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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Rice County Area United Way Awards \$240,000 in Grants**

NORTHFIELD, MINN. (July 6, 2020) – Rice County Area United Way has awarded \$240,000 in grants to 27 nonprofit and school-sponsored programs that promote youth success, foster healthier communities and assist people experiencing crisis and hardship.

These are the first grant awards since the United Way of Faribault and Northfield Area United Way merged last year to become Rice County Area United Way.

Funding priority was given to programs that serve the greatest needs and help the greatest number of community members. Due to a downturn in total donations, the amount awarded in grants was about 20 percent less than last year's combined Northfield and Faribault United Way grants.

Executive Director Penny Hillemann said, "This was our first fundraising year as Rice County Area United Way, and we're still introducing ourselves throughout the region. We greatly appreciate the support we've seen for our new countywide approach. Twenty-two workplaces in Faribault and Northfield held United Way campaigns last fall, and hundreds more individual donors and companies also donated generously."

Rice County Area United Way also expects to invest approximately \$25,000 in 2020-2021 promoting early childhood literacy as the local sponsor of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, sending free, age-appropriate books each month to more than 900 Rice County area children from birth to age five.

Two rounds of COVID-19 relief grants were also made in April and June from funds donated specifically for this purpose, to local nonprofits that have been providing direct relief to people impacted by the pandemic.

Comments from nonprofits awarded grants:

"The grant from Rice County Area United Way will be greatly appreciated during this time, as our requests for food alone have been up substantially," said Larry Muehlenbein, President at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a volunteer-led social services agency in Faribault.

Executive Director Emily Fulton-Foley of Northfield Union of Youth said, "I am so grateful for the United Way in their persistent support of local nonprofits through concerned and

conscientious donors, especially in these stressful times. Our community is stronger because of their efforts.”

HOPE Center’s Executive Director, Erica Staab-Absher, said, “For HOPE Center, having a partner like the United Way means we can spend our time focusing on the needs of our clients, not fundraising. Partnering with the United Way means that our community gets a wide range of needs met. By working in a more unified way our funding goes further, our expertise is channeled more effectively and we are a healthier, stronger community.”

Scott Wopata, Executive Director of Community Action Center of Northfield, said, “United Way funding empowers CAC to flexibly meet the needs of our local community during a time when everything is constantly changing. With the needs in our community exponentially increasing, United Way funding has ensured we can help support each other as a community.”

The grant-making process was advised by 17 community donor-volunteers from Faribault, Northfield and Lonsdale who reviewed applications and provided guidance on funding priorities. Seven local financial professionals also donated their time and expertise to conduct financial reviews of the organizations applying for grants.

This year’s grant recipients are described below. The three main funding categories are not always precise, with several funded organizations doing work that fits in more than one of these categories. Grants were awarded for the period July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021.

#### **FINANCIAL STABILITY– \$156,800 awarded**

- **Community Action Center of Northfield**, supporting the basic needs of families throughout the Northfield community. The CAC served 3,600 individuals last year and demand for its services has grown rapidly during the pandemic.
- **Faribault Adult Education**, providing adults with opportunities to acquire and improve the literacy skills needed to become self-sufficient and to participate effectively as productive workers, family members and citizens.
- **Faribault Diversity Coalition**, working to create an inclusive community where all are welcomed and respected; funded for its Welcome Center program, helping to assess needs of newly arrived refugees and immigrants and connect them with appropriate resources.
- **HOPE Center**, an advocacy agency providing direct services for victims of domestic and sexual violence in Rice County, collaborative support to other organizations serving victims, and educational support to the community.
- **KCQ, Inc.**, funded for a Supported Employment Program providing services for Rice County individuals with disabilities to enable them to obtain employment and maximize their vocational potential for integration in the community.

