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Illinois American Water Supports Inclusion & Diversity Projects through new Grant Program, YWCA Of Alton One Of Recipients

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BELLEVILLE – Over \$18,000 will be shared by 14 organizations through Illinois American Water’s Inclusion and Diversity Grant Program. The program, which is a new initiative for Illinois American Water, provides financial assistance to nonprofit

organizations seeking to develop and implement programs, training and/or community-related projects that aim to promote and foster inclusion and diversity in their community.

Justin Ladner, Illinois American Water President, is excited “to be a part of the progress occurring in the communities we serve.” He said, “At Illinois American Water we celebrate and value the different perspectives and backgrounds each of us offer. Diversity makes our company and our communities stronger. This is why we wanted to create an initiative focused on partnerships for inclusion and diversity. We’re excited to collaborate with these impressive organizations.”

Fourteen organizations across Illinois American Water’s footprint will receive funding for their inclusion and diversity efforts. Illinois American Water’s 2021 Inclusion and Diversity Grant recipients and projects are described in detail below.



YWCA of Southern Illinois located in Alton will receive a \$2,500 grant to support their Reading On program. The program will offer diverse storybooks for teacher professional development and continuing education. They will use diverse storybooks and concepts to give pre-k and other elementary teachers an opportunity to learn and discuss diversity, inclusion and belonging.

Big Picture Initiative located in Peoria will receive a \$1,000 grant to connect young

Black artists in food insecure areas to public arts. The artists will paint fresh produce stands which will be placed in Peoria Public School District 150 schools. The project will elevate the role of art in community issues to students and support the distribution of fresh produce.

Black History Month Awareness Club located in Bolingbrook will receive a \$1,000 grant to secure scholarships for high school seniors. The deserving high school seniors will demonstrate diversity work in the community and educational excellence to succeed in college. The grant will allow the organization to provide scholarships for students in need of financial assistance.

HeartHaven Outreach located in Bolingbrook will receive a \$1,000 grant to support a diverse, educational field trip for teens. The goal is to raise awareness and provide services that are more inclusive to students and families of the Hispanic/LatinX demographic. The educational field trip will create an inclusive experience for the Spanish-speaking community.

House of Miles East St. Louis (HOME) located in East St. Louis will receive a \$1,000 grant to support their HOME Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics (STEAM) program. The grant will support materials needed to allow students to learn and experience STEAM through hands-on experiences.

It Takes a Village located in Peoria will receive a \$1,500 grant to expand their efforts of providing resources to students at Manual High School in Peoria. The expansion of their program will provide socks, hats and gloves to students. The group currently provides toiletries, school supplies and food. This effort is in collaboration with various organizations to increase awareness of community resources and support for children and families.

Living to Serve located in Peoria will receive a \$1,500 grant to enhance their health programming. Their efforts will focus on equal access to healthcare. They plan to expand their efforts through digital marketing and community outreach events to address disparities in public health that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

New Life Lutheran Church located in Bolingbrook will receive a \$1,000 grant to enhance their Diaper Depot program. The program currently provides bundles of diapers to families in need. The expansion of the program will provide much-needed formula. The program will support women caring for their children and provide food for their families while supporting their efforts to maintain their work in the community.

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No Father Left Behind, Inc. in Belleville will receive a full grant request of \$2,000 to support incarcerated men and their children. The organization will provide parental training skills to fathers, provide transportation for children to visit their fathers on the weekend, and provide transportation vouchers to fathers who may have a job interview. They will also be able to help incarcerated fathers provide Christmas gifts to their children.

Prospect Heights Fire Protection District will receive a \$1,000 grant to expand their Community Connection Program. This program allows residents to share critical information about their households to aid first responders and emergency personnel to respond more efficiently. The expansion of the program will support conversations with diverse populations in the community. The conversations will present dialogue to aid in diverse strategies, practices and programs.

Southwest Suburban Immigrant Project located in Bolingbrook will receive a \$1,000 grant to support the organization's health justice program. The program promotes inclusion and diversity in the community and is on the forefront of language access with local health departments. The work supports equitable access to diverse populations. They plan to expand their efforts by providing additional training to community health workers to assist in connecting and leveraging resources.

The Well Experience located in Urbana will receive a \$1,000 grant to fund the Sisters Engaging Together (SET) project. The SET project provides a safe place and activities to promote healthy conversations about racial disparities for women of color in a trauma-informed environment. Activities and discussions will relate to racial disparities, systemic oppression, generational trauma, community violence and more.

Trauma and Resilience Initiative, Inc. located in Urbana will receive a full grant request of \$2,500 to support their Healing Communities-Wisdom Leaders-Senior Community-Building program. The program supports senior residents in high-need neighborhoods who have concerns about safety, social isolation and inability to navigate the service system. The project supports a relationship-based healing model to increase access to services and support.

Woodridge Rotary Club located in Woodridge will receive a full grant request of \$550 to purchase and donate inclusive and diverse books to students in the Edgewood School District. The books will focus on acceptance of all children and encourage them to feel confident in who they are. The books will include biographies, poetry and fiction stories with diverse backgrounds.

For more information about Illinois American Water and the Inclusion and Diversity grant program, please visit www.illinoisamwater.com.

About Illinois American Water - Illinois American Water, a subsidiary of American Water (NYSE: AWK), is the largest investor-owned water utility in the state, providing high-quality and reliable water and/or wastewater services to approximately 1.3 million people. American Water also operates a customer service center in Alton and a quality control and research laboratory in Belleville. With a history dating back to 1886, American Water is the largest and most geographically diverse U.S. publicly traded water and wastewater utility company. The company employs more than 7,000 dedicated professionals who provide regulated and market-based drinking water, wastewater and other related services to 15 million people in 46 states. American Water provides safe, clean, affordable and reliable water services to our customers to help make sure we keep their lives flowing. For more information, visit amwater.com and follow American Water on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).