

## City of Aurora 2022 Quality of Life (QoL) Applicant Summary

### 1. **Applicant:** Aurora Regional Fire Museum

**Agency Background:** Housed in Aurora's old Central Fire Station, the Aurora Regional Fire Museum actively serves the Aurora community to teach and preserve the history of the Aurora Fire Department and our region as well as through fire safety programs. The Museum serves the community as a unique historical, educational, landmark and is a destination for local, regional, and international visitors. The Aurora Regional Fire Museum is open to the public Wednesday – Saturday from 10am-4pm and during the summer months, we are open on Tuesdays. We are actively involved in all events happening in Downtown Aurora and open our doors for First Fridays and other community events. We have two floors of exhibits, provide educational programming and outreach in the museum, virtually, and in the community. We are a stakeholder in Downtown Aurora, Aurora, and the Region. We are actively engaging in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility work to ensure we are open and available to all Aurora residents.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Aurora Regional Fire Museum*

*Funds will be used to support the areas of museum operations, exhibition development, and education program development. We explore fire history, teach and promote fire safety and prevention. We serve Aurora and the Fox Valley Region.*

### 2. **Applicant:** 360 Youth Services

**Agency Background:** For over 50 years, 360 Youth Services (360YS), a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, has been an agent for positive change in the North and Northwest suburbs and beyond, identifying and responding to the needs of youth. Our mission is to provide life-changing services to youth through: (1) Substance Use Prevention; (2) Housing programs and wrap-around services for youth experiencing homelessness; and (3) professional, accessible, community-based Youth Counseling services for youth and their families regardless of ability to pay. Our Youth Counseling Program – specifically an initiative entitled “Moving Forward” serving Aurora students -is the focus of this grant request. As an organization, we strive to be trauma-informed, anti-racist, culturally inclusive, and affirming of all marginalized youth including all gender identities and sexual orientations. For the last 2 years, we have earned the Human Rights Campaign's Inclusion Innovation Seal -their highest tier of recognition - for our inclusive practices of LGBTQ+ youth and families.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Youth Homelessness Response and Prevention*

*Provides IPSD middle and high school students at risk of suspension, expulsion, or dropping out the chance to develop increasingly responsible behaviors at school, home, and in the community, and aids in the prevention of future disciplinary action.*

### 3. **Applicant:** Cities in Schools

**Agency Background:** Cities In Schools Aurora 2000, Inc. (CISA), formerly known as Communities In Schools of Aurora, Inc., has created collaborative projects with community partners that engage families, youth, neighborhoods, social service agencies and schools. Since the organization was founded in 1993, CISA has partnered with East Aurora School District 131, West Aurora School District 129, Indian Prairie School District 204 and Oswego School District 308 to deliver daytime and afterschool programs to children who are most in need. The organization works collaboratively as a broker of services by linking more than 30 community agencies and resources to 35 area schools and hires over 300 supplemental staff, which includes school district employees and college and high school students who provide services each year. Services offered by CISA include after school programs, summer camps, individual student and group counseling, truancy prevention, parenting programs, substance abuse

prevention/ education, violence prevention and intervention, tutoring, mentoring, conflict resolution and peer mediation. CISA was responsible for securing 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) grants and currently manages 13 sites for East Aurora and four CCLC sites for West Aurora. The program expanded services to bring a wide variety of community resources into the schools and create a community of support that eliminates obstacles to a student's success. In addition to writing the District 131 grants, CISA has managed staffing positions, was responsible for overseeing Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) services, participated in the planning and development of the programs and manages ongoing CCLC programs. Since Covid-19, CISA has continued to provide services virtually using teleconferences, Zoom meetings, telephone, and successfully conducted the Back-to-school-Fair as a drive-through.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal: CISA Comprehensive Services Program**

*Program: Level 1-Back-to-School Fair; Level 2-students/families with long-term needs - tutoring, mentoring, literacy, enrichment/recreational, and community programs for Aurora students at risk of academic failure/dropping out in 4 school districts.*

**4. Applicant African American Men of Unity (AAMOU)**

**Agency Background:** African American Men of Unity (AAMOU) is a 501(c) (3), organization founded in 1999 with the commitment to empowering underserved individuals and families with education, training and resources to fulfill their divine purpose, improve their quality of life and promote self efficacy in impoverished communities. AAMOU serves at risk youth of all ethnicities, regardless of challenges, socio-economic background or academic deficiencies disabilities. We are here to support families struggling with the managing the day to day stresses and help youth avoid the pitfalls of life, enrich their cultural aptitude and preparedness to reach their full potential. AAMOU believes that education, training and certification are essential keys to unlock the doors of opportunities, prerequisites for youth to see the value in themselves and achieve optimal self sufficiency. Programs and services include but not limited to Rites of Passage, Leadership Development, Job and Career Readiness, Mentoring, sports activities and Life-skills. We also offer cultural enrichment through our Kwanzaa and Juneteenth celebration attended by officials, family, elders and youth. In addition we have a Back to School Fair for economic disadvantaged individuals and families in need of backpacks filled with school supplies.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal 1: Rites of Passage Program**

*Rite of Passage (ROP) a evidence based mentoring program will provide youth with positive youth development, guidance, structure and examples of leadership, manhood and appropriate behaviors expected at each developmental stage in a group setting.*

