

Metro United Way's Young Men United Program Goes Beyond College Prep to Provide Life Lessons, Community Support

BY LAUREL MALLORY, METRO UNITED WAY

Mentorship. Scholarship. A safe space and a network of support. Metro United Way's Young Men United program provides that to young men of color ages 16 to 24 to aid them in their educational journeys and help them navigate life's challenges.

The program focuses on this population because they are the most underrepresented in higher education. And that's not about ability or knowledge – it's about a lack of community support.

Enter Young Men United.

At a base level, the program provides college scholarships to young men of color. But it is not merely a scholarship program; Young Men United is a comprehensive support system that carries on for years of each participant's life, beginning in high school.



The program works with a cohort of high school juniors and seniors at the W.E.B. DuBois Academy in Louisville. Metro United Way has been supporting the school since it opened in 2018 and

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chose to start the Young Men United program there because both the school and the program focus on supporting young men of color.

Through intentional supports, Young Men United ensures the students are not just educationally prepared for life after high school, but also socially, emotionally, and mentally prepared to achieve their potential.

Sessions at the DuBois Academy cover many topics, including practical things like FAFSA help and connection to job opportunities, more scholarships, and other resources. The sessions also work on the building of soft skills like communication, time management, love and relationships, and empathy.

"It gave my son a chance to see positive, successful men that not only look like him but have walked the same roads he finds himself on," Terri White said. "He will leave (for college) knowing and assured that he has a support system back home that he can reach out to when in need."

Another major piece of Young Men United is one-on-one mentorship, which begins in high school but really picks up during the students' college years. Metro United Way will consistently check in with each young scholar to offer support, helping ensure they have what they need to thrive and, ultimately, graduate college.

In 2025, 100% of seniors in the Young Men United cohort were accepted to and have started college. The real success doesn't lie in statistics, however. It's how the students say the program has impacted their lives in positive ways.



"It's just a great program," participant Malachi English said. "The scholarships are great because college is extremely expensive, and they'll help with that. But they also help build your community. They help Black boys grow, and that's needed."



Another participant, Nehemiah Clements, added: "Young Men United helped me to realize my worth, my purpose... Plenty of opportunities are going to be presented to me and now I'm willing to take them and I'm ready for them."

The transformational work of Young Men United is just getting started! Metro United Way is dedicated to cultivating a supportive and encouraging space for young scholars of color for years to come. If you're interested in investing in this initiative so it may grow to serve more young men, visit metrounitedway.org.

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