



United Way
of Delaware

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Levy Court, United Way of Delaware Partner to Address COVID Learning Gap

Dover, Del. - Kent County Levy Court Commissioners proudly supported United Way of Delaware and their partners for a summer initiative to address the academic achievement and social/emotional gap caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A \$100,000 check was presented to United Way of Delaware through American Rescue Act Funding, At-Risk Nonprofits Program administered through Kent County. The partnership between the Capital and Caesar Rodney School Districts, First State Community Action and United Way of Delaware, supported 90 students in grades K through 8 from the partner School Districts to participate in a Learning Pod program called Freedom Schools. The program ran through the summer months with a strong focus on literacy aimed to close the academic gap.

“The need for these funds arose from the exacerbated learning loss and achievement gap of students due to the COVID pandemic. We leveraged the summer weeks to help our youth close the academic gaps, provide safe social and emotional environments, and exposed students to constructive summer activities,” said United Way President and CEO Dr. Michelle Taylor.

MORE

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There's been a lot of coverage in the national news about learning loss during the COVID-pandemic. According to the Nation's Report Card issued earlier this year by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), middle school student test scores nationally this school year dropped nine points in math and four points in reading compared to 2019-2020; and in Delaware, from 2019 to 2022, 8th graders saw a 7-point drop in reading and a 13-point drop in math.

The Levy Court has always had a vested interest in student achievement. "A good education helps us all around, said Terry Pepper, it helps our residents get better jobs, and it's just an overall good thing for our economy."

In her remarks at the 3rd Annual Freedom School Harambee Celebration at Delaware State University on August 2, Dr. Taylor said, "I want to thank the Kent County Levy Court for giving us the funding to support Freedom Schools this year." Speaking to the students, she continued, "I want you to know that investing in your future, our future leaders, we couldn't think of anything more important to do."

Freedom Schools is a successful program that has been shown to improve students' academic, social, and emotional learning skills. In 2023, about 160 students in Kent and Sussex Counties participated; with additional funding and space from our partner school districts, we could potentially enroll 200 students in 2024.

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