**2022 QoL Project Proposal2: Jobs for Youth Internship Program**

*Jobs for Youth Internship is a workforce development program that will provide job readiness training, and other job related employability skills to unemployed persons ages 14-30 and prepare them to fill expected growth in high demand jobs.*

**5. Applicant Agape Connection, Inc.**

**Agency Background:** Agape Connection, Inc., formed in 1991, is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization and currently has five subcontractors. Since its establishment, Agape Connection has been committed to improving the quality of life for residents in Aurora, Illinois, and surrounding western suburbs by developing and implementing cultural and educational programming for underprivileged youth and children in grades1-8. Agape's vision is to bring awareness of and respond to social, economic, and educational needs of disenfranchised residents with attention to persons of African descent. Agape's initiatives make significant and lasting contributions in the community. Since 2012, 900 participants attended a concert, and community-wide cultural events draw close to 400-500 guests annually. The

Wax Museum debuted in 2002 and averages 53 children or more who participate each year. It has reached literally hundreds of households in the Western Suburbs since its 17 years of production. Students have participated in training, educational and social activities, and opportunities. Participants who are engaged in activities in the Wax Museum are enrolled in the Sankofa Saturday School of History, Culture and Creativity, which also includes a cross-cultural music program. The Agape Connection rents facilities from St. John AME Church in Aurora.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal: Youth Education**

*Sankofa is designed for underrepresented/low-income participants, grades 1-8, to gain knowledge of African-American icons, and prepare and present findings by participating in a Wax Museum. Sankofa also provides cross-cultural music appreciation.*

**6. Applicant Alive Center NFP**

**Agency Background:** The Alive Center is a one-of-a-kind teen center that deeply impacts thousands of youths on a daily basis. Our mission is to be a Teen-Led, Teen-Driven center focused on empowering the youth of today to become the impassioned, resilient leaders of tomorrow. Alive Center offers a diverse range of programming designed to empower teens, foster physical and emotional well-being, and inspire personal growth. The Alive Center's free Teen Initiated Drop-in programs provide unique opportunities for teens to come together to learn, create, and socialize in a welcoming, safe, and supervised environment. The first of its kind, Alive focuses heavily on encouraging leadership, teaching coping/life skills, and providing a place to belong. The Alive Center is one of the first teen centers in the country to support both junior high and high schoolers, both privileged and at-risk, through our unique teen-led model. It is a powerful peer model of teens-helping-teens where they all become empowered in the process. During the critical hours after school and over summer vacation, our program provides teens with free tutoring, mentoring, events, and classes. Our Teen Initiated Drop-in programs include:

**2022 QoL Project Proposal: Teen Initiated Drop-in Program in Aurora**

*Alive's free Teen Initiated Drop-in program is held 3 days per week from 3 - 6 PM in downtown Aurora. The program will provide Aurora teens in grades 6-12 with a safe after school alternative where they can learn, meet new friends, and gain skills.*

**7. Applicant Association for Individual Development**

**Agency Background:** Celebrating 60 years of providing customized, consumer-focused programs and services in an equitable, inclusive manner, the Association for Individual Development (AID) works with individuals with developmental, intellectual, physical and/or mental health challenges, those who have suffered a trauma, those experiencing immediate and/or chronic crises and those at risk to overcome personal, behavioral, societal and environmental barriers to achieve recovery, independence, self-reliance and to live the lives they choose. Operating in Kane, Kendall, DeKalb, DuPage, Will, McHenry and suburban Cook County communities, AID is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) and the American Association of Suicidology (AAS). In FY 2021, AID served 6300 people in client-centric, community-based programs. AID currently operates community centers in Elgin, Aurora, Batavia, Sugar Grove and Yorkville, mental health outpatient clinics throughout the Fox Valley, supports 1000 individuals living in their own apartments, and more than 220 individuals in 3 dozen group homes scattered throughout the greater Fox Valley. AID collaborates with Federally Qualified Healthcare Centers (FQHCs), managed care companies, Frequent Users (FUSE) programs, Continua of Cares and local hospital systems to decrease homelessness, increase employment and improve the mental and physical health of residents.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal: Victim and Outreach Services**

*The 24-hour, on call program provides customized services to victims of crime, trauma or quality of life issues. This program is a collaboration with municipalities, police, fire and medical personnel and local human services providers.*

8. **Applicant** Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry

**Agency Background:** The mission of Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry is to help end local hunger by ensuring that everyone has access to enough nourishing food, thereby helping our overall community stay healthy and productive. Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry was founded in 1981. An economic downturn had led to a growing number of people seeking food assistance, often through local churches. Unable to accommodate the growing need, these churches worked with local leaders to help establish a larger community pantry to assist those struggling to make ends meet. The collaboration of people of all faiths – and a desire to serve those in the city of Aurora and beyond – led to the forming of Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry. Today, Aurora Food Pantry is one of the largest food pantries in northern Illinois, distributing 3.6 million pounds of food each year to 24,000 unique individuals. With a staff of 8, a crew of over 500 volunteers, and countless community partners, Aurora Food Pantry is dedicated to ending hunger in the community by providing nutritious food in a humanitarian and compassionate manner.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Pop-Up Pantries for Indigent Women, Children & Teenage Girls*

*The pantry began monthly women's pop-up pantries to serve females in Aurora. The first pantry was hosted in October, 2021 in Aurora.*

