

**Business**

# Big changes coming to United Way under new president Golderer

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ary: Chester Eastside, Inc.

## CHESTER EASTSIDE INC.

Chester Eastside Inc., a nonprofit whose programs include an afterschool program in Delaware County, is among the organizations that received grants for fiscal 2019 under United Way of Greater Philadelphia & Southern New Jersey's focus on ending intergenerational poverty.



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The United Way of Greater Philadelphia & Southern New Jersey on Wednesday announced \$14.1 million in grants to 122 nonprofits, far fewer than the 233 organizations that previously received money, reflecting the United Way's shift to a narrower focus on fighting "intergenerational poverty."

The 36 organizations new to United Way's roster this fiscal year starting July 1 show a heavy focus on education, after-school programs, and family services, with the addition of a few hunger-fighting groups. The new recipients were picked to help the United Way meet its goals of increasing the number of third-graders reading at grade level, getting more youth attached to work or school, and increasing household incomes.

Largely left out were programs that help seniors.

Among the happy newcomers to United Way funding is Chester Eastside Inc., a small organization in Delaware County that has after-school and other educational programs. Its efforts for more than 30 years have fit with the United Way's current focus on entrenched poverty, Chester Eastside's executive director Rev. Zulin Wilkinson said Wednesday.

Like the United Way, Chester Eastside is striving to change itself into an organization that measures everything it does. "We can now say who is coming to our after-school program, what they're doing when their in the after-school program, whether it's math, whether it's computer technology, whether its reading," Wilkinson said.

"We are absolutely thrilled to have our work affirmed," she said. The group, which had \$454,095 in revenue in 2016, is expected to receive \$42,500 annually for three years from the United Way.

This year's grants, approved by the United Way board Tuesday, are the first visible step in the Philadelphia nonprofit's transformation from a general grant-maker into one that has specific goals designed to reduce poverty that spans generations.

Selling that shift to corporations and wealthy individuals who are expected to fill the United Way's coffers has not been easy. United Way's leadership expected its impact fund to have \$28.1 million to work with for the year, but it fell short, reaching \$24.7 million.

That fund-raising result sent a clear message to Bill Golderer, who in February was named United Way's president. He called the shortfall "a referendum on the things that we need to be thinking about," both in terms of how the United Way needs to change and how the external environment needs to change.

At a time when individuals can easily support causes they care about through an app on their smartphone, the United Way has had to face difficult questions about its purpose, Golderer said. "The United Way needs to recognize that and say what we offer is knowledge about what interventions that we can measure would actually yield a reduction in the poverty rate. We're not there yet," he said.

To get there, Golderer, who founded homeless-services group Broad Street Ministry, promised that "there's going to be dramatic change at the United Way in the next 24 months."

Bob Evans, a consultant to nonprofits in Willow Grove, said that traditional umbrella organizations such as United Way chapters across North America have been in trouble for years and need to change. "To do it overnight is traumatizing, both for the recipient agencies as well as the in-house staff," Evans said.

In addition to spending \$14.1 million in grants, the United Way board approved \$4.1 million for the United Way team that will work alongside the "grantees and the community organizations in a very hands-on way" to manage projects and evaluate the performance of recipients, Golderer said.

And \$2.2 million more will go to programs specified by donors. The final \$4.3 million, or 17 percent of the \$24.7 million, is for United Way's overhead. "It's normal, but on the high side," which is not unexpected at an organization that is regrouping, Evans said.

Another first-time United Way recipient is Bancroft, of Cherry Hill, which is to receive \$30,000 annually for three years to help individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities obtain employment.

The Foundation for Delaware County will receive \$100,000 annually for three years to expand its Healthy Start and Nurse-Family Partnership Program to work on school readiness for two- and three-year-olds.

But the United Way's new focus eliminated more than \$600,000 for organizations that provided seniors with energy assistance programs, transportation, emergency food and shelter, assistance with benefits and entitlements, and health screenings, said Holly Lange, president of the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging.

"PCA hopes, in future funding cycles, the United Way will reconsider seniors' needs, as well as their impact and contributions in our communities throughout the city," she said.