

Unified Youth Debuts The Wonder Fund with First-of-Its-Kind National Investment in Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing

Headspace's Dr. Wizdom Powell Named CEO to Lead Bold National Vision and Growing Multi-Million Dollar Fund

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, October 6, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, national non-profit Unified Youth emerges from more than a year of stealth with the debut of The Wonder Fund, a first-of-its-kind national investment linking creativity and youth behavioral health. Timed ahead of the announcement of its first regional investment on World Mental Health Day (October 10), The Wonder Fund is designed to build regional Wonder Ecosystems—safe, inspiring community sanctuaries where imagination, connection, and play are treated as foundations of youth mental wellbeing and future readiness—not afterthoughts. With corporate, philanthropic, and individual funders already in place, Unified Youth plans to grow the Wonder Fund into a nine-figure platform to catalyze this work across the country.

“Too often, young people are framed as problems to solve. We start from a different place: youth aren’t broken—they are possibilities,” said Dr. Wizdom Powell, PhD, MPH, CMHC, newly named CEO of Unified Youth. “The Wonder Fund is our promise to create conditions for joy and resilience—moving beyond crisis response to the everyday infrastructures that help young people thrive.”

We all know the problem. Across the nation, rates of youth anxiety, depression, and suicide are at historic highs. At the same time, cuts to federal and state spending on education and arts programs have stripped access to creative outlets—proven to reduce stress, build resilience, and expand opportunity—from millions of students. Too often, young people are treated as problems to be solved instead of being recognized as the catalyst for future possibilities. Unified Youth was built to change this narrative and to create the conditions where imagination and connection are treated as essential to mental wellbeing.

Unified Youth’s launch builds on a growing body of evidence that creativity is not an extracurricular—it’s essential to youth wellbeing. A systematic review of more than 8,500 adolescents found that arts engagement is linked to higher self-esteem and significantly lower rates of depression and anxiety. In fact, adolescents who regularly participate in creative activities are 38% less likely to develop symptoms of depression and anxiety by young adulthood. And the economic case is equally compelling: every \$1 invested in school-based arts

programs yields an estimated \$7 return through reduced healthcare costs, stronger academic outcomes, and increased lifetime earnings.

The Wonder Fund is a catalytic national investment vehicle that will:

- Seed sustainable collaborations across sectors and systems of care for breakthrough creative mental wellbeing solutions.
- Accelerate grassroots innovation through strategic funding, knowledge-sharing, and evidence generation.
- Pioneer a creative peer mental health coaching institute forging meaningful career pathways for transitional-age youth.
- Position youth as catalysts for systems change through bold storytelling and transformative leadership.
- Expand evidence-based creative mental health content and curriculum across play environments, maximizing impact among coaches and youth sports.

Unified Youth's approach is grounded in a three-level theory of change: build organizational strength, create environments of wonder, and foster youth creative capability—a reinforcing cycle that turns individual progress into system-level impact.

Originally incubated as an internal impact project at law and consulting firm Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP—drawing on its deep experience across health care, entertainment and digital media—Unified Youth was conceived as a way to bring impactful and creative solutions to empower and support today's youth. Now a standalone national nonprofit, Unified Youth launches after significant financial and pro bono support from Manatt, in addition to investments from other corporate leaders and a coalition of philanthropic and individual funders committed to scaling creative solutions for youth mental health and wellbeing.

"The concept behind Unified Youth resulted from the Manatt community's passion for improving our nation's health care ecosystem and our entertainment group's deep relationships across music and arts, especially since collaboration across industries is part of Manatt's DNA, in addition to uplifting and investing in the next generation of leaders," said Bill Bernstein, leader of Manatt's Health Care Practice and Chairperson of Unified Youth's Board of Directors. "Unified Youth represents exactly that kind of bold vision—bringing together corporate partners, philanthropic donors, and community leaders to ensure that imagination and creativity are treated as essentials for every young person's mental wellbeing. And with the appointment of Dr. Wizdom Powell as Unified Youth's founding CEO, we are confident this movement has the visionary leadership it needs to truly transform youth mental health nationwide."

Unified Youth will announce the location of its first Wonder Ecosystem on World Mental Health Day (October 10, 2025), marking the beginning of a nationwide effort to reimagine the future of youth mental health and wellbeing investment in the United States.

##

About Dr. Wizdom Powell

Dr. Wizdom Powell is a visionary leader at the nexus of mental and behavioral health, education, advocacy, and multi-sectoral community programming. As the inaugural Chief Executive Officer of Unified Youth, she brings over two decades of experience driving systemic change through data-driven policy action, place-based interventions, and rigorous impact measurement. A tenured professor and nationally recognized thought leader, Dr. Powell has shaped national mental health policy, led groundbreaking public-private partnerships, and worked globally to advance equity-driven solutions that create measurable, lasting change across all facets of population health.

Dr. Powell received a Ph.D. and M.S. in Clinical Psychology and M.P.H. from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor and has held tenured professorships at some of the nation's most prestigious academic institutions including the University of Connecticut where she served as Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the Health Disparities Institute and UNC-Chapel Hill's Gillings School of Global Public Health, where she served as Research Associate Professor in the Department of Behavioral Health and Associate Director of the Center for Health Equity Research in the Department of Social Medicine.

Most recently, Wizdom was the Chief Purpose Officer at Headspace where she oversaw the organization's Social Impact, Legislative Affairs, and Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) portfolios as well as company-wide organizational culture and belonging efforts.

Ben O'Keefe

Unified Youth

ben@joinunifiedyouth.org

Visit us on social media:

[LinkedIn](#)

[Instagram](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/854985824>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2025 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.