

# PRESS RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### **Baton Rouge Area Youth Network (BRAYN) Launched by Capital Area United Way and the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation**

**Baton Rouge, La. (October 11, 2021)** – Founded in January 2021 by representatives from Capital Area United Way and The Huey & Angelina Wilson Foundation, the Baton Rouge Area Youth Network (BRAYN) is a network of youth service providers and youth supporting organizations in the Greater Baton Rouge Area that are dedicated to sharing resources and time to advance the following shared goals:

- a) Increase youth engagement in high-quality youth opportunities and
- b) Build the youth services field to create more equitable outcomes for youth in the Greater Baton Rouge Area.

BRAYN envisions a community with the resources and the will to provide impactful opportunities for positive development and learning for all children. BRAYN aligns with the goals of the East Baton Rouge Parish School System to support the collaboration between communities and schools and to establish programs in underserved communities. The organization is managed by a team comprised of representatives from The Huey & Angelina Wilson Foundation (Jan Ross), Capital Area United Way (Edy Addison), Co-chairs Anna West (Humanities Amped) and Murrelle G. Harrison (Gardere Initiative) and Gaylynne Mack (Big Buddy Program).

“For many decades, Capital Area United Way has been committed to youth development through quality afterschool and summer learning opportunities,” said Edy Addison, Senior Director of Community Impact at Capital Area United Way. “COVID-19 presented many challenges for youth-serving organizations working in these spaces. BRAYN was created out of necessity but has quickly evolved into a forward-thinking group of providers aiming to serve the Louisiana Capital Area’s young people through quality out of school programming.”

BRAYN Member Organizations achieves its goals via four Working Groups:

- The Programming Committee (Co-Chaired by Lucy Perera, Line4Line, and Murrelle Harrison, Gardere Initiative) is responsible for increasing opportunities for cross-site programming among BRAYN’s membership that are responsive to both the needs and offerings of various providers in the network.
- Marketing and Outreach Committee (Co-Chaired by Laura Hawkes, Baton Rouge Youth Coalition, and Dannica Kenner, Community Kids After School Club) purpose is to develop and implement strategies to recruit students for school-year out of school programming via a family-friendly website for youth and families.
- Collaborative Learning Resource Committee (Co-Chaired by Sarah Vandersypen, The Center for Literacy and Learning, and Genny Thomas, Big Buddy Program) is responsible for strategically increasing the collaboration of overall resources and opportunities for children and youth in Baton Rouge across multiple stakeholders and entities. This includes identifying gaps in services and developing overall training goals for member organizations.
- The Field Building/Strategic Planning Committee (Co-Chaired by Jody Hanet, Kids Orchestra, and Gaylynne Mack, Big Buddy) establishes short and long-term training goals and strategies for the BRAYN network. A database of all member organizations is currently being filled with the expectation to having all members’ information available to youth and families by the end of the year.

BRAYN's general membership meets for monthly digital meetings with breakout rooms assimilating coffee shops that enables small group conversations. These conversations provide opportunities for members to network in real-time, develop relationships and build capacity.

Start-up funding from Capital Area United Way and The Huey & Angelina Wilson Foundation has allowed BRAYN to create a website that will allow families in the Louisiana Capital Area to search and register for out of school time programs of all types. The website has an estimated launch date in fall 2021.

Funding is allowing for the hiring of a full-time Coordinator to manage BRAYN. The 12-month contracted position will be responsible for the continued establishment of BRAYN along with administrative duties. Interested persons may send their resume and cover letter to Admin@ourbrayn.org.

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### **Capital Area United Way**

For more than 97 years, Capital Area United Way has touched thousands of lives in our 10-Parish service area. We envision a community where everyone is empowered to reach their full potential. Our mission is to solve our community's toughest challenges by leveraging partnerships to advance the common good in education, income stability, and healthy living. To learn more visit [www.cauw.org](http://www.cauw.org).