



# By Youth for Youth

## Supporting Youth as Decision Makers in their Community

**Situation:** There is a need to connect youth programming to public health, in particular for youth to understand how their work (whether in community development, civic engagement, or school club settings) connects to the health of their community. Additionally, there is a need to advocate for youth to be at the center of decision-making processes with adults, where youth are valued as key stakeholders and experts of their community. The By Youth For Youth (BYFY) program addresses this need. BYFY is a unique volunteer committee composed of Dane County high school students that make investment decisions for youth-led programming and initiatives. BYFY members identify critical issues impacting youth in Dane County, establish funding priorities, review grant proposals, and recommend funding to support projects developed and implemented by youth to serve youth.

**Response:** Each year, United Way of Dane County, the City of Madison, and Dane County provide funding for BYFY grant projects. Taylor Seale, Extension’s Youth Development Educator, provides administrative and programmatic oversight in partnership with the City of Madison staff and United Way serves as the fiscal agent. 22/23 BYFY program activities included members analyzing the Dane County Youth Assessment Report to identify data driven funding priorities. They attended organized site visits and had guest speaker panels from community organizations to learn more about the issues and opportunities for systemic impact. BYFY members then evaluated 34 received grant proposals totaling \$85,170 in requests. The youth individually reviewed, evaluated, and ranked each proposal, deliberated the merits of each proposal as a group, and then recommended funding to City and County adult partners. An awards ceremony was hosted at the Urban League of Greater Madison to celebrate all grant awardees and BYFY youth accomplishments.

### 2023 BYFY Priorities

- Poverty, food insecurity, homelessness
- School programming & student support
- Youth mental & physical health
- Immigrant youth
- Climate Change
- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)

Extension empowers young people in decision making directly in their community, preparing the next generation of civic leaders, and building systems in which youth voice is valued and prioritized.

# 13

funded projects that directly impact youth and their families

# \$36,447

awarded to selected grant applicants

# 18

youth participated representing 10 Dane County high schools

**Evidence:** BYFY is a unique and innovative funding and youth engagement model, being only one of two programs of its kind in the state of Wisconsin. Overall, BYFY youth vocalize their personal improvements in leadership skills, critical thinking skills, facilitation, ability to work in a large group as well as gaining a better understanding of the issues youth face in Dane County and how to address them. City and County partners, and BYFY youth alike overwhelmingly support the BYFY program.

*“BYFY is a program where youth are given the opportunity to impact their community by funding different youth programs in the area. It’s a great program to be a part of and helps you understand the needs of our community along with helping others.”*

- BYFY Youth Member

*“We are honored to provide funding to BYFY each year. This program provides Dane County high school students the experience of allocating tangible funds that positively impact youth county-wide. It’s a unique and wonderful experience for youth interested in making a difference in their communities.”*

- Joe Parisi, Dane County Executive

*“BYFY is a one-of-a-kind youth program and the City of Madison is proud to partner with them. BYFY puts decision-making power in the hands of young people in real and structural ways, allowing participants to fund other youth programs, preparing them to be community leaders and participate in policy-making and funding decisions. BYFY supports young people in understanding and exercising the power they have to better their communities.”*

- Satya Rhodes-Conway, Mayor of Madison



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