9. **Applicant** Aurora Historical Society

**Agency Background:** Founded in 1906, the Aurora Historical Society is the primary caretaker of Aurora's heritage, with the Mission Statement: "The Aurora Historical Society gives the past a future by collecting, preserving, interpreting and presenting the rich, diverse history of Aurora and the surrounding area." The Society fulfills its mission by actively collecting artifacts and documents from all eras of Aurora's history, including the present, and by documenting the community and its activities as they happen (tomorrow's history), and permanently preserving these all materials for future generations. The Society helps serve and educate the public through the operation of its two museum sites and a research archives, and by producing several educational exhibits, events, programs, and publications throughout the year. At the downtown Pierce Art & History Center, a City-owned facility shared with the Aurora Public Art Commission, since 1996, the Historical Society has presented quality exhibits and programs. The Society's Collections Storage is also located at the Tanner site. Like so many other businesses and institutions, the Historical Society was adversely affected by the COVID pandemic, having to close both sites for an extended period of time and losing most of our volunteer help. **2022**

**QoL Project Proposal:** *Museum Operations*

*"Giving the Past a Future" describes our entire museum operations and programming over the year--exhibits, programs, and activities at our two museum sites--the David L. Pierce Art & History Center and the Tanner House, serving all of Aurora.*

10. **Applicant** CASA Kane County

**Agency Background:** The CASA movement began in the late 1970's when Superior Court Judge David Soukup felt that children were not being adequately represented in court. It was then that he conceived the idea to recruit and train community volunteers to serve as Court Appointed Special Advocates to gather information about these children, be a stable presence in their lives and ensure they are placed in safe and permanent homes. CASA Kane County was established in 1988. The mission of CASA Kane County is to advocate for the best interests of every child in our local Juvenile Court system to help ensure they are placed in a safe, permanent home in the quickest amount of time. We are a Guardian

ad Litem, non-profit, 501c3 volunteer organization that serves the best interests of abused and neglected children from the age of birth through 21. Our trained and supervised community volunteers serve as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and Guardian ad Litem (GAL) for children in court due to abuse, neglect, or private guardianship. The CASA/GAL volunteer acts as the eyes and ears of the judge to help make the best decision for a safe, caring and permanent home for each child.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Child Advocacy for Abused & Neglected Children in Aurora*

*Our mission is to serve and advocate for the children ages birth through 21 in the foster care system until their well-being and safety to reach permanency is achieved. The children are in court due to abuse, neglect, or private guardianship.*

11. **Applicant** Dominican Literacy Center, Aurora

**Agency Background:** The Dominican Literacy Center empowers the immigrant community in Aurora by providing trained individual tutors for immigrant women who want to learn to read, write and speak English, and by offering Citizenship classes and individual tutoring to women and men immigrants who are studying to pass the U.S. naturalization test and become new American citizens.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Adult Literacy Program*

*We want to improve our testing of incoming services to conform to our new curriculum, "Stand Out". We want to purchase and use the BestPlus 2.0 ESL literacy test, conform it to our series, and hire a bilingual person to administer the test.*

12. **Applicant** DuPage Senior Citizens Council/dba Kane Senior Council (DSCC/KSC)

**Agency Background:** The DuPage Senior Citizens Council/Kane Senior Council (DSCC/KSC) is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3), volunteer-driven organization committed to helping older people. We are an active and aggressive advocate for the independence and livelihood of older adults. We are committed to the well-being, socialization, and security of older people. Since 1975, our agency has been advocating for and providing services that help older people thrive in the secure comfort of home. In 2018, we expanded to serve Kane County under the dba Kane Senior Council (KSC). In DuPage County, our services include Home Delivered Meals (Meals on Wheels), Hybrid Community Dining/Drive-Thru Food Events, Health and Wellness Education, Well-Being Checks, Pet Care and Food Assistance, Friendly Phone Calls, Intergenerational Activities, Minor Home Repairs, Contractor Referrals, and Yard Clean-Ups. In Kane County, our services include Home Delivered Meals (Meals on Wheels), Hybrid Community Dining/Drive-Thru Food Events, Well-Being Checks, Health and Wellness Education, Pet Care and Food Assistance, and Intergenerational Activities. We provide more than just meals – our array of services is designed to ensure the safety, independence, and mental and physical well-being of older people, particularly those at or below the Federal Poverty Level. Our services provide a safety net for DuPage County and Kane County older adults in need, and DSCC/KSC has been credited with saving several lives.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Home Delivered Meals (Meals on Wheels), Hybrid Community Dining/Drive-Thru Food Events, and Well-Being Checks - Aurora*

*Funds will support the Home Delivered Meal Program, Hybrid Community Dining/Drive-Thru Food Events, and Well-Being Checks services.*

13. **Applicant** East Aurora Counseling, Ltd.

