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PRESS RELEASE

AFT Members, Family Members Awarded 2020 Union Plus Scholarships

Winners Honored for Achievement and Union Values

Washington, D.C. – Union Plus recently awarded \$300,000 in scholarships to 215 students representing 43 unions, including 33 winners representing the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). This year's group of scholarship recipients includes university, college, and trade or technical school students from 38 states. The AFT winners are:

- Arnulfo Arellano of Escondido, California. Arellano, who is a member of AFT Local 4522, has been awarded a \$4,000 scholarship.
- Katherine Betrus of Potsdam, New York. Betrus, whose father, Anthony Betrus, is a member of AFT Local 2190, and whose mother, Kristen Betrus, is a member of AFT Local 2539, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- Alejandro Cuesta of Chicago. Cuesta, whose mother, Maureen Cuesta, is a member of AFT Local 6330, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- William Davis of Syracuse, New York. Davis, whose mother, Melissa Davis, is a member of AFT Local 4053, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- Annie Elias (Deilke) of White Bear Lake, Minnesota. Elias, who is a member of AFT Local 3748, has been awarded a \$4,000 scholarship.
- **Jason Fults of Gainesville, Florida.** Fults, who is a member of AFT Local 7463, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Josue Gil-Silva of Salinas, California.** Gil-Silva, whose father, Jose Gil, is a member of AFT Local 1020, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Daisy Hoover of North Miami, Florida.** Hoover, whose father, Carl Hoover, is a member of AFT Local 1974, has been awarded a \$4,000 scholarship.
- **Shola Jimoh of Oswego, Illinois.** Jimoh, whose mother, Stella Jimoh, is a member of AFT Local 604, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Kelsey Morrey of Orland Park, Illinois.** Morrey, whose mother, Lisa Morrey, is a member of AFT Local 943, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- Olivia Mubarek of Sandy Hook, Connecticut. Mubarek, whose father, Jeffrey Mubarek, is a member of AFT Local 4200B, has been awarded a \$3,000 scholarship.
- Amelia Murphy of Chicago. Murphy, whose spouse, Lennon Murphy, is a member of AFT Local 1, has been awarded a \$2,000 scholarship.
- **David Muscarella of Pittsburgh.** Muscarella, whose mother, Barbara Muscarella, is a member of AFT Local 2097, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- Candice Nance of Redwood City, California. Nance, who is a member of AFT Local 1493, has been awarded a \$2,000 scholarship.

- **Jessica Olson of Caledonia, Minnesota.** Olson, who is a member of AFT Local 7345, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- Ellie Pazol of Northbrook, Illinois. Pazol, whose father, Jonathan Pazol, is a member of AFT Local 571, has been awarded a \$2,000 scholarship.
- **Greta Peterson-Nafziger of Saint Paul, Minnesota.** Peterson-Nafziger, whose father, Erik Peterson-Nafziger, is a member of AFT Local 28, has been awarded a \$2,000 scholarship.
- Abigail Randan of Proctorville, Ohio. Randan, whose mother, Darby Randan, is a member of AFT Local 6340, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Grady Regan of Holland, New York.** Regan, whose mother, Nanette Regan, is a member of AFT Local 2601, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Devin Romines of Camarillo, California.** Romines, whose mother, Terrie Romines, is a member of AFT Local 1273, has been awarded a \$2,000 scholarship.
- **Rylie Sanders of Fresno, California.** Sanders, whose mother, Susan Yates, is a retired member of AFT Local 1533, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.
- Owen Seltzer of Waterford, Connecticut. Seltzer, whose father, Daniel Seltzer, is a member of AFT Local 02038-0, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.
- Hattie Sergent of Milton, West Virginia. Sergent, whose mother, Jill Sergent, is a member of AFT Local 4639, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.
- Alec Stanton of Danbury, Connecticut. Stanton, whose father, Mark Stanton, is a member of AFT Local 3119, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- Sydney Stoehr of Trussville, Alabama. Stoehr, whose mother, Kathleen Parlier, is a member of AFT Local 02143, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.
- **Mia Sweeney of Guilford, Connecticut.** Sweeney, whose mother, Amanda Sweeney, is a member of AFT Local 1942, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.
- Megan Taylor of Grayslake, Illinois. Taylor, who is a member of AFT Local 504, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.
- **Tawny Townsend of Bellingham, Washington.** Townsend, who is a member of AFT Local 1873, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.
- Lynne Turner of Brooklyn, New York. Turner, who is a member of AFT Local 2334, has been awarded a \$1,500 scholarship.
- **Liyanni Vazquez of Wethersfield, Connecticut.** Vazquez, whose mother, Leah Fosse, is a member of AFT Local 4200, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Sebastiane Wall of Cranston, Rhode Island.** Wall, whose father, Daniel Wall, is a member of AFT Local 958, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- **Emily Wightman of Deering, New Hampshire.** Wightman, whose mother, Jodi Wightman, is a member of AFT Local 6219, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.
- Derek Willson of Gansevoort, New York. Willson, whose mother, Andrea Willson, is a member of AFT Local 2996, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.

