



News Release

Contact:

Dan Ayer
412.874.5256
dan@oystercreates.com

Connecting Champions Awarded \$325K From Pittsburgh-Area Foundations

Richard King Mellon Foundation and the Elsie H. Hillman Foundation support meaningful connections and mentorships for young people undergoing cancer treatment

PITTSBURGH, PA. – DATE, 2023 -- Connecting Champions announced today it has received two separate grants totaling \$325,000 from Pittsburgh-area foundations to provide career-focused mentorships for young people with cancer.

The Richard King Mellon Foundation, the largest foundation in southwestern Pennsylvania and one of the 50 largest in the world, has awarded Connecting Champions with \$200,000 to promote economic mobility for young people with cancer through career readiness programs, partnerships, and connections in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties. This grant is part of the Richard King Mellon Foundation's Economic Mobility program and is the third grant in as many years that Connecting Champions has received to provide career-based mentors.

Additionally, the Elsie H. Hillman Foundation, one of the 18 individual foundations of Hillman Family Foundations, has awarded \$125,000 over two years to assist Connecting Champions in building and implementing their strategic plan. This support is critically important in ensuring that young people with cancer will have a consistent and sustainable pathway to connecting and partnering with their passions and the community. The grant is part of the foundation's Health and Medicine strategic priority, carrying forward the late civic leader Elsie H. Hillman's beliefs in promoting a culture of health in southwestern Pennsylvania and lending a timely and neighborly helping hand to those in need.

Connecting Champions asks kids and young adults, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" and then pairs them with a mentor in that field who can help them achieve a brighter future.

Through its in-person and virtual mentorship programs, Connecting Champions has paired young

people 3- to 26-year-olds with mentors from more than 100 career paths, such as fashion design, robotics, various trades, and zoology.

Based on its historic partnership with UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh, Connecting Champions’ model has garnered international recognition through its evidence-based, outcomes-driven approach, and their program has now been implemented in 24 states.

“We continue to be honored by the support of the Richard King Mellon Foundation and the Elsie H. Hillman Foundation,” said Sidney Kushner, executive director, Connecting Champions. “These foundations have long understood the value in connecting one’s passions and interests with mentors for their future growth. With the support of these foundations, we will be able to remove barriers and inspire young people to pursue their ambitions beyond cancer.”

To learn more about Connecting Champions, please visit www.connectingchampions.org.

About Connecting Champions

Connecting Champions is a nonprofit that asks kids and young adults with cancer, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” and pairs them with a mentor in that field who can help achieve a brighter future. Its evidence-based, outcomes-driven approach has received international acclaim. Connecting Champions has helped hundreds of young people across the U.S. better survive the cancer journey, psychosocially and vocationally. It gives them the resources they need to envision life beyond the disease by exploring career paths, acquiring skills/knowledge, or simply feeling like a kid again. Through virtual and in-person programs, 3- to 26-year-olds (during treatment and survivorship) have been paired with a diverse network of mentors from 100 career paths such as NASA engineering, various trades, entrepreneurship, and even ghost hunting. For more information, please visit www.connectingchampions.org.

About the Richard King Mellon Foundation: *Founded in 1947, the Richard King Mellon Foundation is the largest foundation in Southwestern Pennsylvania, and one of the 50 largest in the world. The Foundation’s 2020 year-end endowment was \$3.1 billion, and its Trustees in 2021 disbursed \$152 million in grants and Program-Related Investments. The Foundation focuses its funding on six primary program areas, delineated in its [2021-2030 Strategic Plan](#).*

About the Hillman Foundation: *Since its founding in 1951 by John Hartwell Hillman, Jr., the Hillman Foundation’s mission has been to improve the quality of life in Pittsburgh and southwestern Pennsylvania. The Foundation supports grantmaking that will establish the Pittsburgh region as a national leader in developing and implementing ideas that improve people’s lives.*

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