**Agency Background:** The Judah Robinson Foundation, NFP, is a charitable foundation providing mental health counseling and case management for individuals who are impacted by homelessness and severe or chronic mental illness. This is our third year of (anticipated) support from the City of Aurora Quality of Life grant, and we are so grateful to have had this support, which has enabled us to remain open during the pandemic, even when homeless shelters, clothes closets, food pantries, and all of our collateral supports were shut down or suspended.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal: Homeless Mental Health Intervention**

*Funds will be used to support 1. individual counseling 2. case management 3. transportation 4. administrative*

14. **Applicant** East Aurora School District 131

**Agency Background:** SEAVCV (Supporting East Aurora Victims of Community Violence) Program has been in East Aurora school district since 2018. The program has been the bridge between the community, students, families, and schools. The SEAVCV team has provided students who have been victims of community violence with the resources and skills to inspire them to reach their full potential. SEAVCV serves students who have been exposed to violent crimes and ensures they receive the appropriate services in and outside of the school setting. The SEAVCV team continues to provide critical ongoing services, including advocacy within the school system, along with ongoing emotional support. The SEAVCV team develops a plan that best meets student's needs from the intake assessment. The team maintains contact with professionals whose services are part of the student's service plan, adjusting the plan when necessary according to the student's progress through treatment.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal: Supporting East Aurora Victims of Community Crime (SEAVCV)**

*SEAVCV will continue to provide services to all of East Aurora students who have been exposed to any type of violence by ensuring critical ongoing services, including advocacy along with ongoing emotional supports such as mentoring and counseling.*

15. **Applicant** Echo Development Center

**Agency Background:** Echo (Empowerment Community Hope Organization) was established in 2015 by Arlisia Dockery Pryor and Laparis Pryor to help service disadvantaged families. Having experienced their own personal rejection with housing, food insecurity and abuse, the Pryors were set out to make sure that no families were denied basic needs to help live healthy lives. Their focus has been on low income disadvantaged families. Their mission has been to strengthen families and help save lives. Echo Development center provides social, economic, health, and educational services that promote and strengthens the ability of youth, senior and homeless families and individuals. Our Services are designed to stimulate positive growth and improve the quality of life of families in our community. Our Programs include Senior Care (Providing Health and Wellness Checks, food distribution, and nutritional lunches to seniors) Healthy Lives (Providing housing assistance to the homeless, basic care products, transportation, and job skills) Outreach Program (Abuse and Violence Workshops, First Aid Training, Economic Development) ANTI-Bullying Program (at Risk Families or students) Youth Services (Afterschool and homework, E-Learning Center, Food program)

**2022 QoL Project Proposal: Project Hope**

*Our program project seeks to provide health and training services for youth and senior residents in the Aurora area. These services include access to healthy food, wellness checks, mental health awareness, technology, and anti-bullying workshops.*

16. **Applicant** Fox Valley Hands of Hope (FVHH)

**Agency Background:** Fox Valley Hands of Hope provides compassionate guidance and support to the grieving, at no cost to clients. We serve children, youth, and adults who are suffering from loss and life threatening illness.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal: Operational Expenses**

*Operation costs include the training of our volunteers and programmatic costs for the services that we provide free to the community.*

17. **Applicant** Fox Valley Music Foundation

**Agency Background:** Fox Valley Music Foundation (The Foundation) is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to preserve, protect and present the music of the Fox Valley while providing music education to people of all ages and from all walks of life. The Foundation provides educational opportunities through free lectures and performances by local area musicians. These performances take place in various locations including The Venue (operated by the Foundation), libraries and public parks as well as utilizing social media channels to livestream events. The Foundation's website is a resource to all, providing facts, statistics and other related data on music history and current music events and performances. The Foundation also produces music documentaries in an effort to preserve the rich history of music in the Fox Valley area and provides these to educators. Similarly, the Foundation records performances that take place at The Venue making them available for the benefit of the artists while preserving these performances for generations to come. The Foundation/The Venue has become a gathering place for the music community as well as the community at large providing free and affordable music and educational programming to its patrons.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal: Operating Dollars**

*The weekly Big Band Residency would feature high school and college bands from throughout the Fox Valley, Kane and DuPage Counties prior to a professional performance allowing students to experience performing in a professional concert venue.*

**18. Applicant Fox Valley Special Recreation Foundation**

**Agency Background:** Fox Valley Special Recreation Foundation (FVSRF) supports the ancillary programs and services for Fox Valley Special Recreation Association. Projects supported by the Foundation go above and beyond the scope of services provided but are still essential to the quality of life of individuals with disabilities within the community. FVSRA was formed to provide a diverse range of year-round recreational activities to enable residents with disabilities to experience active, healthy, and fulfilling lifestyles. FVSRA offers a wide range of programs and services for individuals of all ages and abilities. Annually FVSRA implements more than 600 programs and special events, assuring and promoting choice for all individuals. The mission of FVSRA is to enrich the lives of people with disabilities. Working collaboratively with member agencies and community partners, we pledge to put people first.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal: Recreation for Persons with Special Needs**

*The entire community scope of FVSRA is from Oswego to South Elgin. About 30% would be residents of Aurora. FVSRF is requesting 30% of the overall budget to be supported to match the percentage of population estimated.*

**19. Applicant Fox Valley United Way**

**Agency Background:** Fox Valley United Way is committed to ensuring that all young children, birth to age 5 have access and equity to early childhood resources and education. Investing in the health, education and financial stability of all individuals in our community provides a child a strong foundation to achieve success in school and life. Fox Valley United Way's history began in 1922 with the founding of the Aurora Social Service Federation. The organization incorporated the United Way name and community tenets in 1972 and was renamed the United Way of the Aurora Area. The name was changed in 2004 to Fox Valley United Way (FVUW) following the merger with the United Funds of Yorkville and Plano. Today, Fox Valley United Way represents 23 communities in Kane and Kendall Counties and supports over 50 social service agencies serving the families and individuals that reside within these communities. In 2018, FVUW changed from a multi-issue focus to a single-issue focus on early childhood. The long-term health and welfare of a community is directly correlated to the health and welfare of its children. Those who are strong, prepared and ready for kindergarten have a significantly greater chance for success in school and life. Fox Valley United Way (FVUW) is committing all of its resources to promoting positive early childhood experiences. The impact of our SPARK Early Childhood

