

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 30, 2018



Contact: John M. Thompson II – Starr Commonwealth Chief Advancement Officer
Email: thompsonj@starr.org Phone: 517-630-2445

Community Collaboration Builds Stronger Schools, Brighter Future

BATTLE CREEK, Mich. –

The Battle Creek community's commitment to the positive transformation of their school system continues to gain momentum, thanks to new, local partnerships and investments.

Last winter, community leaders and child advocates answered a call to action to reinvest their resources and skill sets to support the future of Battle Creek – its youth and their education. Nearly one year later, the strength of this group and the fruits of their time and investments are beginning to take form. Composed of local public service officials, health and human service non-profits, educators and community leaders, each is working together to blaze new paths towards meaningful change, and Starr Commonwealth is one of the many partners committed to igniting this great opportunity.

Due to this community leadership team, specific needs are being identified. This led to a partnership with Battle Creek Public Schools (BCPS) and the award of a \$466,510 grant from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund. The Health Fund works to improve the health and wellness of Michigan residents and reduce the cost of healthcare, with a special focus on children and seniors. The financial support of this fund will allow Starr to share their resilience focused tools and resources with Northwestern Middle School over a two-year period. Utilizing two, full-time Starr professionals, Northwestern teachers, administrators and support staff will receive daily, on-the-ground training, mentoring and professional coaching. From the first step into school until the final bell rings, students and adults will learn how to recognize and respond to each other's needs, how to build trust and how to ensure each child has someone to turn to. Parent support will be an additional component of the overall program at Northwestern, with a parent academy created to build new support systems, both within and outside of the school day.

Starr's collaborations with other school partners, like Raupp Elementary in Lincoln Park, Mich., continues to support the power of their strength based, resilience focused tools. Since implementing Starr's Resilient Schools Program in 2017, office discipline referrals have decrease by half at Raupp, reducing classroom stress and disturbances and increasing the strength of their overall learning environment.

"Each community leadership team meeting we have participated in has left us more and more excited to be part of the change in Battle Creek Public Schools and the community in which we are so invested. With leaders like Kim Carter (Battle Creek Public Schools superintendent) and child advocates like Brenda Hunt (Battle Creek Community Foundation president & CEO) at the table, along with so many others, we knew positive change was in the making – and it is," stated Elizabeth Carey, Starr Commonwealth president & CEO. "Our partnership with BCPS, paired with the generous support of the Health Fund, is allowing us to share our strengths with students and teachers alike. Relationship-by-relationship, we are helping children feel safe, seen and loved. We're just one piece within a big puzzle, but we believe we can help to bring about positive change, we believe in the strength of our partners and we believe in Battle Creek."

For more information about the Health Fund or Starr Commonwealth's services, visit www.mhealthfund.com and www.starr.org.

#####