



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BestSelf Behavioral Health Awarded Nearly \$50,000 in Local and State Grants

Three Foundations and NYS Will Help Provide a Variety of Behavioral Health Services to Children

Buffalo, NY, May 16, 2024 – BestSelf Behavioral Health (BBH) today announced four new grant awards that will help them advance new programming, expand existing services, and sustain vital programs, specifically for infants and children throughout Western New York. Through BBH, the local community is provided easy access to a full continuum of person-centered, trauma-informed behavioral health treatment and recovery services. This generous funding enables BestSelf to sustain crucial community services that foster health, hope, recovery, and an improved quality of life.

- **The Baird Foundation – *The Scott Bieler Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf (CAC) - \$15,000***

The Baird Foundation is contributing to the capital campaign of the Scott Bieler Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf (CAC), an innovative facility providing safety, support, and healing for children and families affected by sexual abuse, violence, and trauma in Erie County. With over 3,000 cases of child abuse annually, the county reflects the second-highest rates for reported child abuse in New York State, yet the CAC currently serves only 30% of them at its current location.

This capital campaign supports the relocation of the CAC to 899 Main Street in Buffalo, allowing for the co-location of the Erie County Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT). The MDT, comprising law enforcement, prosecutors, child protective services, medical professionals, mental health counselors, and victim advocates, offers comprehensive services. The move aims to address the needs of child survivors in one child-friendly setting, reducing wait times and significantly increasing the CAC's capacity. The new facility opens in the summer of 2024.

- **Brady Corporation Foundation – *BBF Celebrating Diversity through Literacy - \$30,000***

The Brady Corporation Foundation's investment in Building Brighter Futures at BestSelf (BBF) will fortify literacy initiatives for approximately 4,000 K-12 students and their families across 25 school and community-based sites. Specifically, the funding will facilitate the acquisition of Scholastic's LitLeague™ curricula for grades K-5, coupled with diverse books. This strategic investment aims to enhance literacy programs and libraries in three schools—Buffalo Public Schools #18 and #89 and Buffalo United Charter School (BUCS). The initiative, overseen by a Building Brighter Futures Program Director, After-School Teachers, and Youth Development Specialists, includes culturally responsive and inclusive books, rotating between sites, to address students reading below grade level.

- **Kelly for Kids Foundation – *Infant Safe Sleep Project - \$3,500***

The Kelly for Kids Foundation's funding will be crucial in supporting the purchase of 50 Pack N' Plays from Cribs for Kids to address the alarming statistics of infant deaths due to unsafe sleep practices. In 2022, the state recorded around 120 infant deaths, and Erie County reported that 54% of unexpected deaths in children under one year old were attributed to unsafe sleeping conditions. Additionally, 56% of these fatalities involved non-white children, 33% lacked a crib at home, and 79% occurred in lower-income communities of Buffalo. To combat this issue, BestSelf initiated the Infant Safe Sleep Project in 2020 to promote safe sleep practices through a comprehensive approach of resources, outreach, and education. The funded cribs, featuring the ABCs of Safe Sleep, will be distributed during Safe Sleep informational sessions in underserved Buffalo communities, offering a vital resource for caregivers and empowering them with the knowledge and tools to prevent infant deaths from unsafe sleep.

- **NYS Network for Youth Success (Million Girls Moonshot) – *Building Brighter Futures* - \$1,000**

The Million Girls Moonshot funding empowered BestSelf's Building Brighter Futures (BBF) program to launch an 8-week, after-school STEM Immersion Program that ran from January to March 2024. This initiative targeted 30 girls in grades 2-3 from Elmwood Village Charter School – Hertel (EVCSH) and Buffalo United Charter School (BUCS), providing early exposure to engineering fields and fostering interest in STEM through meaningful experiences. The program, supported by Million Girls Moonshot, emphasized racial equity and inclusion, aiming to counter societal messages discouraging girls from STEM involvement. Utilizing Engineering for Kids (EfK) workshops, the STEM Immersion Program focused on robotics, interactive engineering, and technology, then concluded with a field trip to the Buffalo Museum of Science in March 2024. Funding covered both the field trip and EfK workshops. BBF's school-based services focuses on evidence-based programming and social-emotional learning to enhance confidence, well-being, and mental health.

BestSelf is grateful to all their funders who make it possible for them to continue to provide innovative, evidence-based, accessible, and family-focused behavioral health services to the people in our community.

With the new Scott Bieler Center at BestSelf located at 899 Main Street on the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus doors set to open this summer, BestSelf urges the community, as well as other foundations and organizations, to invest in and reinforce their positive impact on the people of Western New York.

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BestSelf Behavioral Health

BestSelf Behavioral Health, Inc. is the largest community-based behavioral health organization serving children and adults with mental health and substance use disorders in WNY. We provide easy access to a full continuum of person-centered, trauma-informed behavioral health treatment, rehabilitation, and recovery services. BestSelf has an annual budget of \$94 million and serves more than 41,000 children and adults in 70+ locations in Western New York.

K.F.K. Foundation, Inc.

K.F.K. Foundation, Inc. (d/b/a Kelly for Kids Foundation) is a not-for-profit foundation committed to helping organizations who assist children in the Western New York area. The Kelly for Kids Foundation was established in 1987 by former Buffalo Bills quarterback and Pro Football Hall of Famer, Jim Kelly. It was his

inspiration and hope the Foundation would improve the quality of life for disabled and disadvantaged youth in Western, NY. Since its inception, the Foundation has raised over 5 million dollars.

NYS Network for Youth Success – Million Girls Moonshot

The New York State Network for Youth Success is dedicated to building a youth-serving system that increases the quality and availability of afterschool and expanded learning programs. The Network for Youth Success supports all programs that promote young people’s intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development outside the traditional school day. These programs include those that serve youth in kindergarten through 12th grade, take place in schools and/or in community-based settings, and occur before and after school, during weekends, holidays, and summer breaks, or during the school day through partnerships with community organizations.

The Million Girls Moonshot seeks to re-imagine who can engineer, who can build, who can make. It will inspire and prepare the next generation of innovators by engaging millions more girls in STEM learning opportunities through afterschool and summer programs over the next 5 years. The Moonshot is active in out-of-school programs in all 50 states, leveraging the Mott-funded 50 State Afterschool Network, which has access to more than 10 million youth and 100,000 afterschool programs across the country.

Brady Corporation Foundation

The Brady Corporation Foundation supports organizations in the communities where we operate. We fund organizations that develop leaders, support educational programs and strengthen communities. We believe that the best outcomes happen when data, research and proven methodologies intersect with lived experiences, inclusive representation, and diverse leadership. Through this, our goal is to make our communities better, safer, and more equitable places to live and work.

The Baird Foundation

The Baird Foundation awards grants primarily in Western New York in support of arts and culture, youth programs, education, social services, historic preservation, the environment, and medical research.