Collaboration initiative has proven that to advance the common good, we need to ensure that children birth to five years old in the communities we support have equitable access to early childhood resources and education. We hope to achieve this goal by focusing on the whole child and the whole family.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Gateway to Early Childhood: Play.Learn.Connect.*

*Play.Learn.Connect provides parent-child education sessions (in-person and virtual) that encompass learning through play; Developmental Screenings; and family interviews for parents seeking information and support regarding early childhood programs.*

20. **Applicant** Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois

**Agency Background:** The Girl Scout mission is to build girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois (GSNI) serves 12,503 girls and 4,485 adult volunteers in a 16-county region with 6 Resource Centers and 4 resident and day camp properties. The Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) is the nation's premier leadership development program designed specifically for girls, and is based on three keys: discover, connect, and take action. The GSLE helps girls discover by encouraging exploration of not only their own interests, talents, and skills, but also the world around them. All experiences in Girl Scouting are also, as much as possible, girl-led and encourage collaborative learning and hands-on experiences. There are a variety of options for girls and families to participate in Girl Scouting, including traditional troops camps, events, series, and events to explore special interests, travel, and outreach. Any girl who participates using any of these methods can take part in Girl Scouts.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Youth Recreation*

*The program serves girls in grades K-8 after school, one time per week for one hour. This year's focus is the Latinx community.*

21. **Applicant** Indian Prairie Educational Foundation

**Agency Background:** In partnership with Indian Prairie School District 204, the Indian Prairie Educational Foundation enriches education for students by supporting their academic, artistic, emotional and physical needs. We share a vision where students achieve success through out-of-the-box thinking, unique opportunities and exposure to inspiring possibilities.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Kid Essentials Program*

*The Kid Essentials Fund exists to support the large number of homeless and at-risk students in District 204 by providing timely support to meet the essential needs of these students when all other resources have been exhausted.*

22. **Applicant** Ladder Up

**Agency Background:** Ladder Up provides free financial programs to help clients secure the tax refunds they deserve, gain the knowledge to navigate today's complex financial systems, and obtain financial aid to make college dreams a reality. Ladder Up's programs are designed to alleviate poverty by increasing the financial stability of Illinois families and communities. Ladder Up operates three programs: The Tax Assistance Program (TAP), the Financial Capability Program (FCP), and the Tax Clinic. Tax Assistance Program: Ladder Up operates one of the nation's largest Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) programs. Ladder Up offers free, high-quality tax preparation services through the Tax Assistance Program (TAP), helping low-income Illinois residents access millions of dollars in tax credits and refunds, including the EITC. Thousands of low-income clients visit Ladder Up's community sites and now also have the option to access the virtual program. These clients trust the organization to prepare and file current-year, prior-year, and amended returns as well as Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) applications. Ladder Up also offers clients free electronic filing, which results in faster refund remittance and works to increase the number of clients using direct deposit for their refunds. The Tax



Clinic engages a panel of highly qualified attorneys, CPAs, and IRS Enrolled Agents to provide pro bono representation to those who could not otherwise afford it. The Tax Clinic also welcomes two yearly J.D. graduate fellows through the Public interest Law Initiative Program to directly learn about tax law and providing non-profit legal services by directly assisting clients.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal: Free Preparation of Tax Services - Sponsorship**

*Ladder Up will provide free tax return preparation services to help them secure valuable tax refunds and obtain eligible tax credits, access to legal counsel and financial educational services to low-income Aurora residents.*

**23. Applicant Leaders In Transformational Education**

**Agency Background:** LITE has been providing programming in the Aurora area as of 2017 through funding from the Illinois Department of Human Services, City of Aurora, and foundations. Our work with youth in low income communities continues with ongoing support from community and partners. LITE serves youth ages 16 - 24 years old in Aurora and adjacent communities as well as the Proviso township area on the near west side of Chicago. Our programming is based on a positive youth development philosophy toward delinquency and violence prevention. Our organization focuses on a three pronged approach to include organizing, advocacy, and direct service. Our collaboration with organizations, advocating for our population needs, and community work for change is accompanied by direct service to our youth. LITE's direct service focus on education and skill building through interactive activities which provide youth with opportunity to enroll into certification, education, and job training programs, obtain internships and apprenticeship, and employment. We accomplish these goals through the following services; LITE has instituted an academic support service where youth work one to one with a tutor that assist youth in coursework if in school, apprenticeship test prep, GED test prep, and mentors youth on their path, life skills service gives youth the tools and support to effectively manage adult life activities, workforce preparation services are interactive where youth are taught employability skills, apply them and are given feedback. Our LITE coaches provide assessment, training, skill building, and case management to support youth development. Another service provided to our youth is positive pro-social recreation and arts giving youth outlets for stressors and engagement with positive adults.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal: LITE Youth Work**

*Service delivery will be to the Aurora areas near east and west sides of the downtown area. Youth within the catchment of school district 129 and 131. The program activity will be stipend work experience with education, training, and debriefing.*

