

April 5, 2025

Dear Susan, Vicki, and Members of the Social & Environmental Justice Committee,

On behalf of ILYA (Independent Living for Young Adults), I want to thank you and UUSD for supporting this program and including us as the recipient for the February 2025 Share the Plate donations. The funds raised will be used exclusively for youth in Sussex County through UUSD ILYA, and will allow us to expand this program to help more youth in our area. At present, as service projects in two covenant groups, we have been sponsoring two students in college through the Student Care Package program.

With these additional Share the Plate funds, we will be able to give support to youth aging out of foster care via many of the programs that ILYA has offered in northern and central Delaware for the past 20 years. It is so exciting to know that these youth will be supported statewide now that UUSD has brought the program here.

Those programs are outlined below:

- **Student Care Packages:** Gifts and notes during the academic year and for birthdays boost morale for young adults in post-secondary school, vocational programs, and military service.
- **Apartment Furniture:** Young adults may select, at no cost to them, used furniture in good condition for their first apartment.
- **New Apartment Kits:** To go along with furniture, laundry baskets filled with basic kitchen and bathroom necessities help young folks feel comfortable and proud in their first apartment.
- **Graduation Celebration and Backpacks:** Many young adults leaving foster care have no celebrations when reaching this big milestone. We provide a celebration event and backpacks as well as an opportunity to build support networks with other graduates.
- **Holiday Giving:** ILYA makes the holidays brighter by providing gifts and packages during the winter season.
- **Baby Supplies:** ILYA makes basic items for new babies — a new car seat and stroller in addition to fun new baby supplies — available to young mothers-to-be.
- **Tutoring:** Students receive assistance with academic tutoring, study skills, and practicing entrance exams.

- **Emergency Grants and Loans:** Grants and loans from ILYA assist with emergency needs such as, security and utility deposits, student admission fees and books.
- **Advocacy:** Written and oral testimony is occasionally offered before public bodies on matters affecting those aging out of foster care.

Many ILYA volunteers participate to help others, to pay back to our community (for the privileges we have enjoyed) and to live our values. Inherent in our UU principles is the worth and dignity of every person. These youth aging out of foster care are underserved, and will benefit from our love and care as we move forward with these ILYA programs.

Thank you again for helping us support former foster youth with meaningful and useful projects that let these young adults know there are people in the community who care about them and their future.

With so much appreciation,

Ronnie L. Smith

[ILYA@uussd.org](mailto:ILYA@uussd.org)