"Union Plus is proud to be able to increase our scholarship award amount this year and help more union families than ever before," Union Plus President Mitch Stevens said. "At a time when many families have been financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are especially glad to support this year's group of 215 hardworking students as they further their educations and pave the path for future success."

Meet Some of the 2020 AFT Honorees

Arnulfo Arellano

San Diego State University (SDSU)
Cal State University San Marcos (CSUSM): Bachelor of Arts, liberal arts (2017)
San Marcos [California] High School (2012)

Arnulfo is a master's candidate in postsecondary educational leadership and student affairs at SDSU. He expects to complete these studies in May 2021, after which he plans to pursue a doctoral degree. Arnulfo, whose parents are originally from Mexico and who is a single father, hopes to become a transformational senior leader in the California community college system, improving access and equity and increasing holistic student success. He will be the first member of his family to earn a graduate degree. Arnulfo attended Palomar [California] College through his high school's dual enrollment program. He has given back to the college over the past two years as an assessment and school relations specialist under the supervision of Palomar Counseling Services assessment coordinator Jose Luis Ramirez, who said Arnulfo is an outstanding employee who is held in the highest regard by peers and students. "He takes responsibility for his own learning as well as facilitating the learning of others," Ramirez said. "Arnulfo has demonstrated sensitivity to and understanding of diverse academic, socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic disability issues."

Activities, honors, and employment: SDSU Student Equity Fellowship Award; SDSU Academic Excellence Award; Palomar College Student Equity and Achievement Committee; CSUSM Latino Alumni Board; migrant education program specialist, San Diego County Office of Education; STEM instructor and intervention specialist, Epiphany Prep Charter School; intem, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators

Annie Elias (Deilke)

Saint Catherine University, St. Paul, Minnesota Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM): Bachelor of Science, special education (2013) Saint Paul College: Associate of Arts, sign language interpreting (2005) Winona [Minnesota] State University: Associate of Arts, liberal arts (2002)

A special education teacher with the Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District, Annie is pursuing a graduate degree in curriculum and instruction. She works with high school students who have severely limited development capacity, and her goal is to develop literacy and math curriculum that addresses their needs and share it with other educators. She has been with the Northeast Metro 916 ISD since 2005, previously as a sign language interpreter and an intervener for students with deaf-blindness. Northeast Metro 916 ISD South Campus Education Center teacher Lisa Santi, who has worked with Annie for nearly 15 years, said Annie is an integral part of the faculty. "Annie has worked tirelessly to become an expert in teaching literacy to students who are non-verbal with a focus on improving their communication skills through the use of augmentative alternative communication," Santi said. "She is a fierce advocate for each of her students and ensures their individual needs are recognized and supported."

