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## Freedom First Announces 2021 Grant Recipients

**November 2021 (Roanoke, VA)** — Freedom First Credit Union is proud to announce the award of \$70,000 in community grants to thirteen local nonprofits in the Roanoke and New River Valleys. “This is the most we’ve been able to give to our nonprofit partners through the Community Investment Grants,” says Dave Prosser, SVP Community Development. “We are pleased to continue our support of our community nonprofits and are proud to fund their new initiatives.”

The following are the 2021 grant recipients:

**Kid’s Soar- \$6,000:** Funds will be used for multi-generational afterschool and summer programming including teaching children about saving, spending, budgeting, and making smart purchasing decisions. There will also be financial literacy workshops for parents that will raise awareness of available financial resources and demonstrate how they can be used.

**Blue Ridge Literacy- \$6,000:** Funds will support in-person and online Citizenship Preparation Services. BRL offers beginner-level English and Civics classes for lawful permanent residents at the earlier stages of their immigration journey as well as high intermediate/advanced level citizenship preparation classes and citizenship study groups for foreign-born adults who have started their naturalization process.

**Mill Mountain Theatre- \$5,000:** With this grant funding, Mill Mountain Theatre will provide two or three special student performances of its production *In the Heights* in April 2022. These events encourage discussion in schools about race, cultural differences, and inclusive communities. The performances, post-show talk-backs, and classroom materials are designed to raise issues about diversity in communities where there has been significant growth of Hispanic populations over the past decade.

**Roanoke Regional Small Business Development Center- \$6,000:** Grant funding will go towards supporting the Finance Education Program, which provides a series of interactive workshops geared to helping entrepreneurs strengthen their personal finances, manage their business finances, plan for taxes, and prepare for lending opportunities.

**Restoring Hope Roanoke- \$5,000:** Grant funding will be used to fund the Individual Development Grant offered to graduates of Faith & Finances classes. The ID Grant will be awarded within one year of completing the class in November 2021 (no more than \$1,000). Applicants for the ID Grant must set a long-term savings goal that will improve their net worth and they will meet with a case manager or ally regularly to show their progress.

**Roanoke Valley Speech and Hearing Center- \$5,000:** The funds will be used to provide low-cost/free speech and hearing screenings, as well as therapy, to low-income children in the Roanoke Valley. The objective is to support effective communication for young children in the Roanoke Valley so they can enter Kindergarten with the skills needed to learn and thrive.

**NRV CARES- \$6,000:** Grant funding will support NRV CARES Parenting Young Children, an eight-week course which leads participants through a series of concepts to improve knowledge of child



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development and behaviors, coping and problem-solving skills, and communication skills, with the goal of strengthening a family's resiliency against adversity.

**Opera Roanoke- \$2,000:** Grant funding will support Cycles of My Being, a performance series in which a contemporary classical music piece is created and performed by internationally acclaimed Black artists. The project specifically explores the challenges, struggles, aspirations, and dreams of the Black man in this country and provides avenues for discussion by a diverse audience.

**Family Service of Roanoke Valley- \$6,000:** Funding will support mental health services provided on-site in at least two Roanoke Redevelopment Housing Authority sites. By embedding mental health services in these sites, Family Service will address both the high level of need for mental health services and the barriers to accessing these critical services in the neighborhoods most likely to be underserved. The residents of these neighborhoods face increased COVID-19 impacts due to the risks of front line employment, food and housing insecurity, the shutting down of many community and natural supports, and financial stressors, leading to high rates of mental health issues.

**New Freedom Farm- \$6,000:** Funding will be used to construct a new storage room to store the Farm's Color Guard gear and basic supplies for veterans. This will expand the existing facility and services in order to serve additional veterans, first responders, and their families.

**Commonwealth Catholic Charities- \$5,000:** Grant funding will be used to positively impact the lives of five refugee families who have recently arrived to Roanoke. CCC will direct these funds towards affordable housing, transportation to and from work, utilities, and items such as furniture and basic necessity items. The goal is to ensure these families are set up for success and are integrated successfully into our community.

**A Tree Planted Counseling- \$6,000:** Funds will be used to begin a new program specific to Spanish-speaking community members, and specifically, to hire a native Spanish speaker with a background in mental health to run much needed groups for processing sexual trauma and domestic violence situations.

**Salem Ministers Conference Community Food Pantry- \$6,000:** Funds will be used for the Snack Buddies Program. The program is designed to provide nutritional snacks for school children that might have to go without due to family financial situations. They supply all 21 preschool programs in Roanoke County and all 20 elementary schools in Salem and Roanoke County with at least one bag of 100 snacks each month, a total of 7,100 snacks each month.

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**ABOUT FREEDOM FIRST CREDIT UNION:** Freedom First Credit Union is the largest member owned, Community Development Financial Institution in Southwest Virginia. Founded in 1956, Freedom First has grown to over 57,000 members, assets of over \$850 million, and 10 branch locations in the Roanoke and New River Valleys. Freedom First members benefit from competitive rates, secure and convenient technology, and the knowledge that their money is being reinvested in their community. For more information, please visit [www.freedomfirst.com](http://www.freedomfirst.com)