

United Way of Hunterdon County Launches First-in-the-Nation Youth Mental Health & Sports Advisory Board

Advisory Board Tackles Most Pressing Needs of Youth Through Sports

FLEMINGTON, NJ, UNITED STATES, July 23, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [United Way](#) of Hunterdon County is proud to announce the formation of the nation's first Youth Mental Health & Sports Advisory Board, a groundbreaking initiative uniting experts, coaches, and youth voices to transform the future of youth well-being through the power of play.



Youth Sports Foster Positive Mental Health

The [United in Play](#) initiative, already recognized for eliminating financial barriers and providing free mental health resources to youth and families, now takes a bold step forward. The new advisory board will guide national best practices for integrating mental health support into sports programs across all levels, ensuring all children—regardless of background—can access the benefits of play, growth, and thriving mental health.

“

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Jennifer Thompson, CEO

“Every child deserves the chance to play, grow, and thrive—on and off the field or court,” said Jennifer Thompson, social worker and CEO of United Way of Hunterdon County. “We are living in the middle of a youth mental health crisis, and it's time for bold, collective action. By bringing together leading minds in mental health, youth sports, and lived experience, our advisory board will

pioneer a new era where coaches are equipped, families are supported, and no child is left behind. We're not just responding to a crisis—we're building hope, resilience, and opportunity for every young person in America.”

Key Facts:

- * 1 in 5 youth experience a mental health challenge, yet therapy and support remain out of reach for many.
- * United in Play partners with recreational and club programs to provide access to sports and equipment for ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families.
- * United Way of Hunterdon County provides trauma-informed training and certification for youth sports coaches. Programs are available in-person and online.

Youth Mental Health & Sports Advisory Board Members include:

- * Dr. Marlon Grey, Founder EmpowerU
- * George Mercado, HBA Director and Coach
- * Cheryl Kuster, Nonprofit Leader & Youth Sports Advocate
- * Todd Spidare, Owner Fyzical and Club Pilates
- * Eric Eisenhart, Managing Partner, Pro-Activity
- * Mathew Walker, Director of Football, DVRR Jr. Terriers, Coach
- * Pat Spencer, LCSW, Owner, Getting Your Mind in Gear
- * Lacy Phelps, Financial Advisor, Edward Jones
- * Kevin Graeves, HBA Coach & Youth Sports Trainer
- * Scott Koral, Sports Reporter
- * Mitchele Drulis, Owner of Evolution Gym
- * Jacque Beason, Parent of Youth Athlete & Retired NFL Cheerleader
- * Kelly Denti, Owner, Nex Level Ninja

The new advisory board includes national youth representatives, mental health professionals, sports leaders, and community advocates. Together, they will shape policy, drive awareness, and champion innovative solutions at a national level.

About United Way of Hunterdon County:

United Way of Hunterdon County is dedicated to building thriving communities by advancing financial security, youth opportunities, and health for all. Through United in Play and other programs, the organization leads the way in addressing the urgent needs of today's families and youth.

For more information, to sign your team or league up for training, partnership opportunities, or to join the movement, visit: <https://www.uwhunterdon.org/unitedinplay>

Jennifer Thompson

United way

+1 917-969-9765

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