Activities and honors: Northeast Metro 916 ISD Teacher of the Year nominee (2019)

Volunteerism: AFT Local 3748 executive board membership chair; Northeast Metro 916 ISD talent show, literacy committee, employee health and wellness committee, yearbook

Daisy Hoover

MAST Academy, Key Biscayne, Florida (2020)

Daisy, who will attend Davidson College in North Carolina as a genomics major, plans to become a geneticist. She wants to study conditions like cancer and Alzheimer's disease, which have affected various people in her life. Last summer, she was a research assistant for Dr. Holly Cukier with the Hussman Institute of Human Genomics.

Daisy's father became a union steward in 2010, and she is thankful for his longtime union membership. "My dad takes his union membership and steward position very seriously, and his dedication to advocating for his fellow teachers is one of the many reasons I look up to him," Daisy said. "Unions have offered my family security for my entire life, allowing my dad to do what he loves because he knows that the union will be there for him and for us."

Activities, honors, and employment: MAST Performing Arts Club; MAST newspaper; peer educator, Health Information Project; Live! Modern School of Music; Miami Theater Center; Girls State delegate; Davidson Posse Scholar; National Merit Semifinalist; MAST Language Arts and Foreign Languages Department Academic Recognition; instructor, Mathnasium of North Miami

Olivia Mubarek

Elon [North Carolina] University Newtown High School, Sandy Hook, Connecticut (2018)

Olivia recently completed her second year as a marketing major at Elon University, where she is a Business Fellow in the Martha and Spencer Love School of Business. Last summer, she studied for three weeks in the United Arab Emirates and also began a marketing and social media internship with Ethan Allen Inc.

Olivia and her twin sister were born two months premature, and Olivia was seriously ill at birth. She is thankful that her father's AFT membership provided health insurance that covered the necessary medical treatments. "My dad has remained a state government employee for 35 years due to his feeling of security and safety in the workplace as a union member," Olivia said. "AFT has helped provide a better quality of life for me and my family, and we are eternally grateful."

Activities and honors: Love School of Business Social Responsibility Honor Roll; President's List; Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society; American Marketing Association; Phi Mu social fraternity

Volunteerism: Autism Speaks; fundraising, Children's Miracle Network and Duke Children's Hospital

Amelia Murphy

Loyola University Chicago: Bachelor of Science, anthropology (2015) Dutch Fork High School, Irmo, South Carolina (2012)

Amelia plans to begin studying this fall for a Master of Education in early childhood education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Since 2017 she has been the volunteer manager for Chicago HOPES for Kids, where she oversees volunteers from the community, as well as local colleges and universities, in providing academic support for children at nine homeless shelters throughout Chicago. Amelia began pursuit of an education policy graduate degree at Loyola before deciding to focus on her work with HOPES. Her goal now is to be an elementary classroom teacher.

Amelia said her experiences have taught her that being an educator requires continual learning. "My work with HOPES has challenged many of my assumptions about education, homelessness, and what it means to be an educator," Amelia said. "I recognized the importance of supporting the whole child in education but was uncertain how to move this knowledge into practice. With HOPES, I gained the knowledge and skills to implement trauma-informed teaching, classroom management, and socioemotional learning skills."

Activities, honors, and employment: Housing Opportunities for Women; Community Impact Award; Jumpstart intern

Volunteerism: Jumpstart AmeriCorps

Candice Nance

San Jose State University (SJSU)

American International College, Springfield, Massachusetts: Master of Business Administration (2009)

San Jose State University: Bachelor of Science, marketing (2006) Ohlone College, Fremont, California: Associate of Arts, business (2003) Washington High School, Fremont, California (2001)

Candice is a tenured business professor, department chair, and curriculum committee chair at Cañada College in Redwood City, California. She is concurrently a doctoral student in the educational leadership program at SJSU and expects to complete the program in 2022. Candice is pursuing the doctoral degree to learn more about teaching and learning while developing research relating to teacher preparation programs in higher education. She was previously an adjunct professor at Ohlone College in Fremont, California, and was named Ohlone Adjunct Professor of the Year in 2012.