**24. Applicant Marie Wilkinson Child Development Center**

**Agency Background:** The Marie Wilkinson Child Development Center (MWCDC) has kept to its original goals for 51 years to provide quality service to the Aurora Community through early childcare, educational readiness, technological skill development, safe/healthy environment, before/after school programs, homework assistance and variety of family support. The Mission of the MWCDC is to "Provide assistance in a diverse area of education and charitable provisions to our families. Our service has been a constant in the lives of many of the city poorest and most at-risk vulnerable residents who is most case would be unable to pay for childcare programming. We have provided that critically needed beginnings for children to succeed in school-ages 2-12 years of age.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal: Marie Wilkinson Child Care & Youth Before & After School Care**

*The Quality of Life funds will help the MWCDC to continue to provide a comprehensive development program for the social emotional, physical, intellectual growth, preschool, before & after school homework assistance readiness program.*

**25. Applicant Marie Wilkinson Food Pantry**

**Agency Background:** The Marie Wilkinson Food Pantry's (MWFP) history of work to eliminate food insecurity in Aurora area dates back to 1957 when a civil rights activist, for whom the pantry is named, began handing out food from the front door of her home to those in need. Her philanthropic work to combat food insecurity in the region grew from its humble beginnings and culminated in the opening of the current MWFP in 2004. Today the Pantry offers two sites for area residents to access food support, a community garden boasting a substantial, yearly harvest of organic produce and a wealth of meaningful partnerships to allow the provision of wrap around services to the clients who visit the MWFP. The mission of the MWFP is to meet the hunger needs of individuals and families in Aurora, Illinois and surrounding communities by educating, empowering and enlightening people to be self-sustainable through collaborations and partnerships.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Reducing Food Insecurity and Improving Quality of Life in the Community of Aurora*

*This project will include the provision of healthy food to those experiencing food insecurity; additionally, we are working to expand our program's capacity to provide pediatric and senior specific needs like formula, Ensure and diapers.*

26. **Applicant** NAMI DuPage

**Agency Background:** NAMI DuPage is a fiscally independent affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Established in 1985 with 501 (c) (3) status granted in May 1986, NAMI DuPage is one of 1,000 NAMI National affiliates. Our mission is to improve the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness by providing support, advocacy, and education. NAMI DuPage offers two clusters of services, educational and supportive, all of which are peer and family driven and recovery focused. NAMI DuPage improves the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness, and facilitates recovery and self-sufficiency by providing free services that help individuals and families cope with mental illness. NAMI DuPage's Community Education program teaches community and professional groups about mental illness and how to engage and help someone who is ill. Our Early Intervention program, Ending the Silence, operates in 50 middle and high schools in the county, and promotes early identification and intervention for children with or at risk of mental illness. NAMI DuPage partners with 6 hospitals to educate staff, patients, and their family members about mental illness, and how to access resources and services after discharge.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Ending the Silence*

*Ending the Silence (ETS) is a collaboration between NAMI DuPage and the DuPage County schools that promotes early recognition of and intervention for youth at risk of serious mental illness. ETS raises awareness and reduces stigma of mental illness.*

27. **Applicant** National Alliance on Mental Illness for Kane-South, DeKalb, and Kendall County or NAMI KDK

**Agency Background:** NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. In 1979 NAMI began by a small group of families struggling with mental health conditions and has grown into the largest grassroots mental health organization. We offer the following services to community members in Aurora: NAMI Connection & Recovery: a peer-led support group for individuals living with mental health conditions. NAMI Family Support/Grupo de Apoyo Familiar: a support group for family members, significant others, and friends living with mental health conditions. Ending the Silence: a 50-minute in-school presentation about mental health designed for middle and high school students. Students learn about mental illness directly from the family members and individuals living with mental illness. BIPOC Support Group: Black, Indigenous, People of Color Community are invited to join the group for a time of support and empowerment for those living with symptoms of a mental health condition. Let's Talk Expressive Writing/Conversemos enfrente el estigma: Facing the Stigma of

Mental Health through Expressive Writing. Family to Family: is a free, 8-session educational program for family, significant others, and friends of people with mental health conditions. It is a designated evidence-based program. This means that research shows that the program significantly improves the coping and problem-solving abilities of the people closest to a person with a mental health condition.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *NAMI KDK Mental Health Support Groups and Educational Presentations*  
*NAMI KDK Mental Health Support Groups and Educational Presentations will be offered for FREE to Aurora Residents: Connections, Family Support Group, BIPOC Support Group, Spanish Support Group, Ending the Silence & In Our Voice Presentations.*

28. **Applicant** Northern Illinois Food Bank

**Agency Background:** For 38 years, food manufacturers, grocers, corporations, foundations and individuals have come together, donating food and funds, and sorting, evaluating and repacking food for distribution to more than 900 community food pantries and partners, including 39 organizations in Aurora, to serve more than half a million neighbors every year across 13 counties. Our vision is for no one in Northern Illinois to be hungry and in FY21 (7/1/20-6/30/21), that commitment provided 100 million meals to food-insecure neighbors so they would have access to a variety of nutritious foods. In Kane County we distributed 12.8 million meals. Our primary program of food acquisition and distribution gives our food insecure neighbors access to a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy and lean protein mainly through our network of 293 pantries, 45 soup kitchens, 13 shelters and 51 group homes who accounted for 70% of the total Food Bank distribution in FY21 to ensure that neighbors in need can access food in their local communities. 97% of our member agencies remained open to serve their communities during the pandemic and we have worked with them to manage distribution changes, social distancing and increased need among our neighbors simultaneously. collaboration with more than 150 schools we give children at risk of hunger on weekends a backpack of food to take home on Fridays.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *BackPack Program - Aurora, IL*

*The Backpack program in Aurora currently provides food to prepare healthy meals to 147 food-insecure children weekly, serving Aurora districts 131 and 129. We project this increasing to 175 children as the year progresses to address food insecurity.*

29. **Applicant** Quad County Urban League, Inc.

