

## NEWS RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **United Way of Greater Stark County to Recognize 2018 Gold Key & DeHoff Award Winners at Annual Celebration March 29<sup>th</sup>**

(Canton, OH) March 15, 2018 - United Way of Greater Stark County (UWGSC) announces this year's recipients of the DeHoff Emerging Young Philanthropist Award and Gold Key Service Award. Both awards will be presented on March 29th during UWGSC's Annual Celebration at Kent State University Stark Conference Center. "These awards allow us to recognize community leaders and volunteers for the positive impact they have made – and continue to make - in our community." says UWGSC President & CEO Maria Heege. Recognition awards for the 2017 UWGSC Annual Campaign will also be presented at the event.

**The DeHoff Emerging Philanthropist Award** will be presented to **Cyrus Harper**. A native of Massillon, Cyrus returns to the area often to inspire youth, connect to schools and retain his positive influence on the city. Having spent a great deal of time at the Boys and Girls Club, he always stays involved there. A published author, Cyrus is also a sought-after speaker for organizations dedicated to inspiring and making America's youth reach their full potential. His social media platforms are all developed on platforms of integrity and positivity, and feature a diverse array of individuals from all walks of life and socioeconomic backgrounds. Dividing his time as a dual resident of both Massillon and Los Angeles, Cyrus' frequent visits to his hometown signify his investment in the youth here, and his dedication to improving the quality of life for at-risk children in our community. Cyrus said, "I think it's important to be a role model that kids can see, someone they can see in their neighborhoods."

"Anytime Cyrus plans a trip to Massillon, he works with the Massillon Museum to connect with schoolchildren," says Massillon Museum Director Alexandra Coon, who nominated Cyrus for this award. She says, "Cyrus has a passion to change the world, hence assigning himself the moniker, 'Cyrus the Solution.' Through his organization, 'A Wise Way,' he mines first-hand accounts of individuals with inspirational success stories to motivate and encourage others to aspire toward personal success."

The DeHoff Emerging Young Philanthropist Award was established in 2010 by Bob and Linda DeHoff to recognize a Stark County resident age 45 and under who impacts Stark County through direct service and volunteer work. Cyrus will receive \$5,000 to be donated to a health and human service 501(c)(3) organization of his choice.

**The Gold Key Service Award** was established by United Way of Greater Stark County in 1961 to recognize individuals who have continually demonstrated the highest degree of personal dedication and service in a voluntary capacity. Their contribution of time and talent supports UWGSC's Bold Goals 2020 in the areas of Health, Education and Financial Stability. This year's award will be presented to 2 recipients:

**Rob Pierson** is the Deputy Director of Child Support at Stark County Job and Family Services, but his personal commitment to helping other people extends far beyond his role at work. Rob juggles his job, being an active member of his church, serving as chairman of the Fatherhood Coalition all while being a husband, father and a new grandfather. “Rob thinks of others and is always finding new ways to be a positive impact on those around him,” says his nominator Baylee Diedrich, Events Assistant at the Pro Football Hall of Fame. She explains, “I met Rob a little over a year ago during the planning period of an event at the Hall of Fame. Rob was assisting with organizing a Winter Retreat for the fathers of the Fatherhood Coalition. The idea behind the event was to help connect fathers and their children, an experience most of the families had never had.” Baylee adds, “Rob brings together and unites organizations, such as the Fatherhood Coalition and the Pro Football Hall of Fame, to make our community better.”

Rob said, “I have always believed that one person can make a difference, even if it is just in small ways. I also have always been inspired by individuals who have demonstrated that effort and commitment can improve our community and the daily life of our fellow citizens.”

**Bob Fernandez** is Special Projects Director at Stark County Family Court. A long-time UWGSC volunteer, he was nominated by the United Way Board of Directors. Retired Family Court Judge and UWGSC board member Michael Howard explains, “I worked with Bob at Stark County Family Court for over 25 years. At Special Projects, he oversees all of the court’s grant funding and in that capacity, he has studied the research on children’s programming and he knows what programming works best for kids. He started with the United Way back in the ‘90s, and is currently serving on the Board of Directors as well as chairing the Financial Stability Impact Council and Public Policy Advisory Committee. Bob recognized early on the need for collaboration among all the child-serving agencies. He’s a leader in bringing all of those systems to the same table, to develop comprehensive, data-driven strategies to help kids. And he brought those same skills to United Way.”

Judge Howard adds, “Under his leadership, and in partnership with OhioMeansJobs, we established the Financial Prosperity Center. We now fund programming there that provides preparation for the workforce, job training, financial coaching, household stabilization, and all this with the goal for long-term economic independence for people.”

“I’ve known Bob, both from United Way and working downtown, for over 10 or 15 years,” says Bill Cook, Chair of UWGSC’s Board of Directors. “When you see Bob at the board meetings - where I really got to know him - he comes with passion, he comes educated on problems and what he believes are the things to do. He can be very persuasive, he has facts to back up whatever he says and he challenges us. He has brought to our attention the challenges that the youth face in this community, and he’s really been the advocate behind our commitment to helping people learn skills that are going to allow them to move to the next level out of poverty.”

### **About United Way of Greater Stark County**

United Way of Greater Stark County fights for the Health, Education and Financial Stability of every person in every community. The agency collaborates, convenes, and partners to support programs and initiatives that break the cycle of poverty, promote a healthy community where children are successful from kindergarten through graduation to a career, and where families have the tools, skills, and support they need to become financially independent. We win by living United. For more information about United Way of Greater Stark County visit [www.uwstark.org](http://www.uwstark.org). Offices are at 401 Market Avenue North, Suite 300, Canton, Ohio 44702. (330) 491-0445.

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