



West Suburban Teens Award \$30,000 to Local Health and Human Service Agencies

Sixty students participating in Community Memorial Foundation's youth philanthropy program have awarded \$30,000 in grant funding to four local nonprofit organizations working to provide basic needs services within the Western Suburbs. The program, known as YC2 (Young Community Changemakers), unites students from Hinsdale Central, Lyons Township, Nazareth Academy, and Riverside-Brookfield high schools in a semester-long effort dedicated to understanding the important roles of the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors.

Community Memorial Foundation, a west suburban health foundation, partners with local philanthropists, The Burjan Family, Moira & Paul Naffah, and Corlyn & Jeff Simmons, to facilitate the program, which intends to create a culture of philanthropy throughout the region.

"Community Memorial Foundation and its partners share the vision that young people need opportunities to develop skills that will help them become future leaders and stewards of our community," says Greg DiDomenico, President & CEO of Community Memorial Foundation.

The program, now in its fourth year, encourages students to explore their local community and its social needs; learn about philanthropic theory; and engage in organizational evaluation and grantmaking. This year's participants elected to direct funding toward efforts that "address the effect of poverty on health by

providing for basic needs such as access to nutritious food, homelessness prevention, and promotion of self-sufficiency."

Twenty-one local organizations applied for a grant and four were awarded funding: BEDS Plus (\$7,500), Bridge Communities (\$10,000), Hope's Front Door (\$5,000), and Housing Forward (\$7,500). These agencies are working throughout Community Memorial Foundation's geographic service area to provide an array of basic needs assistance, including housing, food, medical, and transportation vouchers; and financial literacy programming.

Community Memorial Foundation recognized the participating students, schools, and philanthropic and nonprofit partners at an event on Friday, May 6, 2022, at the Holiday Inn Countryside. The celebration highlighted the experiences of the teens who participated in the program and showcased what they learned and what inspired them.

Jenna Jazayerli, a junior at Hinsdale Central, spoke at the event and recognized the mission and services provided by Bridge Communities. "Though Bridge Communities and their clients have endured struggles throughout the pandemic, they've demonstrated true resilience and have persevered during these uncertain times. We are so grateful for all the great work they do."

DiDomenico recognized all the Foundation's grantee partners and the students who participated in the

program. "Thank you for being you – local changemakers, collaborators, and ambassadors of our philanthropic mission."

DiDomenico also noted that three words capture the essence of philanthropy and are at the heart of Community Memorial Foundation and the YC2 Program: kindness, partnership, and gratitude. "These philanthropic keys strengthen our collective action, guide our work together, and represent the best in all of us."

All students that participated in the program received a sweatshirt identifying them as a "changemaker." Faculty member Abbey Kutlas-Prickett shared, "when you wear your sweatshirt and someone asks you what a changemaker is, tell them. Tell them you are a changemaker. Tell them about this program and encourage others to be changemakers too."

For more information on Community Memorial Foundation's youth philanthropy program, please visit: cmfdn.org/yc2

About Community Memorial Foundation

Community Memorial Foundation (CMF) is a private health conversion foundation established in 1995. The Foundation's grantmaking and community work are guided by its mission — to measurably improve the health of those who live and work in the western suburbs of Chicago. Throughout over 25 years of regional investment, the Foundation has proudly awarded more than \$81 million dollars to nonprofit organizations in the western suburbs of Cook County and southeastern portion of DuPage County. cmfdn.org