



# THE EQUITY INNOVATION FUND



## Equity Innovation Report 7



**UNITED WAY**  
Racine County

# Equity Innovation Report 7 Grantees

**DRIVEN Student Leadership**  
Project: DRIVEN Student Leadership Program

**Fight to End Exploitation**  
Project: Continuing to Bridge the Gap

**LGBT Center of SE Wisconsin**  
Project: LGBT Center of SE Wisconsin  
Transgender Resource Project



**3 projects** totaling over **\$96,000**.

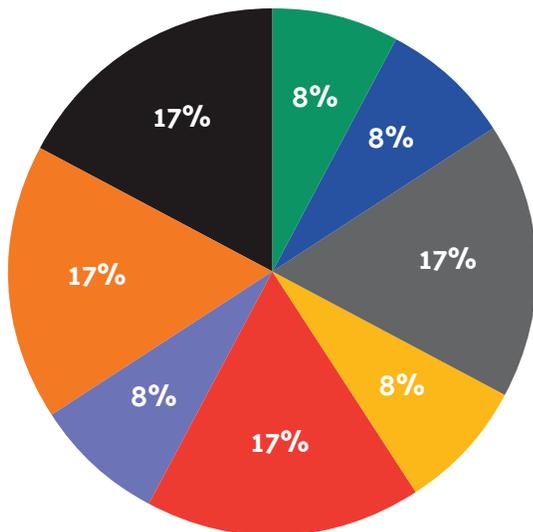


**3,022 individuals** served.



**2 projects** are directed by BIPOC, women, LGBTQIA+ community members or other marginalized individuals.

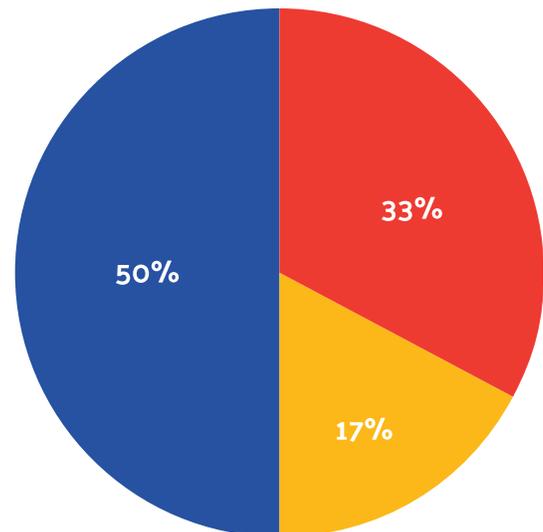
**Marginalized Populations Served by Projects**



- African American
- Individuals with cognitive or physical differences
- LGBTQIA+
- People of color
- Individuals with low socioeconomic status
- Women
- Veterans
- Latinx/Hispanic

Grantees indicated in their application which marginalized population their projects will serve. Projects may serve more than one population.

**Areas Addressed by Projects**



- Individual independence
- Individual and/or family stability
- K-12 academic and/or social emotional success

Grantees indicated in their application the focus area addressed by their project. Projects may address more than one focus area.

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## DRIVEN Student Leadership Project: DRIVEN Student Leadership Program

The DRIVEN Student Leadership Program, based at Burlington Area High School, focuses on strengthening the school and community through service and by promoting character development among students. The group leads several student-driven initiatives, including supporting freshmen transitioning into high school, welcoming transfer students, and serving as student mentors. DRIVEN members teach key character concepts to freshmen, lead character-building activities in middle schools, and organize extensive community service projects.

With its EIF grant, DRIVEN was able to host events for economically disadvantaged youth and students with special needs, as well as raise funds and volunteer to make a meaningful impact with other organizations. The group also increased their impact in the broader community through service projects that addressed the needs of various disadvantaged adult populations. These efforts included organizing events such as Special Olympics Basketball, a Special Education Prom, a community Easter egg hunt, and community bell ringing.

Feedback from students and advisors indicates a strong sense of connection among freshmen, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds. DRIVEN mentors have provided consistent peer support, fostering a more inclusive school environment. Community service projects received overwhelmingly positive feedback and strengthened relationships beyond the school. DRIVEN members demonstrated notable growth in leadership, problem-solving, and public speaking. Many second- and third-year participants took on expanded roles in organizing and executing projects, and several have expressed interest in continuing community service efforts beyond high school. Surveys and reflections highlight increased confidence and advocacy skills.



### By the Numbers

- 2,100 service hours completed by student participants
- 95% of members served as a mentor for freshman mentorship program
- 40 individuals served by the special education prom
- 180 individuals served by Special Olympic Basketball
- 1,000 served by community Easter Egg Hunt
- 250 freshmen served in mentorship program
- 2,449 people served across all efforts



“The DRIVEN students provided the single greatest fundraising day for Love Inc. all year. We literally could not do it without them.” – Terri Plachy, Director of Love Inc.



## Fight to End Exploitation Project: Continuing to Bridge the Gap

Fight to End Exploitation's project received a second round of funding from the Equity Innovation Fund. Phase two of the Bridge the Gap program, known as Continuing to Bridge the Gap, builds on the initial program's success and continued to expand outreach efforts and partnerships. Fifty-three individuals directly impacted by human trafficking were served. This includes at-risk people, survivors of trafficking and the families of survivors.

FEE works to eradicate human trafficking and exploitation through prevention, intervention, and restoration efforts. The group focuses on raising awareness, providing tools and training to professionals, and advocating for victims and survivors from marginalized populations in Racine County, with a focus on young Black girls.

Printed and digital materials about available services for vulnerable teens were again made available to organizations and FEE expanded outreach to organizations serving communities of color. New initiatives included a partnership with the Sturtevant Police Department to provide care bags and educational resources at the Amtrak station to support youth in crisis. FEE also enhanced their online presence, launching a new web site and using social media platforms to engage youth and promote anti-trafficking messages.

