

## Boone County partners with Flourish to support low-income youth

BY MELISSA JACQUES

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Boone County Children's Services Board has entered into a contract with a Columbia-based nonprofit to provide funding for youth interns.

Fostering Life-Changing Opportunities, or Flourish, supports Boone County high school students who experience barriers to post-secondary education and employment, in part through setting up internships with Veterans United.

Contract funds of up to \$47,558.85 will help finance job coaching, job readiness, career exploration and case management for youth who are interning with Veterans United.

The funding will also help establish a local Youth MOVE chapter, which will focus on involving youth in developing an action plan to address youth violence in Boone County.

The contract was awarded after the service board released a request for proposals in June 2021 to address youth needs. In January, the service board entered a contract with Flourish to fund the Flourish Prep Internship Program.

“Often, adults plan for students and not with them. It is important to note that Flourish is addressing what our young people have asked for, including having an ongoing opportunity to share their opinions,” said Leigh Spence, director of secondary school counseling with Columbia Public Schools and Boone County Children’s Services Board member.

Flourish is a Columbia-based nonprofit that was established in 2019. Its goal is to target economic inequality in youth through educational opportunities and wraparound support. This support includes mentoring, help with college savings and monetary support from an emergency fund.

The service board also supports Boone County youth by providing social-emotional screening for children ages 0-5 and through Triple-P, the Positive Parenting Program, which offers seminars and brief individual sessions for parents.

“We are excited for the county’s support because it will allow more resources to be dedicated to Flourish interns’ efforts to convene diverse youth and adult community leaders in action planning,” said Flourish Board Treasurer Rachel Cooper.

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