

PRESS RELEASE

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United Way's Women United Group Awards \$124,000 in Grants to Expand Out-of-School Learning for Underserved BIPOC Youth

Camp RYSE, Mount Hope Learning Center, and The Grace School at Meeting Street receive funding

Providence, R.I. (July 28, 2021) United Way of Rhode Island's [Women United](#) group has awarded a total of \$124,000 in grants to three local organizations in support of increasing access to experiential learning for underserved K-3 students and to expand out-of-school time programs for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) youth. The organizations to receive funding are Camp RYSE, Mount Hope Learning Center, and The Grace School at Meeting Street. Grants ranged from \$34,325 to \$50,000.

"The past year has both highlighted and exacerbated the stark inequities that exist for our underserved and BIPOC communities, particularly with regard to educational opportunities," said Margaret Lamb, chair of Women United's executive committee. "We know the impact out-of-school learning has on student achievement and growth, and we know these programs are needed now more than ever in the face of disruptions caused by the pandemic."

An all-volunteer group, Women United is an initiative of United Way of Rhode Island whose mission is to ensure that every child in every Rhode Island neighborhood has equitable opportunities to learn and read. The group is more than 175 members strong, representing every county in the state. Since 2011, the women have donated more than \$5.3 million to United Way of Rhode Island and made grants totaling more than \$1 million to support childhood literacy and out-of-school learning programs.

At Camp RYSE, the grant is helping the organization enhance the curriculum of its multi-week summer learning program for more than 100 refugee youth with a focus on experiential learning. And as the refugee community has been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and civil unrest of the past year, the funding is also supporting expansive trainings for camp staff on mental health, restorative justice, and social change.

"Camp RYSE serves youth who are disproportionately lower income, 100 percent non-white, and who have fled from their homes in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, The Gambia, and numerous other countries facing humanitarian catastrophe," said Samy Amkieh, Director of Finance at Camp RYSE. "The return of Camp RYSE after a year shuttered by the COVID-19 pandemic signals a resilient refugee community in the state, with the Women United grant providing the baseline for a full return to summer-based learning!"

Serving youth in which more than 75 percent identify as low-income, the Mount Hope Learning Center's out-of-school time learning programs have proven successful in improving student achievement and growth. While distance learning worked in some communities, it is known that metro area students experienced increased barriers to their education, including with technology and non-engagement. Right now, the center is expanding to reach more families in its community to remediate learning loss and emphasize a learning environment that is inclusive and open.

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For The Grace School at Meeting Street, its Women United grant will support the 'Closing the Gap' program, which was created to mitigate the learning gaps that exist between K-3 BIPOC learners in Providence and their more affluent peers. Modeled after Meeting Street's successful Olneyville Summer Kindergarten Readiness program, the effort identifies each child's grade-level deficiencies and implements an individualized curriculum to bring students to grade-level standards.

"We are at danger of having a generation of children at educational disadvantage due to isolation and a public health necessitated lack of individual attention," said Cortney Nicolato, president and CEO of United Way. "Fortunately, we have advocates and organizations that recognize the long-term implications of these disparities and are doing tremendous work to meet kids – and their families – where they are and support their ability to thrive."

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United Way of Rhode Island is uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders. A member of the world's largest nonprofit network, we bring together individuals, business, nonprofit, community leaders and government to tackle the root causes of inequity and achieve specific, measurable goals. Our programs include 211, the statewide front door connecting Rhode Islanders with social services, resources, and vital programs. Both directly and through grants to nonprofits, we are investing to build economic opportunity, advance childhood learning, expand philanthropy, and to drive policy and participation. To learn more, visit unitedwayri.org, or follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Twitter](#).