

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Jennifer Rosa  
Public Relations Manager  
Third Federal  
(216) 429-5037  
[jennifer.rosa@thirdfederal.com](mailto:jennifer.rosa@thirdfederal.com)

Alison Bibb-Carson  
Chief Marketing and Communications Officer  
College Now Greater Cleveland  
(216) 635-0311  
[abibb-carson@collegenowgc.org](mailto:abibb-carson@collegenowgc.org)

## **College Now Greater Cleveland Receives Special \$85,000 Award in Honor of the 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Third Federal Savings & Loan**

*Grant selected by committee of Slavic Village residents will bring career exploration program to neighborhood students*

CLEVELAND – July 6, 2023 –In recognition of Third Federal Savings & Loan’s 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a committee of Slavic Village residents serving on behalf of the Third Federal Foundation awarded a special one-time grant of \$85,000 to College Now Greater Cleveland to support a new career exploration and travel program for high school students living in the neighborhood.

This is the first time Third Federal Foundation has brought together Slavic Village residents to participate in its grantmaking. Members of the Anniversary Grant Committee ranged from a high school student to lifelong residents and included Hector Aboytes, Victor Benton, Dasia Harris, Lynda Lewis, and Sharena Zayed.

“For 85 years, Third Federal has been guided by a core set of values, one of which is trust,” said Third Federal Chairman and CEO Marc A. Stefanski. “What better way to celebrate this anniversary than to trust residents to direct resources where they feel it will have the most impact.”

The award will enable College Now Greater Cleveland to bring its innovative career exploration program called Xplore to 40 high school students who reside and/or attend school in Slavic Village. Starting in Fall 2023, each four-week, afterschool Xplore session will include three weeks of experiential learning of “meta majors,” or groupings of college majors needed in multiple facets of any given industry. Students will learn from expert advisors and local leaders about different academic majors and resulting careers, and they will then create personalized, in-depth college and career plans while exploring the meta-major. The final week of the session offers a week-long, out-of-state



trip so students can explore in person the colleges and careers in industries that interest them.

“The committee considered what could make our community even better and identified a gap in opportunities for high school-aged youth,” said Victor Benton, who grew up in Slavic Village and is a graduate of and now a teacher at Cleveland Central Catholic High School in the same neighborhood. “This program will help them see a world of possibilities, including ways to contribute to their own community.”

In total, the Anniversary Grant Committee received 12 proposals from area nonprofits located or working in Slavic Village. The committee selected four finalists and invited them to an evening of networking and presentations. Each finalist walked away with financial support as well as new connections and ideas of how to collaborate with one another in the neighborhood.

The other finalists included:

- **Southeast Cleveland Resource Center**, a new resident-founded and resident-led resource center on Fleet Avenue, received a \$10,000 runner-up grant for capacity-building support.
- **The DARL Center for the Arts** and **Community of Faith Assembly** each received a \$5,000 collaboration grant to work with neighborhood partners and build on ideas generated during the presentation event.

“I’ve lived in the neighborhood my whole life and I learned so much through this experience,” said committee member Lynda Lewis. “There are so many great ideas and programs that people do not know about and we realized how much opportunity there is for collaboration and connection.”

Executive Director Emily Thome said she expects the Foundation to make resident-driven grantmaking an ongoing part of its work. For more information on the committee’s process and the ideas they sourced, [see this summary report](#).

#### *About Third Federal Foundation*

[Third Federal Foundation](#) exists to strengthen communities and improve the conditions that make home ownership possible, supporting efforts centered on affordable housing, financial stability, accessible education, and thriving neighborhoods. Third Federal Savings & Loan established the Foundation in 2007 with \$55 million in assets following its initial public offering. During the last 15 years, the Foundation has granted a total of \$60 million across the Third Federal footprint in Ohio and select markets in Florida.