Dr. Diana G. Abbati is a professor in SJSU's Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership program and taught one of Candice's classes last summer. Abbati said Candice is a natural leader in the support of public education. "Candice is an excellent problem solver who consistently exercises wise judgment, patience, understanding, attention to detail, and follow-through," Abbati said. "There is a sophistication and astute intelligence about Candice that leads to practical, smart, and innovative solutions."

Activities and honors: Redwood City Public Library Board; Redwood City Chamber of Commerce Leadership Program

Ellie Pazol

Glenbrook North High School (GNHS), Northbrook, Illinois (2020)

Ellie plans to begin college this fall as a global health major. She hopes to pursue a career in global public health and wants to work in medicine, in policy, for an NGO, or in another health-related field. Ellie credits her father, a biology teacher, for her interest in science. She was drawn to medicine after helping a younger girl who sustained a life-threatening waterskiing accident. Despite a chronic illness that has forced her to miss significant periods of school, she consistently excelled in her studies.

Jeffrey Kallay, who taught Ellie's AP U.S. history class, noted that she voluntarily convened study groups to support her peers even when she had mastered the material, explaining that she felt everyone learned more when the atmosphere was more cooperative than competitive. "As impressive as Ellie is as a student, she is exceptional as a person," Kallay said. "She is the best kind of leader a high school can have. She is popular without bending to peer pressure, and she is accepted by students while being true to herself and her principles."

Activities and honors: National Honor Society; GNHS Honor Roll; Illinois Seal of Biliteracy (French); GNHS Student Association Vice President; executive editor, GNHS Torch; GNHS Peer Group Leader; instructor and counselor, Camp Kamaji for Girls

Volunteerism: Glenview Youth Services Study Buddies

Greta Peterson-Nafziger

Columbia University, New York Great River School (GRS), St. Paul, Minnesota (2019)

Greta recently completed her first year as an architecture major at Columbia. She plans to study green ergonomics with a focus on indoor ecology, using LEED design to support a circular economy. She has gained experience in arts and architecture through a position on a house renovation team and an internship for a bronze casting artist. Greta was one of the top students in Sheila Sullivan's IB Physics class at GRS. Sullivan said, "Greta values creativity, equality, education, and reverence for the natural world. Students like Greta who use their education and values to improve our communities are an inspiration to teachers like myself."

Both of Greta's parents are public school teachers, and her family has a rich union history that spans multiple generations. Greta is grateful for the many protections that AFT has provided to her family, most recently since her family was impacted by a serious health diagnosis last year. "With all the large-scale impacts like lobbying, legal counsel, negotiating, and supporting workers during strikes, it's easy to overlook the significance of the union's personal impacts," Greta said. "My family is deeply thankful for AFT's support."

Activities, honors, and employment: Columbia Ratrock Magazine; Walker Art Center Teen Art Council; Rotary Youth Exchange Ambassador (Elche, Spain); National Honor Society; GRS varsity soccer

Volunteerism: Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity Southeast, Vieques, Puerto Rico; International Institute of Minnesota Immigrant and Refugee Outreach; International Institute of Minnesota Festival of Nations: Red Cross blood drive

Abigail Randan

Huntington [West Virginia] High School (HHS) (2020)

Abigail plans to major in neuroscience when she starts college this fall and wants to be a pediatric neurologist. She graduated at the top of her class at HHS after completing eight AP courses. Abigail was on the planning committee for Dance Green, an HHS group that raises money for the Hoops Family Children's Hospital and is the largest nonprofit operated by minors in West Virginia.

In addition to her mother's AFT membership, her father, James Randan, is a member of the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC). During the 2018 West Virginia teachers strike, Abigail joined her mother and other AFT members for a march at the state capitol. "I witnessed the true power of unions and what they can accomplish," Abigail said. "Unions connect workers and prove there is strength in numbers. Watching my dad protect jobs and marching with my mom for teacher wages taught me that there is immeasurable power in unity."

