



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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United Way Supports More Local Youth Projects

La Porte County, IN --- The United Way of LaPorte County has leveraged local donations and grants to help front-line workers and others citizens most in need of food, personal protective equipment, child care, learning supports, rent/mortgage assistance, medication, and utility assistance since the COVID pandemic began.

“Our local youth have been of great concern to us over the past year and a half,” said Kris Pate, executive director of United Way of LaPorte County. “Whether it’s been child care, mental and emotional health, safe learning spaces, technology, or preparing for the next school-year, we’ve done our best to quickly get the funds and services to our youth where they are most needed.”

On Monday, United Way presented a check for \$50,000 to Judge Alevizos, Chief Dion Campbell, and Emily Back for youth supports provided by the LaPorte County Juvenile Service Task Force, Inc. These funds will be directed to the Bridge to Manhood Program, Suicide Prevention, and Circuit Court’s Youth Wellness Court to ensure youth with mental/emotional health needs are supported with services rather than incarcerated.

LaPorte Circuit Court has been a Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) county for the past seven years and is now expanding into “Deep-End” reform. According to the LaPorte Circuit Court Judge, Thomas Alevizos, “We want to identify the youth who can be diverted out of the juvenile justice system not create more delinquency by placing them in a facility with more serious offenders.” Alevizos cited a Supreme Court Justice who said JDAI helps us send the right kids, to the right programs, for the right amount of time. “Without our partnerships with United Way and others, we couldn’t address our goals as effectively. United Way has been a strong partner in helping us provide effective juvenile programming.”

Reducing racial and ethnic disparities is one of the strategic focus areas for the court’s JDAI work. LaPorte County 2019 data shows that black male youth were 4.4 times more likely to be securely detained than white males and 8 times more likely to be referred to the Juvenile justice system than white males. As a part of the deep-end reform work, the courts are focusing on black males through the Bridge To Manhood workshops.

These workshops include interactive group discussions that allow youth to speak freely and for themselves. Subject matter includes morals, social norms, and respect (both earned and gained), discrimination (real and perceived), how to create change (in yourself, in others, in policies, in your neighborhood/community), education (pros/cons, peer pressure, teachers, administrators), following rules and guidelines (how there are different places and times to act in certain ways), personal experiences (how were you treated by law enforcement, probation, the court), and what could be changed to help youth succeed (policies, attitudes, etc.)

Our current local data shows that well over 10 percent of youth entering the juvenile justice system in La Porte County are affected by some type of mental health issue. The Youth Wellness Court (YWC) is a 6 to 12-month deferral court program for youth who are facing juvenile criminal charges. YWC is a collaborative effort among families, LaPorte Circuit Court,

School leaders, treatment providers and other community support agencies. This program provides the family unit a variety of services with consistent supervision and monitoring aimed to support the journey. YWC involves frequent court appearances, behavioral health interventions, school support, and involvement with community support.

While the last of the \$1.5 million dollars that United Way of LaPorte County raised for COVID Relief are being distributed throughout the community between now and the end of December, the United Way will kick-off its annual fundraising campaign in September to raise funds to support local agencies in 2022.

Many organizations providing services throughout the county depend on the annual United Way campaign to raise dollars for their regular programming. Annual priorities for funding disbursement include supportive programs for children and youth, financial stability for adults and families, and provisions for basic needs. Please help them continue their work by donating to the United Way annual campaign today or by hosting a campaign rally at your business this year. According to Pate, "The money raised here, stays here!"

Please visit unitedway.org to learn more and to give to the annual campaign, call 219-201-3534, or email us at info@unitedwaylpc.org.

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