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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **York County Youth Court Alliance wins international award as Program of the Year**

[United Way of York County](#) is pleased to share that the York County Youth Court Alliance has received the Program of the Year Award from the [International Association of Truancy & Dropout Prevention \(IATDP\)](#). The IATDP Program of the Year Award recognizes one outstanding, emerging, or best practice program that meets the four criteria of innovation, across system, replication, and response to mission.

[York County Youth Court Alliance](#) is a school-based diversionary program that offers students who have been truant, and their families, the ability to resolve and correct the truant behavior and avoid attending Magisterial District Court. Fellow students are trained to hold hearings and panels, where they deliberate and form appropriate dispositions for the truant students who have opted into the program. Dispositions are aimed to reconnect the truant youth to their school and can include attendance improvement, jury duty, apologies, community service, research, and tutoring. It is an effective program that uses restorative justice principles, rather than punitive sanctions, to reengage truant youth in school. Youth Court Alliance currently serves Central York, Northeastern, Red Lion Area, and York City school districts.

United Way of York County launched the program in 2011 in collaboration with the York County Truancy Prevention Initiative. Since the program's inception, it has:

- Enrolled 970 students
- Trained 871 volunteers who completed over 11,000 hours of community service

Over the past five years, 76% of students completed the program successfully, and 93.1% of participants who completed the program had no unexcused absences while enrolled.

"Youth Court Alliance is a true collaboration between community stakeholders, United Way staff, volunteers and students, and we're proud to celebrate its positive impact on our community," said Elizabeth Richard, Director of Education Initiatives at United Way of York County. "Re-engaging youth in school is critical to helping them achieve their potential, as students who attend school regularly are more likely to graduate high school and transition successfully to post-secondary education, the workforce, or public service."

York County Youth Court Alliance would not be possible without key stakeholders, including longtime advocate and supporter Judge John C. Uhler, who contributed a letter of recommendation in the award application. Initial financial supporters, including United Way of York County and the York County Bar Foundation, and funders such as the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, the R.I. Richardson Foundation, and the York County Human Services Division helped to move this idea from paper into action, and a special grant from the Women's Giving Circle allowed us to buy real judges' robes and gavels for student use during the hearings. In 2015, the York County Office of Children, Youth, and Families stepped in with United Way of York County to provide funding and continue to offer the program and provide expansion opportunities.

## **About United Way of York County**

For over 98 years, United Way of York County has worked in the York County community to improve people's lives. It began as The York Welfare Federation, an organization that raised funds on behalf of 17 member agencies. Today, as the United Way of York County, the mission of raising community funds remains the same, but the strategies have broadened in order to meet the growing and changing needs of people living in York County.

United Way has adapted over the years and now collaborates with other public and private organizations to engage the community in addressing the complex issues facing York County. By developing initiatives that get at the root causes of these issues, United Way and its partners find solutions and fund programs that improve the lives of one in three people in York County. Through gifts to the Community Fund, United Way is able to invest those dollars into 66 programs supported by 35 Partner Agencies. These programs address human services needs across three Focus Areas: Education, Health, and Financial Stability. This enables United Way to tackle the immediate and continuing needs of York County families and individuals and to create real, lasting change that matters to you and our community.

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