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Submitted Content

Thirteen Chicago-area nonprofits get a lifeline thanks to \$312,500 in mental health grants from Megan Butz Legacy of Hope



Megan Butz Legacy of Hope founders Mary Jo and Larry Butz, center, present a \$20,000 grant check to Doryce McCarthy, left, and Chrissy Trilling-Raices, right, of Omni Youth Services in Buffalo Grove. The grant is part of \$312,500 in total awards given by Meg's Legacy in 2026. *Courtesy of Susan Stoga*

Submitted by Susan Stoga

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From school hallways in Chicago to counseling rooms in Lake and Cook County, 13 organizations are expanding their life-saving mental health work this year, funded by a volunteer-run foundation that has become one of the region's most important forces in youth suicide prevention.

Megan Butz Legacy of Hope, a Northwest suburban nonprofit dedicated to strengthening mental health among at-risk teens and young adults, announces \$312,500 in grants to 13 Chicago-area organizations working on the front lines of youth mental health and suicide prevention.

Suicide remains the second-leading cause of death among Illinois youth ages 10-14, and the third-leading cause of death for young people ages 10-24, according to the National Institutes of Health. The 2026 grants, the largest single-year investment in the foundation's three-year history, reflect the region's urgent and growing need for accessible mental health services.

"The quality of this year's grantees is exceptional and the need they represent is sobering. These organizations are saving lives right now, in our communities, with our neighbors' children. However, we need more people to join us in supporting them," said Larry Butz, co-founder of Meg's Legacy of Hope.

"The organizations we fund are doing extraordinary work, often with limited resources and enormous heart," Co-founder Mary Jo Butz said. "Every grant we make is a reminder of how much more is needed. The waitlists to see counselors are long, the need is urgent, and we are determined to do more."

A 501(c)(3) organization founded in June 2023, Meg's Legacy of Hope was established by Larry and Mary Jo Butz to honor their oldest daughter, Meg, who died in 2020 at age 26. Since its founding, the organization has awarded more than \$700,000 in grants and support to Chicago-area nonprofits providing direct counseling, suicide prevention education, and mental health training.

2026 Grant Recipients include:

- Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute (Chicago): \$20,000 for Project RISE: Reach, Impact, Sustain, and Expand.
- Elyssa's Mission (Northbrook): \$27,000 for the SOS Program, providing critical school-based suicide prevention education and resources to help prevent teen suicide and connect at-risk youth to needed mental health support.
- Erika's Lighthouse (Winnetka): \$25,000 for the Four Pillars Mental Health Education Program Model, a school-based program empowering students, families and educators with evidence-based resources.

- Gabriel's Light Foundation (Chicago): \$25,000 for ASK & ACT: Turning Youth Mental Health Awareness into Action.
- Josselyn (Grayslake): \$35,000 for the Adolescent Intensive Outpatient Program, which utilizes trauma-informed and evidence-based treatments for children and teens addressing critical mental health issues.
- Juvenile Protective Association (Chicago): \$30,000 for school-based therapy, providing dedicated therapists for individual and small-group student therapy across multiple Chicago schools.
- Naomi Ruth Cohen Institute (Chicago): \$12,500 for Strengthening Communities through Mental Health Education.
- OMNI Youth Services (Buffalo Grove): \$20,000 for school-based counseling with licensed mental health counselors.
- Partners for Our Communities (Palatine): \$25,000 for The Resilience & Suicide Prevention Project, providing clinical therapy counselors for underresourced teens in the Northwest suburbs through its Skyward Bound program.
- Willow House (Bannockburn): \$15,000 for Family Peer Support including Survivors of Suicide, offering bereavement support groups across four formats: peer support, survivors of suicide, expressive arts and school-based groups.
- Youth & Family Counseling (Libertyville): \$35,000 for Strengthening Youth Mental Healthcare Access, helping families in Lake County overcome barriers to mental health care.
- Youth Services of Glenview/Northbrook (Glenview): \$25,000 for school-based mental health services.

In addition, Carmel Catholic High School in Mundelein will receive \$18,000 for Wellness Programming. For the second consecutive year, Meg's Legacy of Hope is funding a yearlong mental health initiative at Meg's alma mater. Funding supports evidence-based mental wellness programming for the entire student body, followed by training for all staff and student leaders.

Megan Butz Legacy of Hope (Meg's Legacy of Hope) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in the Northwest suburbs of Chicago. Founded in June 2023 by Larry and Mary Jo Butz in memory of their daughter Meg, the all-volunteer organization supports mental health services through funding initiatives for teenagers and

young adults. Since its inception, the group has awarded more than \$700,000 in grants to Chicago-area nonprofits providing life-changing and lifesaving mental health programming. For more information, visit megalogyofhope.org.

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Hundreds of local business and civic leaders came together for Lake County Partners' 2026 "Big Event" recently held at the Lincolnshire Marriott Resort. This year's sold-out event drew a huge ...



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The Kane County Health Department has partnered with community organizations across the county over the past year to install publicly accessible naloxone dispensing boxes, making the life-saving medi...

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