Activities, honors, and employment: National Honor Society; HHS cheerleading; Mu Alpha Theta mathematics honor society; HHS STAR Award; HHS Honor Roll; Wendy's Student-Athlete of the Week; Mountain State Athletic Conference Night of Champions Award; Cabell County Board of Education Summer Lunch Program

Volunteerism: Cabell Huntington Hospital Teen Volunteer; Salvation Army Angel Tree Elf Night; HHS Special Olympics; peer tutor, HHS Tutoring Center; youth cheerleading camps

Devin Romines

California Lutheran University (CLU), Thousand Oaks, California Channel Islands High School (CIHS), Oxnard, California (2017)

Devin is a biological sciences and music double major and expects to complete both degrees next May. He aspires to be a college biology professor and researcher and plans to eventually teach children's piano. Devin has conducted research with CLU professors Dr. Kwasi Connor (mussels) and Dr. David Marcey (fruit fly genetics). He is a certified American Red Cross lifeguard and was a 2017 and 2018 Union Plus Scholarship recipient. Dr. Paloma Vargas, an assistant professor of biology and director of Hispanic-Serving Institute Initiatives at CLU, taught Devin's emerging infectious disease class last fall. "It is rare to find a student of Devin's caliber who is grounded, easygoing, and driven all at once," Vargas said. "What distinguishes Devin is his compassion and his ability to teach others."

Activities, honors, and employment: Black Belt, Shotokan Karate; Improv Club; Eagle Scout; TriBeta Biology Honor Society; NeuroLab Residential Research Institute, Coastal Marine Biolabs; Swensen Science Summer Research Fellow; student program coordinator, CLU University Honors Program; tutor, CLU Math Center

Volunteerism: summer reading program and Teen Advisory Board, Camarillo Public Library (800 hours)

Mia Sweeney

University of Connecticut (UConn) Guilford [Connecticut] High School (GHS) (2019)

Mia recently completed her first year as an animal science major at UConn, where she is a member of the Honors Program. She hopes to be an ambulatory mixed-practice veterinarian. Rachael Wardin Schettenhelm of the Wardin Brothers Dairy in Hemlock, Michigan, said Mia is a quick learner with a strong work ethic and, along with a heavy chore load, was a great mentor for 4-H members preparing to show cattle. "Mia has unbridled enthusiasm for animals and their care and training," Schettenhelm said. "She is knowledgeable on so many aspects of animal care and passionate about furthering her education."

Mia says it is only through the American Federation of Teachers that her family was able to stay in their home after her parents' divorce. Because the union ensured her mother's job security and salary stability, she was spared a disruptive move and was able to stay in the excellent school system that prepared her well for college.

Activities, honors, and employment: UConn Equestrian Club (IHSA); Adventures in Veterinary Medicine summer program, Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, Tufts University; Presidential Bronze Award for Community Service; Excellence in AP Chemistry; stable hand, Miles Hill Farm; farmhand, Wardin Brothers Dairy

Volunteerism: Animal Assisted Therapy Services; A Place Called Hope; peer mentor

Megan Taylor

Concordia University Chicago Truman State University, Kirksville, Missouri: Bachelor of Arts, psychology (2005) Wauconda [Illinois] Community High School (2001)

Megan is registrar and counseling department secretary for Waukegan [Illinois] High School, where she has worked since 2011. She expects to complete a Master of Arts in school counseling in May 2022. Megan, who is deeply committed to providing excellent care and opportunities for her daughter with special needs, said she has witnessed the impact of school counselors in children's lives and the need for counselors who are well trained, passionate, and dedicated. She believes a master's degree will better equip her to be a supportive resource for children and make a positive impact in her community.

Despite initial ambivalence about unions, Megan said she quickly learned how AFT supports members when AFT resolved a dispute following an administration change at her school that led to unfavorable working conditions. "AFT not only advocated for me, they taught me how to protect myself," Megan says. "My union has been a source of strength and support for me over the last three years, and I don't believe I would still be employed in my current school district if not for the iron will of our representatives and executive board."