**Agency Background:** Quad County Urban League, Inc. (QCUL) was founded in 1975 by a diverse group of local leaders responding to the absence of a community-based organization to address the needs for academic achievement, job placement and training, equal access to employment, housing, and cultural enrichment for low-income and displaced citizens. QCUL, an affiliate of the National Urban League, serves the DuPage, Kane, Kendall, and Will counties of Illinois, securing equal opportunities for all underrepresented persons including people of color, women, and persons with disabilities. QCUL is a member agency of United Way. The QCUL mission and vision ensures civil rights for all people by eradicating barriers to equal participation in the economic and social mainstream. We understand the needs of the community from young adult ex-offenders and at-risk youth to single mothers trying to make ends meet on a low-wage job, seniors who are struggling on fixed incomes, and small business owners who need financial relief and support to sustain and grow their businesses. Our programs consistently help residents that other programs cannot or do not reach, including those with multiple barriers to employment and financial stability. Most clients fall into the definition of "low-income." . We are an Economic First Responder and Economic Relief Community Navigator for the Aurora community, which needs our help now more than ever to address financial, basic needs, health, and emotional hardships, during this COVID-19 emergency, and this past year we operated the Economic Empowerment Center, which was funded through the City of Aurora Quality of Life grant.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *The Quad County Urban League's (QCUL) Economic Empowerment Center*  
*The program will provide evidence-based programming, employment skills training, and community resources that serve the following segments: Youth and young adults ages 16-24; Unemployed adults; and Families in poverty. Service area is Aurora.*

30. **Applicant** RITAS Ministry (Restoring Inmates to America's Society)

**Agency Background:** Beginning in 1997, RITAS Ministry (Restoring Inmates to America's Society) has been a pioneer in working towards criminal justice reform and re-entry efforts. RITAS Ministry provides a total aftercare program for anyone who has been involved in the criminal justice system. Services include substance abuse & anger management counseling, mentoring, employment skills and emergency housing and personal needs. Also, on top of providing assistance to client's in navigating parole or probation successfully, RITAS Ministry offers support and guidance to family members facing the incarceration of a loved one.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Prisoner reentry services including mentoring and employment assistance*  
*This program is a total aftercare reentry program offering ex offenders and their families the assistance needed to navigate through the complex issues they face in order for each client to become a productive citizen.*

31. **Applicant** Riverwalk Adult Day Services

**Agency Background:** Riverwalk serves the elderly with some form of cognitive decline, adults with physical/mental/intellectual disabilities, and their families or caregivers that will receive respite from their constant care. The Riverwalk Adult Day was founded in 1983 as the Ecumenical Adult Day and changed the name in 2018. As a non-profit, part of our mission is to offer services to low- and moderate-income seniors and adults in need. By offering a daytime program of life-enriching activities, medical monitoring, nutritious noon meals and snacks, and socialization for the participants, allows their caregiver to have a break in caring which helps avoid the potential for abuse and neglect for the care receiver. Due to COVID restrictions, we are only able to serve 50% of our participant's capacity. Currently, there are no adult day services located in Aurora and Riverwalk is the closest center to Aurora and is approved as a State of Illinois, Illinois Department on Aging Community Care Provider, and U.S. Veterans Affairs Community Care Provider. At this time, we have 25% of our participant's residents of the City of Aurora and hoping that this number will increase as we are now a member of the Kane County Health Department IRIS system for referrals. Although most of our participants are seniors, Riverwalk is the only adult center in the area that provides services for adults 18 and older that are navigating some form of cognitive challenge (examples: Down Syndrome, Intellectual disability, stroke).

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Senior Care, Adult Day Care*  
Funds will be used for staff salaries.

32. **Applicant** Sanjeevani4u

**Agency Background:** Sanjeevani 4 U is a 501c (3) non-profit organization with the id # 81-1722515. It was started in 2015 with the objective to provide free counselling and support to anyone who is going through mental health concerns or domestic abuse. The services are provided by trained personnel and are available 24 hours, 7 days a week through phone, emails and in-person interactions. The target groups that Sanjeevani serves are men, women, senior citizens and youth across Chicagoland. Sanjeevani is manned by more than three dozen volunteers spread across the Chicago area. The volunteers are available to speak in English, Spanish and 12 other South Asian languages and are trained to handle calls/callers facing the above-mentioned issues. There are also doctors, lawyers and social workers on board for referrals. Sanjeevani also partners with organizations across Chicagoland including similar NPO's for mutual help and support. Through a range of free services - a helpline number which

runs 24 hours, 7 days a week; text and toll-free assistance; walk-in clinics for in-person counselling; personal home visits and professional help through referrals, Sanjeevani brings relief to people who have mental health problems, depression, anxiety, relationship problems, domestic violence issues. Through these endeavors, Sanjeevani forges ahead in its mission to build awareness on mental health and domestic abuse and provides actionable tools to people to make informed choices- choices which will bring smile to their lives.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Mental Health of domestic Abuse Assistance - Sponsorship*  
*The funds will be used to provide support & job training who are displaced from society.*

