



PRESS RELEASE

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ST. LOUIS COUNTY CHILDREN'S SERVICE FUND
GRASSROOTS FUNDING PROGRAM

ST. LOUIS COUNTY, MO (October 1, 2021) – St. Louis County Children's Service Fund (CSF) has awarded over \$2.1 million to 17 local nonprofit organizations working in historically underserved communities through the Grassroots Funding Program.

These organizations are a trusted voice within their communities and provide unique services and programming designed to meet the behavioral health needs of children and youth in their area. The 17 newly funded organizations provide programs ranging from music and play therapy, yoga and mindfulness, initiatives to provide emotional support and counselors who reflect the community they serve, as well as expressive arts therapy for refugee children.

"We are so excited to be partnering with so many distinctive and diverse community-based organizations for the Grassroots Funding Program," said CSF Executive Director Emily Koenig. "We have long wanted to extend our partnerships from our Core funding to include smaller organizations that really have remarkable community relationships."

Koenig continued "While we hope to support and lift-up these incredible organizations, we realize they are the experts and recognize their knowledge and knowhow. They have built a relationship of trust with the children, youth, and families they work with, and we are looking forward to learning from each other."

In May, CSF announced its intention to invest \$1 million into grassroots organizations. The goal of the Grassroots Funding Program is to work with locally-led agencies to support innovative behavioral health projects that are effective at reaching and impacting children and youth, as well as enhance the capacity of agencies for greater impact.

"This funding for smaller organizations provides an opportunity to make historic investments in St. Louis County and build a stronger future for our children," said County Executive Dr. Sam Page. "I'm grateful for the work of Children's Service Fund to get these financial resources deeper into our community."

CSF received 80 letters of intent to apply, and after review 44 organizations were asked to submit formal applications. Eligible organizations could request up to \$150,000 over a two-year grant period. Once CSF staff and community reviewers began evaluating the applications, it became



clear the need for services went well beyond the board approved \$1 million. The CSF Board, knowing the importance of access to services, quickly authorized the program to exceed \$2 million.

“Access to behavioral health services is imperative, especially during times of high stress and trauma. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored and further exacerbated the inequalities and disparities impacting African-American, immigrant, and other minority communities, including the relative lack of access to services. With that in mind, we moved swiftly to increase our investment into these organizations who have built trusted relationships within their communities,” said CSF Board Chair Dr. Randy Sterkel.

Funding from CSF has allowed organizations, like A Red Circle, to move from relying solely on volunteers to hiring staff in order to support more kids.

“Education Advocacy was one of the earliest programs created at A Red Circle. Prior to this funding, it relied solely on volunteers, which limited our ability to support the most vulnerable students,” said Founder and Executive Director Erica Williams. “With this funding, we are now able to hire competent staff and other specialists to ensure that students will receive the assistance they need to thrive academically. Thank you, St. Louis County Children’s Service Fund.”

The organizations who have been awarded funds from the Grassroots Funding Program are listed below, along with the amount awarded by the CSF Board.

- A Red Circle, \$148,870
- Artists First, \$138,528
- Barak Christian Church, \$127,440
- Bread and Roses Missouri, \$128,000
- Bridging Families to Communities & Beyond, \$98,000
- Charlotte’s Community Outreach (KHAOS Inc.), \$123,468
- Chinese Service Center in St. Louis, \$55,000
- Good Journey Development Foundation, \$132,800
- Man of Valor, Inc., \$140,000
- Music That Reclaims, \$119,405
- Ollie Hinkle Heart Foundation, \$75,000
- Save Our Youth, \$150,000
- THE COLLECTIVE 314, \$148,500
- The Community Reach, \$84,337
- The Oxygen Project, \$64,250
- The SoulFisher Ministries, \$150,000
- Vitendo 4 Africa, \$130,000

For more information about CSF and its various funding programs, visit keepingkidsfirst.org.