Volunteerism: Staben House; Feed My Starving Children

Tawny Townsend

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UW-La Crosse) Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington: Bachelor of Arts (1999), Master of Arts (2004), Master of Education (2006) South Kitsap High School, Port Orchard, Washington (1995)

Tawny is a doctoral candidate in the UW-La Crosse Student Affairs Administration and Leadership program and expects to complete the degree in May 2021. Her goal is to serve as a community college leader—shrinking equity gaps in access and achievement, elevating student retention and completion, and emphasizing gainful employment—while mentoring other women who work in higher education. In addition to Tawny's AFT membership, her husband, Anthony Esser, is a member of the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF).

Jörg Vianden, UW-La Crosse department chair and member of Tawny's dissertation committee, said that despite her full-time work and other obligations, she has achieved at a level not attainable by most doctoral students. He also noted her strong commitment to the program's focus on equity and social justice. "What I appreciate as much as her academic achievement is Tawny's ability to support and encourage her cohort members, her willingness to challenge herself and her peers in examining important issues in higher education, and her loyal and collegial interactions with faculty," Vianden said.

Activities, honors, and employment: Vice President for Member Support, AFT Local 1873; Judy Hoover Award for Excellence; Hobsons Education Advances "Progress and Succeed" Award; representative to Kyrgyzstan, Advisers' Professional Partnership Program, U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs; full-time instructor, Everett [Washington] Community College; Whatcom Community College

Volunteerism: Common Threads; Northern Heights Elementary; Gardenview Montessori

Lynne Turner

The Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY)
The Murphy Institute, CUNY School of Professional Studies: Master of Arts, labor studies (2012)
Swarthmore [Pennsylvania] College: Bachelor of Arts, political science (1986)
University High School, Newark, New Jersey (1981)

Lynne is a sociology doctoral student at CUNY and expects to complete the program in May 2022, with the goal of working full-time as a labor educator in either a university or union setting. She is the Mellon Humanities Alliance Teaching Fellow for Community College Pedagogy at LaGuardia Community College and an adjunct lecturer in the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies. Having grown up working poor and being a first-generation post-secondary student, Lynne is passionate about teaching working-class students and advocating for low-wage, primarily immigrant workers.

Lynne was a labor movement practitioner for two decades and worked with sundry unions, including the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and UNITE HERE. She authored a chapter in a book co-edited by Distinguished Professor of Sociology Ruth Milkman, *New Labor in New York: Precarious Workers and the Future of the Labor Movement*. The piece is a study of SEIU's innovative "Fight for a Fair Economy" campaign, originally written as the capstone of her master's degree. "Lynne writes beautifully and has demonstrated an impressive capacity for serious fieldwork and scholarship," Milkman said.

Activities and honors: Interactive Technology and Pedagogy (ITP) Certificate, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Volunteerism: Broad range of union-related activities

Learn More About the Union Plus Scholarship Program

The Union Plus Scholarship Program, now in its 29th year, awards scholarships based on outstanding academic achievement, personal character, financial need, and commitment to the values of organized labor. The program is offered through the Union Plus Education Foundation.

Since starting the program in 1991, Union Plus has awarded more than \$4.8 million in educational funding to more than 3,200 union members, spouses, and dependent children. Union Plus Scholarship awards are granted to students attending a two-year college, four-year college, graduate school, or recognized technical or trade school. The selection process is very competitive, and this year over 6,300 applications were received from 68 unions and all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia, two U.S. territories, and six Canadian provinces.

Visit unionplus.org/scholarship for applications and benefit eligibility.

About Union Plus

Union Plus, founded by the AFL-CIO in 1986, uses the collective buying power of America's 12.5 million union members to deliver top-quality benefits and services at competitive prices to working families. In addition to the scholarship program, Union Plus offers the Free College program, which makes it possible for union members and their families to earn an associate degree completely online at no cost. As a complement to the Free College program, Union Plus offers the new Bachelor's Degree Completion program, providing union members and their families a low-cost option to complete their bachelor's degree completely online. Union Plus also provides a wide range of money-saving programs, including discounts on wireless services from AT&T, the only nationwide unionized wireless carrier; insurance protection; savings on travel and recreation; and more. For additional information, visit **unionplus.org**.

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