33. **Applicant** SciTech Hands on Museum

**Agency Background:** SciTech Hands On Museum is an educational resource that serves students and families in Kane County and the surrounding areas. It is a nonprofit, charitable organization classified as a 501(c) (3) public charity by the Internal Revenue Service. Each year we provide leading educational programs in science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM). SciTech is an engaging and safe place for families to spend quality time learning together in structured and unstructured ways. We have a variety of programs available, including field trips offering exciting informal science classes and outreach to local schools. There are over 150 hands-on exhibits designed for preschool to middle school students. SciTech's unique educational programs help visitors to understand scientific concepts via visualization, experimentation and hands-on discovery. During August and September 2021 we focused on surveying the community, donors and educational leaders on other ways we can better serve them. We heard that while we have some new exhibits, they desire more variety and upgrades, better signage, and a more welcoming, fresher museum space. We are now focused on completing these upgrades with a target to reopen with the many of improvements in early 2022.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *SciTech 2.0 Operations and Educational programs*  
*SciTech Hands On Museum's mission is to inspire STEM learning through creative, interactive activities and educational programs serving the greater Aurora area.*

34. **Applicant** Simply Destinee

**Agency Background:** Simply Destinee Youth Program is a community-based creative art after-school and summer program for at-risk Latinx youth in Aurora. Founded in 2011, following the loss of 16-year-old family member to suicide, the program's mission is focused on enriching the lives of our youth. The mission is "Help the Grow, Teach them to Dance, Watch them Live." Beginning as an open dance program, Simply Destinee has grown into a learning center for vulnerable, underserved Latinx youth, giving support, education, engagement, dance, and arts programs.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *S.E.E.D. Programs*  
*Support, Educate, Empower and Dance (S.E.E.D.) Learning Center serving the Aurora community and Hispanic population. This program provides opportunities to participate in free classes for art, dance, peer development, and civic duty.*

35. **Applicant** The Cara Program /dba Cara Chicago

**Agency Background:** Cleanslate will create paid transitional jobs for individuals in Aurora who are experiencing high barriers to employment, especially those affected by poverty and homelessness, and help them build the skills needed to secure quality, lasting jobs.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Cleanslate Workforce Crew*  
*This workforce program coordinated by Cleanslate is necessary to move individuals affected by poverty and homelessness into stable, thriving lives.*

36. **Applicant** Wheatland Athletic Association

**Agency Background:** The Wheatland Athletic Association, WAA, is a 44-year-old non-profit, volunteer organization whose purpose is to provide athletic programs for families living in and around the Aurora, Illinois area. Wheatland Athletic Association was founded in 1977 to provide T-Ball for 66 children and has since grown to thousands registrations annually in many different programs. WAA offers recreational and competitive programs in soccer, baseball, softball, basketball, flag football, and more, and travel programs in soccer, softball, baseball and basketball. Participants range in age from toddler through adult. Wheatland's philosophy is to progressively develop children's skills by offering programs for various age levels. Many of the WAA programs are non-competitive which provide a non-threatening and a positive experience for the children. Competitive and traveling leagues are also available for the more skillful and experienced players. Scholarships are available to participants who may need financial assistance. Wheatland Athletic Association structures programs so they are geographically convenient to residents by establishing teams and scheduling events in close proximity to neighborhoods and schools. WAA works closely as a community partner with the local school districts, park districts, and churches, to provide, maintain and upgrade fields and facilities. The offices of Wheatland Township Athletic Association are located inside the WAA Sports Center at 2323 Liberty Street. Fields in Aurora include two fields adjacent to Bednarcik Middle School and 2 fields at Crossroads Community Church.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Fee Assistance and Scholarship Program for Aurora Residents in Need*  
*Annually, WAA provides scholarships and fee assistance to families in need*

37. **Applicant** World Relief Chicagoland

**Agency Background:** World Relief Chicagoland is a refugee resettlement and immigrant services non-profit organization that has been operating in Chicago and the suburbs since 1979. World Relief began resettling refugees in Chicago and DuPage County in 1979, and in Aurora in 1999. As the immigrant population in the Chicagoland area increased, World Relief expanded services beyond refugees to also include the broader foreign-born, low-income population. Every year, World Relief Chicagoland serves over 2,000 clients in Aurora and over 7,000 immigrants across all three office locations in the region. Thirty-five percent of those served are between the ages of 0 and 18 years old, with about 15% ages 0-5 and 20% enrolled in grades K-12. World Relief provides comprehensive services to immigrant families – including early childhood support, academic tutoring and career development for youth – to help each household member become healthy, stable and well-integrated in their communities. Services are designed to address socioeconomic, linguistic and cultural barriers to help families get on a path toward self-sufficiency and overall well-being. World Relief also provides wraparound services for immigration legal support and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and engages local churches and other community groups in volunteer opportunities to provide further support to immigrant families. In Aurora, World Relief maintains strong partnerships with schools, professional training providers, and local government and non-profit agencies to meet clients' complex needs through collaboration and referrals. World Relief's services are designed for culturally diverse client populations, with interpretation in over 60 languages and dialects available through a network of over 200 paid and volunteer interpreters.

**2022 QoL Project Proposal:** *Refugee and Immigrant Youth Services*

*The Refugee and Immigrant Youth Services program will provide early childhood support, tutoring, parent support and mentoring to promote academic improvement, socioemotional development, and community integration among children and youth in Aurora.*