



February 5, 2025

Contact: Charlene Shirk, Assistant Vice President, Public Relations

shirkc@vystarcu.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VyStar Foundation Awards More Than \$200,000 in Grants to Nonprofits Supporting Youth Empowerment

Jacksonville, FL - VyStar Foundation announced today that \$202,621 will be distributed among 11 nonprofits in its fourth youth programs grant cycle. These funds focus on organizations that support youth-focused programs, prioritizing those dedicated to helping young individuals (ages 12-18) achieve academic success and personal growth. The investment underscores VyStar's commitment to strengthen communities by providing wraparound services in key areas such as:

- Food and housing assistance
- Career counseling and skill development
- Mental health support

"We are proud to support these remarkable nonprofit organizations dedicated to uplifting youth in our communities," said Patricia McElroy, President VyStar Foundation. "By investing in programs that provide essential services such as food and housing assistance, career counseling, and mental health support, our community partners are empowering young people to achieve their full potential."

2025 Grantees and Programs

- **Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry [BEAM] (Northeast FL)** – Funds will be directed to families with children attending Fletcher High School, Fletcher Middle School, Mayport Middle School as well as the elementary schools that are served by the Beaches Family Resource Center for families who are at immediate risk of eviction or having their utility service disconnected.
- **Fulton County Schools (Metro Atlanta)** – Funding will support the *Breaking Barriers: Enhancing Student Well-Being Through Peer Education and Support* program. The school-based 'Wellness Center' will provide accessible mental health services to students and create a safe space where students can engage in mindfulness, relaxation techniques, and peer support across Fulton County Schools.
- **MaliVai Washington Kids Foundation Inc. (Northeast FL)** – Funds will support the Teen College & Career Initiative, a program designed to empower youth with hands-on workforce development skills, career exploration opportunities, and college preparation.
- **Safe Harbor Children's Center Zach's Place (Southeast GA)** - Funds will address the immediate needs of 200 runaway and homeless youth in Glynn County offering resources that meet basic needs and help them achieve stable, safe, and supportive living arrangements.
- **Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida Inc (South Central FL)** - Support will be provided for the 2025 School Partnerships Capacity Building program, which ensures students in rural, remote, and low-income areas have access to nutritious food during the academic year. This includes equipping schools with the supplies and equipment needed to store and distribute food.
- **The 4R Foundation, Inc. (South Central FL)** - Funds will support 4Roots Youth Education Programming to address food insecurity, provide nutrition education, and inspire the next generation to play an active role in improving the food system, while also promoting interest in culinary and agricultural career paths.



-
- **The DePaul School of NE Florida Inc (Northeast FL)** - The grant will fund the *Pride of Lions Mini-Park* playground which will provide multi-sensory learning to more than 500 students. This initiative will enhance interpersonal and social skills, improve emotional regulation and social interactions while boosting problem-solving abilities and confidence in independent activities.
 - **The Drake House (Metro Atlanta)** - Funding will support the Drake House Youth Program, which focuses on holistic development through mental health counseling, tutoring, enrichment activities, and social engagement opportunities.
 - **The Twenty Pearls Foundation, Incorporated (Metro Atlanta)** - The grant will support the Childhood Hunger Initiative Power Pack (CHIPP) which partners with Title 1 schools to combat food insecurity in Fulton County through the distribution of snack packs and stocking at food pantries at selected schools.
 - **Travis Manion Foundation (Northeast FL)** – The grant will fund the Character Does Matter: Empowering Young Leaders Through Veteran-Led Youth Mentorship program which pairs Veterans with more than 1,000 youth in Duval County Public Schools, helping students develop a sense of responsibility, courage, and leadership through mentorship.
 - **United Way of Northeast Florida (Northeast FL)** - The grant will support the Full- Service Schools (FSS) program which provides a comprehensive network of health and mental health services through a holistic, wrap-around approach to benefit at-risk children and families throughout Duval County by addressing their educational and personal growth needs.

VyStar Foundation supports nonprofit organizations across Georgia, North and Central Florida. In 2024, the Foundation distributed more than \$390,000 in grants to 22 local organizations, addressing the critical needs of youth, military members, veterans, and their families. These grants provided essential resources to those in need, reinforcing VyStar’s mission of building stronger communities.

Grants through VyStar Foundation are available to 501(c)(3) organizations aligned with its core giving pillars:

- **Military:** Ensuring active military members, veterans and their families receive the social services they need and the recognition they deserve
- **Youth:** Empowering youth by providing equitable access to creative learning environments
- **Community Building:** Cultivating financially strong, culturally vibrant, and interconnected communities

VyStar Foundation will launch its next grant cycle in February focusing on nonprofit organizations that support military and veterans service programs. The military application process opens on February 24, 2025, and closes on March 30, 2025. To learn more about VyStar Foundation and upcoming grant information sessions, visit vystarfoundation.org.

###

About VyStar Foundation

Established in 2021, VyStar Foundation is the grantmaking arm of VyStar Credit Union, dedicated to making meaningful impacts in the communities we serve. As a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, the Foundation funds local non-profits to support youth, military members, veterans, and enhance community vitality. For more information, please visit vystarfoundation.org.
