

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Positive Youth Development Institute  
DIVISION OF EXTENSION  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



## BY YOUTH FOR YOUTH (BYFY) AWARDS \$26,130 TO LOCAL YOUTH PROGRAMS

*High school leaders review and award City, County and United Way funds that will benefit youth-led organizations and youth programs in Dane County.*

**MADISON, Wis. (May 19, 2026)** – In April 2026, the By Youth for Youth committee awarded \$26,130 to 9 local youth programs and projects. By Youth For Youth is a committee of Dane County high school students that make local investment decisions to support youth-led programs and projects in Dane County. The BYFY program is a collaborative effort between UW-Madison Extension’s Positive Youth Development Institute, the Dane County Youth Commission, the City of Madison and United Way of Dane County. Funding for BYFY is provided through a combination of City, County and United Way funds, with a special thank you to the Madison Civics Club for awarding the BYFY program with a generous endowment in support of continuous youth leadership.

This year’s BYFY cohort included 24 Dane County high school students from 9th to 12th grade, spread across the County from 11 different high schools including Belleville, Cambridge, Edgewood, Madison Country Day, Middleton, MMSD (East, La Follette, Memorial, West), Sun Prairie and Waunakee.

By Youth For Youth’s chosen funding priorities for 2026 focused on addressing mental health (anxiety, depression, suicide ideation & self-harm), positive experiences inside and outside of school (belonging, equity & inclusion, bullying), food security (food access, nutrition for low-income youth), immigration (accessing services & resources), sexual assault prevention (accessing services & resources) and climate change.

### Funding highlights:

- **Wisconsin Heights School District:** BYFY is proud to fund the “Closegap Initiative,” supporting the training and implementation of a daily digital check-in for students that enables early mental health intervention in school settings.
- **Oregon High School:** BYFY is proud to fund the “Run-Walk for Sexual Assault Awareness Month” event hosted by the Imagine Club, a youth-led educational fundraiser supporting survivors of sexual violence. Proceeds are donated to local organizations in Dane County.
- **Rooted, Inc.:** BYFY is proud to fund the “Rooted in Community Gardens” project, where youth update and fix existing garden beds that are used for local families to grow their own personal produce.

### Full List of Funded Organizations and Programs:

- Dairyland Dancing Diamonds: “Nourish & Flourish Initiative”
- Wisconsin Heights School District: “Mental Health Closegap Initiative”
- Rooted Inc.: “Rooted in Community Gardens”
- East High School’s WAVE Club: “Menstrual Equity Project”
- Oregon High School’s Imagine Club: “Run-Walk for Sexual Assault Awareness Month”
- Cardea: “American Heart Association & National Alliance on Mental Illness 5K Run”
- Elver Park Neighborhood Center: “Team Building Through Art Experiences”
- Meadowood Neighborhood Center: “Plates with Purpose”
- MTZ Charitable Organization: “Planted with Purpose”

**Supporting partner statements:**

“By Youth For Youth gives the next generation of community leaders an opportunity to make a real impact at a young age. These inspiring teens are learning how to collaborate, communicate effectively and accelerate results, all in order to help more people and change more lives. We are proud to mobilize Dane County’s up and coming thought leaders.” - *Renee Moe, President & CEO of United Way of Dane County*

“By Youth For Youth 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*

“We are honored to provide funding to By Youth For Youth 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.” - *Melissa Agard, Dane County Executive*

**2025–2026 BYFY Committee Members:**

Zoha Adnan	Madison Country Day
Hannah-Kay Amuzu-Gassou	Edgewood High School
Fatima Romero Alvarado	Madison La Follette High School
Amogh Avadhani	Middleton High School
Brandon Ballweg	Waunakee High School
Brooke Ballweg	Waunakee High School
Ruth Bawithadim	Sun Prairie West High School
Aditya Behara	Middleton High School
Jailen Clark	Madison La Follette High School
Denise Espirito Santo Dias	Waunakee High School
Sophia Downs	Cambridge High School
Hanshika JaiPravinKumar	Sun Prairie West High School
Angelina Li	Waunakee High School
Sharon Medina	Madison West High School
Andry Negovani	Madison Memorial High School
Kobe Ni	Waunakee High School
Christian Rubio Robledo	Madison La Follette High School
Frances Schaller-Davis	Madison East High School
Jinal Shah	Middleton High School
Lily Shapiro	Madison West High School
Evelyn Soukup	Waunakee High School
Jill Thompson	Cambridge High School
Faith Waefler	Belleville High School
Yesenia Naomy Villagomez	Madison La Follette High School

**By Youth For Youth Staff:**

Nathan Beck, City of Madison  
Taylor Seale, UW-Madison Extension  
Michelle Van Asten, United Way of Dane County

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