brock, Executive Director of Cradle 2 Career. “Partnerships of this kind are at the core of our work to build a cradle to career civic infrastructure in our community that provides every young person with the resources they need when they need it.”

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About United Way of Olmsted County

United Way of Olmsted County is a social change organization that fights for the education, health, and financial stability of every person in our community.

We do this in a variety of ways. We operate programs and provide shared resources that support the community, such as our 211 information and referral service or our Get Connected volunteer matching portal. We work collaboratively with partners from many organizations and walks of life to create system change and solutions that elevate our community more than any single program or organization could. We provide financial, technical, and volunteer support for programs that make a difference.

At United Way, we LIVE UNITED with the change-makers, risk-takers, and problem-solvers as we seek, find, and create lasting solutions to the challenges that face our community.

About Cradle 2 Career

Cradle to Career is a community-based initiative to improve educational outcomes in Rochester, Minnesota with options to expand county-wide. We are a Sustaining community within the StriveTogether National Network of 70 communities doing the continuous improvement and collective impact work to build a cradle to career civic infrastructure. Visit <http://c2cmn.com> to learn more.