



AGAINST THE STORM
FOUNDATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Dick Shaner, Jr.
716-984-9828 (cell)
dickshaner@gmail.com

**Against the Storm Foundation Partners With
Mental Health Advocates of WNY to Support Organization's
Basic Emotional Skills Training (BEST) Program**

***Funding will provide classroom-based learning to help students Pre-K through K
in the Cheektowaga Central School District develop healthy social and emotional skills***

CHEEKTOWAGA, N.Y, March 9, 2023 – Against the Storm Foundation, Inc. presented a \$10,000 check to Mental Health Advocates (MHA) of WNY today to support the organization's Basic Emotional Skills Training (BEST) program. The funding will provide classroom-based learning to help students Pre-K through K in the Cheektowaga Central School District develop healthy social and emotional skills.

Many Pre-K students are socially and emotionally unprepared for kindergarten. The BEST program is proven to increase skills that enable young students to understand feelings and interact with others in a healthy, socially responsible manner. The lack of these skills can result in poor academic performance, social isolation, anxiety, and other mental health disorders.

"We are in the midst of a national crisis in child and adolescent mental health, exacerbated by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our kids, and the Against the Storm Foundation is proud to support this important effort," said Thomas Lillis, president. "Bringing mental health into the classroom at such an early age will hopefully establish a framework for these young people to significantly improve their academic, social and economic outcomes, leading to success in school and in life."

"The BEST program is an amazing resource for our students at Union East," said school social worker, Maria Kocialski. "The teachers love the lessons and look forward to working them into their own curriculum. They particularly love the classroom engagement and interaction with their students by the BEST staff. Parents also look forward to this program and enjoy the carryover with their children at home."

"BEST has developed a strong working relationship with the students, staff and families in Cheektowaga," said BEST Program Director Mary Lou Montanari. "All students need the social-emotional skills training that BEST offers. Through BEST, students learn to be "peacemakers" who share, discuss emotions, and handle anger and conflict non-violently thus building a foundation for academic and interpersonal success."

BEST currently serves a diverse population of 579 students in the district. The grant from the Against the Storm Foundation will help continue and expand this program in Cheektowaga through the end of the current school year.

--more--

About the Against the Storm Foundation

Established in 2019, the Against the Storm Foundation, Inc. is a New York State authorized not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Its mission is to help fight blood cancers and support other causes that will improve the health and quality of life for people in need. For more information visit: <http://againstthestorm.org/>

Mental Health Advocates

Mental Health Advocates (MHA) promotes mental health and well-being in our community and supports individuals and families living with mental illness through advocacy, treatment linkage, and outreach services. The non-profit agency delivers non-clinical services to more than 17,000 individuals each year in homes, schools, hospitals, community organizations, and workplaces across Western New York. MHAWNY.ORG

###