Through professional partnerships, including with the Racine Youthful Offenders Correctional Facility and Judge Cafferty's Juvenile Enhancement team, FEE provided training and resources to staff and at-risk youth. FEE's newly developed curriculum, Running Out of Risk: Empowering At-Risk Youth Before They Disappear, addresses the complex challenges faced by at-risk youth, including chronic runaway behavior, online enticement, and sextortion. It emphasizes trauma-informed, victim-centered interview techniques and equips participants with practical tools for early intervention, aiming to prevent exploitation before vulnerabilities escalate. FEE also worked to combat implicit bias and develop specialized advocacy services, training advocates specifically for marginalized groups.

### By the Numbers

- 2,500 printed resources distributed across 46 community locations
- 1,728 hits on the teen resource page
- 5,821 interactions on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok
- 2,254 professionals trained in 39 training sessions
- 100% of professionals reported feeling better supported with resources after attending the training
- 100% of adult participants reported feeling more equipped to seek help from service providers
- 100% of youth served reported learning more about the dangers of running away and human trafficking risk factors



“The Fight to End Exploitation has made significant strides in addressing human trafficking by equipping professionals, supporting survivors, and fostering systemic change. Through projects like Bridging the Gap, we’ve not only delivered critical resources but also gained invaluable insights to guide our mission. We remain committed to empowering vulnerable populations and ensuring no one slips through the cracks.” – Karri Hemmig, Co-founder of Fight to End Exploitation

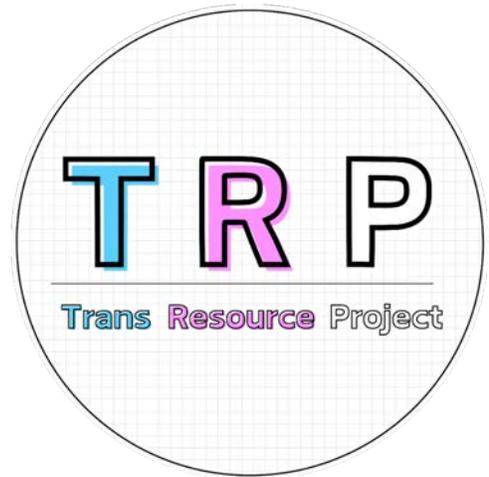


## LGBT Center of SE Wisconsin Project: LGBT Center of SE Wisconsin Transgender Resource Project

The Transgender Resource Project successfully expanded access to affirming care and critical resources for the transgender community in Racine County. Hosted through the LGBT Center's website, the project created a centralized hub featuring a directory of medical and mental health providers with expertise in transgender care. The directory now hosts listings for 134 gender-affirming providers and organizations, 122 of which are located in Wisconsin. The services listed by providers span a wide range of care, including primary care, surgical services, acupuncture, chiropractic care, therapy, life coaching and more. Users can search by provider name, services, location, and other filters, helping transgender individuals connect with affirming professionals in their area.

The LGBT Center added a range of essential resources that had not previously existed locally. These included step-by-step guidance on changing legal name and gender markers in Wisconsin, contacts for attorneys who support name change petitions and immigration cases involving transgender and LGBTQ+ individuals, and resources for those recently released from incarceration. The site also offered information on housing support, domestic violence and hate crime response, HIV/STI home testing kits, and safe use of gender-affirming items.

To increase the number of competent, inclusive service providers, the project also developed a training program accredited by NetCE (National Education Credit for Education). The training program helped enhance local providers' understanding of transgender health issues and services. The training strengthened local service delivery and served as a recruitment tool to encourage more providers to join the directory.



### By the Numbers

- 3,725 total page views and 1,305 active users via website click-throughs
- 54% of provider survey respondents reported receiving at least one referral from the provider directory
- 377 providers nationwide were trained through NetCE accreditation partnership
- 99.6% of training participants reported increased knowledge on how to support LGBTQIA+ rights
- 98% of training participants said they would recommend the training to a colleague

“The existence of the trans and nonbinary resource directory is what pushed me to go back to therapy after a years-long gap. Knowing that I had multiple options of therapists on this list that I knew were putting their name there to say they are experienced and confident in queer clients made me feel safe enough to start contacting providers. I was able to start from a place of common ground with my provider, without feeling like I had to persuade or educate them to be understood. And our sessions have been going great!” – Community Member



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“I wanted to be a part of important work that would make a positive difference in the Racine community. The Grant Committee gave me that opportunity. It was a pleasure and honor to support the work of so many community organizations.” – Eric Hopkins, Equity Innovation Fund Committee member

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From its launch in January 2022 to the completion of the grants included in this report, United Way of Racine County’s Equity Innovation Fund has awarded 31 grants to organizations, totaling more than \$1,436,000. Over 7,100 people have been served by the projects supported by the Equity Innovation Fund.

Future Equity Innovation Fund reports will detail the impact of grants that have been awarded in subsequent rounds of funding.

United Way of Racine County’s Equity Innovation Fund supports projects, programs and solutions that use innovative strategies to reduce disparities, improve outcomes and empower members of historically marginalized populations. The fund is made possible through the generosity of novelist and philanthropist MacKenzie Scott, and through support from Racine County.



## ▶ Stay Up to Date

If you have any questions about the Equity Innovation Fund, please contact Special Projects Manager Katie Tuttle at [ktuttle@unitedwayracine.org](mailto:ktuttle@unitedwayracine.org)

To learn more, and to see other Equity Innovation Fund reports, scan the QR code or visit: [UnitedWayRacine.org/EIF](https://UnitedWayRacine.org/EIF)

