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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Youth As Resources, Funded by United Way of Kenosha County,  
Awards 14 Grants towards Youth-Led Service Projects**

**May 9, 2022 (Kenosha, WI)** — United Way of Kenosha County (UWKC), mobilizing the caring power of our community, is excited to announce funding towards 14 youth-led service projects in conjunction with Youth As Resources (YAR) and in partnership with University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension. YAR funds youth-designed and youth-led community service projects in Kenosha County with youth speaking up for and addressing community needs.

“During my time on the Youth As Resources Board, I have gained many valuable leadership skills that will last a lifetime,” says Abbey Proctor, YAR Vice-President and eleventh grade student. “My involvement with YAR has also allowed me to see firsthand the impact that youth can have on their community - it is amazing what can be accomplished when youth are given a voice and the means to create positive change.”

The YAR Board consists of nine high school members and three adult members, with all executive officer positions being fulfilled by student members. The program fosters complete youth involvement, including not only leading the approved service projects but also reviewing and allocating grant funds.

“Being in YAR for the past three years has been one of the greatest experiences of high school,” says Justus Wilhoit, YAR President and twelfth grade student. “My leadership and communications skills have grown, and I have been fortunate enough to help with the development of the Shalom Center pavilion, numerous book drives, and donations to 4H and low income families during the winter season.”

In total, roughly five thousand dollars was awarded across the 14 service projects. The recipients of the 2021-2022 YAR grants include:

Brass Community School — In Our Roots Uptown Brass Community Garden: Students started a garden benefitting the school and surrounding community. With support from their teachers, students can work together and learn outdoors while maintaining the garden year-round.

Brass Community School — Clean-Ups: Students provided supplies and volunteer support to make monthly Brass/Lincoln/Uptown neighborhoods possible.



*Abrielle Gurley, YAR grant recipient, helps distribute supplies at a recent Operation Neighborhood Cleanup.*

Bristol Challenge 4H — Blankets for Sharing Center: The Bristol Challenge 4-H club shopped for supplies and then cut fabric to make fleece tie blankets to be delivered to families at The Sharing Center in Trevor, WI.

Bristol Challenge 4-H — Children without a Bed: The Bristol Challenge 4-H club shopped for supplies and created packages for children receiving beds through Sleep in Heavenly Peace.

Cub Scouts Pack 750 — ELCA Winter Clothing Support: Cub Scouts supplied, assembled and organized clothing racks to distribute winter clothing to those who need it most.

E.A. R.T.H. Adventurers Bristol 4-H — Spread the Love: The E.A.R.T.H. Adventurers 4-H club made fleece tie blankets to donate to the Sharing Center and Sleep in Heavenly Peace. Extra materials were used to create animal toys and bedding for Safe Harbor Humane Society.

KUSD Southport Elementary School — "Veteran's Day Parade" project: More than 250 students at Southport Elementary School came together to host a parade with the goal to honor veterans and enhance education and community awareness.

Lance Middle School — Outdoor Classroom: Students with a passion for the environment brought an outdoor classroom at Lance Middle School to life. Students can now have more opportunities to enjoy nature and their community.

Mahone Middle School — River House 6th Grade Student Council: Student council members improved their school's outdoor classroom by creating a butterfly garden and adding solar lighting. By creating an inviting outdoor habitat, more students will be able to learn outdoors and feel connected with the surrounding natural environment.

Midwest Therapeutic Riding Program — Christmas Party: Youth brought smiles and holiday cheer to children with disabilities by hosting a Christmas Party complete with snacks, arts and crafts and other fun activities.

Scouts BSA Troop — Nash Garden Renovation Project: Added vibrance to the Nash Elementary's outdoors, providing community members with a place to walk through and observe nature. The project included an irrigation system to keep the garden as maintenance-free as possible.

Scout Troop 505G — Preventing the Summer Slide: An Eagle Scout from Troop 505G held a book drive and purchased supplies to contribute to the United Way of Kenosha County Readers Are Leaders end of year celebrations, where roughly 50 students will each receive a backpack and reading materials to encourage learning all summer long.



*Cub Scouts Pack 750, YAR grant recipient, organizes winter clothes and builds racks for ELCA.*



*Students at Southport Elementary welcome and cheer on veterans at their Veteran's Day Parade.*



Pleasant Prairie Elementary — Stepping Stones of Kindness Club: With help from her friends, a student at Pleasant Prairie Elementary started a Kindness Club at her school to make stepping stones to be distributed to each elementary school in Kenosha. The group hopes their actions will remind others to show kindness as they play and interact with each other.

Prairie Lane Elementary/Shalom Center — Giving Garden: Third graders at Prairie Lane Elementary planted a Giving Garden at their school to grow fruits and veggies for the Shalom Center in Kenosha. The students worked closely with the Shalom Center to identify their needs, research plants and gardens, and brought their project to life by starting and maintaining a garden, which will eventually provide produce to Shalom Center.

Youth as Resources is made possible by a partnership between United Way of Kenosha County and University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension.

“Youth As Resources is an incredible opportunity for youth in our community to develop their skills while making a difference in the areas important to them,” says Erica Ness, positive youth development educator, at Extension Kenosha County. “This program is proof that youth are both our present and our future. They are ready to step up and lead now, and I am proud to coordinate a program that supports them to do so.”

“For more than 10 years, United Way of Kenosha County and University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension have partnered with Youth as Resources to help bring student ideas to life,” saysCarolynn Friesch, chief executive officer at UWKC. “YAR provides an unforgettable opportunity to inspire and empower youth to make change in our community.”

For more information and questions, contact Marisa Markowski, resource development manager, at [mmarkowski@kenoshaunitedway.org](mailto:mmarkowski@kenoshaunitedway.org) or (262) 671-2208. Additional pictures available upon request.

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### **About UWKC**

United Way of Kenosha County fights for the health, education, and financial stability of every person. For almost 100 years, UWKC has created positive change throughout Kenosha County by mobilizing the caring power of the community, improving lives, and striving for lasting, positive transformation. Through partnerships and collaborations, UWKC both supports local initiatives with an annual community investment process and manages programs such as Readers are Leaders, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, SingleCare Prescription Discounts and more.

### **About YAR**

Kenosha County Youth as Resources was developed out of a need – a need to make the youth of Kenosha County feel more connected to their community. YAR is youth-led board and a grant-giving program that funds youth-designed community service projects in Kenosha County. Youth, with guidance from adults, design projects to address a community need and apply to YAR grants, which are awarded up to \$500 to fund supplies for the project. The Youth as Resources Board reads all applications, invites youth groups to present project proposals, and allocates funds. For more information, visit [kenosha.extension.wisc.edu/youth/yar](http://kenosha.extension.wisc.edu/youth/yar).