

Town of Palm Beach United Way, Oxbridge Academy launch pilot youth philanthropy program



Jodie Wagner

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A new partnership between Oxbridge Academy and the Town of Palm Beach United Way is teaching local high school students about philanthropy, nonprofits, and grantmaking.

Launched Oct. 16, the Youth Philanthropy Initiative at the West Palm Beach private school is an 18-week, in-person program that introduces high-school students to the basics of philanthropy.

Through the program, students in grades 9-12 will analyze local issues, evaluate area nonprofits and help direct \$25,000 in grants to five Palm Beach County organizations. The grant money was donated by Palm Beach residents and longtime Town of Palm Beach United Way supporters Bob and Susan Wright, who are underwriting the program.



Students will meet weekly on campus to gain hands-on experience in financial literacy, nonprofit leadership, grantmaking and collaborative decision-making, according to a statement released about the program.

The elective program will wrap up with a youth-led grantmaking project that includes instruction and practical experience on writing grant proposals, reviewing applications, interviewing finalists and hosting a community event to announce the financial awards.



“Starting a program like this has always been a dream of mine,” Beth Walton, president and CEO of the Town of Palm Beach United Way and the course's instructor, said in the statement. “We do a fantastic job of educating our donors and volunteers on the process of grantmaking, but it’s these students who are going to be our future leaders and philanthropists. Instilling these concepts now will empower students to become life-long stewards of public service and social work.”

Lesson topics for students include understanding community needs; mapping social issues; learning more about how nonprofits work; exploring the “financial literacy” of giving; reading IRS Form 990s; and researching and evaluating nonprofits.

As part of the course, students will explore ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) to better understand the realities facing working families.

The Youth Philanthropy Initiative at Oxbridge reflects the school's goal of preparing students to lead with purpose through learning, service, collaboration, and giving, said Jay Boodheshwar, Oxbridge's assistant head of school for advancement.

“The Youth Philanthropy Initiative embodies Oxbridge Academy’s dedication to developing engaged, thoughtful leaders,” he said in a statement. “Through hands-on experience in grantmaking and community engagement, students will gain a firsthand understanding of the power of philanthropy and the profound responsibility that comes with making meaningful, lasting change in the world around them.”

At the end of the program, students will award \$5,000 grants to five nonprofit organizations. The winners will be revealed at a celebration in early 2026 with families, partners, and community members..

Underwriting the program is just one way the Wrights have supported at the United Way. They have chaired the United Way’s Alexis de Tocqueville Society and served on its Board of Trustees. Susan Wright is also a member of the United Way’s Allocation Committee.

”We are thrilled to support the new Youth Philanthropy Initiative at Oxbridge,” Susan Wright said. “Having served on the Allocation Committee for many years, I know firsthand the value this experience will bring to young leaders. Understanding charitable giving and

grantmaking is essential, and we believe in educating the next generation of changemakers in our community.”

Oxbridge Academy was founded by energy billionaire and Palm Beach resident William ”Bill” Koch.