- **Neighbors United**, an advisory, advocacy and action group for marginalized and vulnerable communities in Northfield, receiving funding for a financial skills project.
- **Northfield Union of Youth**, connecting youth to each other, caring adults and the community, with a focus on providing a safe and nurturing space and services for Northfield's most at-risk and disenfranchised youth.
- **Rice County Habitat for Humanity**, partnering with volunteers, donors and people in need towards a vision where everyone has a decent place to live; funded to pay for credit reports used to provide financial literacy counseling for potential applicants to help them become financially prepared to own a home.
- **Ruth's House**, an emergency and transitional shelter with supportive services for women and children in the Rice County area facing homelessness due to traumatic life circumstances, and helping families work toward stability and self-sufficiency.
- **Semcac Senior Nutrition Program**, serving well-balanced, low-cost noon meals, normally in a congregate setting but currently packed for takeout, to people age 60+, Monday through Friday in Faribault and Northfield.
- **Society of St Vincent de Paul**, a volunteer-run organization in Faribault providing free food, clothing, furniture, ESL class and financial assistance to people in the Rice County area.
- **Three Rivers Community Action**, for its home-delivered meals program in Faribault, and advocacy for older adults and caregiver support services for Rice County residents.

Faribault's **Community Café** would also have been awarded United Way funding in this category but recently withdrew their request after receiving funding from another source. Community Café is an all-volunteer program providing a free, hearty, nutritious meal to Faribault residents every Tuesday night.

#### **EDUCATION – \$61,550 awarded**

- **Northfield Community College Collaborative**, striving to provide an accessible and supported environment for students to pursue their post-secondary education in Northfield.
- **PRIMEtime**, providing after school and summer enrichment to over 850 Northfield children in grades K-8.
- **Project ABLE**, providing social, recreational and educational opportunities for adults with disabilities in Rice County and surrounding areas; a collaboration between the Community Education departments of Faribault Public Schools and Northfield Public Schools.
- **Project Friendship**, matching Northfield-area children in grades 2-7 with mentors from St. Olaf or Carleton College.
- **Faribault Youth Investment**, working to ensure that all of Faribault's young people thrive, and positively impacting youth outcomes through community collaboration.
- **Serve Minnesota's Reading Corps**, to support AmeriCorps volunteers in several area schools who apply the science of how children learn to read to help struggling K-3 students become confident readers.

- **Supply Our Children**, aiming to eliminate the financial burden of purchasing school supplies for Faribault's struggling families by giving Faribault's youth the supplies they need.
- **TORCH**, providing academic assistance, college and career advising, and social-emotional support to over 600 Northfield Public Schools students and graduates who identify as low-income, first-generation and/or students of color.
- **Tri-City United Schools**, for scholarships to provide more families with the opportunity to send their children ages 3+ to TCU's Little Titans school readiness program.

#### **HEALTH – \$48,800 awarded**

- **Student Support Services Division, Northfield Public Schools**, addressing the social and emotional well-being of students with chemical and mental health services provided by Omada Behavioral Health to students and their families.
- **Exchange Club Center for Family Unity**, a child abuse prevention agency providing supportive and educational in-home services to Rice County families at risk of child abuse and neglect, through a parent mentoring program.
- **Growing Up Healthy**, enhancing community connectedness and developing leadership among low-income, immigrant and refugee neighborhoods in Rice County.
- **HealthFinders Collaborative**, a community health center providing comprehensive health and wellness services on a sliding fee scale to marginalized families in Rice County and engaging communities in their own health.
- **IRIS (Infants Remembered in Silence)**, helping bereaved parents, family, friends and professionals cope with the loss of a child, in Rice County and beyond.
- **Northfield Healthy Community Initiative**, serving as a backbone organization for youth and family efforts in Northfield and striving to identify needs for youth and families in the community, build coalitions to develop and run programs, and write and manage large collaborative grants to bring additional resources into the community.

#### **About Rice County Area United Way**

Rice County Area United Way fights for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in our community. Living United, we mobilize the resources and caring power of individuals, organizations and networks to strengthen the community. Donations stay local, improving the lives of people who live and work in the Rice County area.

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