

Racine Mayor Mason: Launches “GROW Racine,” \$1.5 million in initiatives to advance residents’ education, training, financial resiliency

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Initiative includes new \$1,500 scholarships for adult high school degree attainment,

pre-apprenticeship training.

City of Racine – Today, Mayor Mason announced the launch of a new campaign, website, and scholarships to help City residents connect to City resources and transform their futures. The Growing Residents’ Opportunities and Wealth (GROW) Racine initiative will be run by the Mayor’s office and provides City residents with access to key resources to help them earn high school degrees, launch family-supporting jobs in the trades, become homeowners, and more.

GROW Racine and its website (www.growracine.org) offers residents’ one-stop access to the City’s economic mobility initiatives.

Included in these resources are two new tracks of scholarships announced by Mayor Mason today. Adult City residents will now be eligible for up to \$1,500 scholarships to support them in earning their high school degree through the YWCA SEW’s 5.09 High School Equivalency Degree (HSED) program or completing pre-apprenticeship

training through the Racine Family YMCA's First Choice Pre-Apprenticeship program or WRTP/Big Step's Southeast Wisconsin's Roadbuilding Training program.

GROW Racine also includes the Racine Financial Empowerment Center (FEC), which the City runs in partnership with Housing Resources, Inc.

"These ARPA funds provide a once-in-a-generation opportunity to address longstanding disparities in our community and advance our residents' education, training, and financial resiliency. We are investing in our residents' futures with these GROW Racine programs. We want all City residents to know that we believe in them, we believe in their futures, and we're investing real resources to help our residents grow and succeed," **said City of Racine Mayor Cory Mason.**

The City is utilizing \$1.5M in American Rescue Act Plan (ARPA) funds for these initiatives to catalyze adult high school degree attainment, launch residents' careers in the building trades, and improve residents' financial resiliency.

The following is a breakdown of the \$1.5 million investment in City residents:

- Catalyzing Residents' Careers in the Trades: \$510,000 - Funding will be utilized to provide scholarships to support up to 250 adult City residents in completing local pre-apprenticeship training to launch family-supporting careers in the trades.
- Sustaining the Racine Financial Empowerment Center: \$600,000 - Funding will be used to sustain and grow the Racine FEC, which provides free, confidential, one-on-one professional financial counseling to all City residents to help them address financial challenges, prepare for home ownership, and achieve financial resiliency.
- Catalyzing Adult Residents' High School Degree Attainment: \$475,000 — Funding will be utilized to provide scholarships to support up to 250 adult City residents in attaining their high school diplomas or equivalency degrees.
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Lindsay Blumer, President & CEO of WRTP/Big Step said, "We are proud of our collaborative work with the City of Racine and Mayor Mason in creating equitable ways for city residents to access quality training opportunities that lead

directly to family-sustaining wage careers. In developing this innovative scholarship program we are focusing on what truly matters—learners who are diligently working toward a life-changing career—which exponentially increases positive impact for families in our community.”

“The Racine Family YMCA and the First Choice Pre-Apprenticeship Training initiative are excited to partner with the City of Racine, YWCA, RUSD, Higher Expectations, WRTP/Big Step and other agencies to transform lives through GROW Racine. The scholarships provided through this initiative will assist underserved communities in training for well-paying careers in the construction industry. The path to a better future for underrepresented communities in our city begins today through GROW Racine,” said **Ahmad Qawi, Racine Family YMCA President/CEO.**

Marie Hargrove, Education Outreach Coordinator for the YWCA SEW said, “The YWCA SEW is thrilled to partner with the City to expand access to our successful 5.09 HSED program. Since 2019, Mayor Mason and his staff have worked diligently with our team to ensure that City of Racine residents were aware of our program. These City HSED scholarships will help to reduce residents’ financial barriers to pursuing their education.” Hargrove continued, “The YWCA SEW applauds Mayor Mason and the City for making these investments in residents. GROW Racine will benefit our community academically and financially, and the City of Racine will be a thriving community once again.”

In order to be data driven, Higher Expectations of Racine County will lead the City’s evaluation efforts to make sure the GROW Racine programs are achieving the City’s goals of increasing the economic mobility of City residents.

Higher Expectations for Racine County is partnering with the City to evaluate these new scholarship programs, **Chelsea Powell, Managing Director of Higher Expectations** notes, “With the launch of GROW Racine, the City is investing directly in Racine residents to ease the financial burden of prioritizing their education. Higher Expectations is grateful for the opportunity to support this innovative effort, and to help evaluate the impact of providing scholarships to participants on their ability to succeed.”

The City’s new GROW Racine website can be found at www.growracine.org. City of Racine residents are encouraged to visit site and take advantage of these new programs and resources, including the new scholarships.