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Carmen David Mirabile, Chief Growth Officer; Aaron Piccirilli, Treasurer, Board of Directors; Lisa Snodgrass, Director of Business Development; and Brian Peller, Community Relations Officer, presented the check on behalf of Freedom Federal Credit Union alongside Richie Huffman, President and CEO of Huffman Family Brands, and members of the Huffman Family Brands leadership team to Sarah Park and Talitha Lyons, representing the Bright Beginnings Grant Program recipients.

FREEDOM FEDERAL CREDIT UNION AWARDS \$8,000 TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS THROUGH PARTNERSHIP WITH HUFFMAN FAMILY BRANDS

***Freedom's Bright Beginnings Program awarded grants to seven educators from
Celebree Schools and Caliday Programs for innovative classroom initiatives***

Bel Air, MD – Freedom Federal Credit Union is proud to announce the recipients of its inaugural Bright Beginnings Grant Program. Created in partnership with Huffman Family

Brands, the program supports early childhood educators and innovative classroom initiatives that enhance learning and development.

Through the 2026 program launch, Freedom awarded \$8,000 in grant funding to seven educators across Celebree Schools and Caliday Before and After School Programs. The initiative recognizes creative, sustainable, and impactful ideas designed to enrich the educational experience for young learners while supporting the educators who serve them every day.

A check presentation for the Bright Beginnings Grant Program was held on June 10th, bringing together grant recipients alongside representatives from Freedom Federal Credit Union and Huffman Family Brands, to celebrate the program's inaugural year and the impact of the selected projects.

Applications for the Bright Beginnings Grant Program were reviewed by a panel of judges and evaluated based on creativity, impact, and sustainability.

Bright Beginnings Grant Recipients

Tracy Flora of Celebree in Annapolis is creating an Indoor Infant Sensory Garden Experience that brings nature-inspired exploration into the classroom through tactile materials, sensory stations, and interactive play.

Sumayya Ahmed of Celebree in Frederick is enhancing her classroom with immersive sensory stations, flexible learning spaces, and dramatic play experiences designed to engage two-year-old learners through exploration and creativity.

Sarah Park of Celebree in Forest Hill is creating a more inclusive learning environment through playground enhancements, a calming quiet space, and an engaging sensory play area designed to support children of all abilities.

Keona Carmichael of Caliday at Pot Spring Elementary School is implementing Mighty Movers, a health and wellness initiative that integrates active play with structured movement and nutrition-based learning.

Talitha Lyons of Caliday at William S. James Elementary School is developing a Future Innovators Lab that combines STEM exploration with early financial literacy concepts.

Jeremy Mundell of Caliday at Timonium Elementary School is implementing a Flexible Learning and Calm Corner Initiative designed to support student focus, engagement, and emotional regulation.

Jolanda Graham of Caliday at Woodholme Elementary School is creating a Healing and Enrichment Corner designed to provide students with a safe, supportive space for both learning and emotional regulation.

“The Bright Beginnings Grant Program reflects Freedom’s commitment to invest in our educators at every stage of a child’s learning journey,” said Aaron Piccirilli, Treasurer of Freedom’s Board of Directors. “Early childhood educators play a critical role in shaping young minds, and through our partnership with Huffman Family Brands, we are proud to support innovative ideas that will positively impact children and families now and for years to come.”

Reflecting on the impact of the program, recipient Sarah Park shared, “I am grateful for this amazing opportunity to make a difference in my school. Thanks to Freedom Federal Credit Union and their generous donation and support, my ideas to improve Celebree school in Forest Hill are going to become real. No matter what people tell you, words and ideas can change the world.”

Talitha Lyons also expressed appreciation for the grant opportunity, stating, “I am so grateful for receiving this grant for my school at William S. James. Receiving this grant is an incredible honor and a meaningful investment in the work that lies ahead for my center.”

Richie Huffman, President and CEO of Huffman Family Brands, emphasized the significance of the partnership, stating: “Celebree, Caliday, and Huffman Family Brands are thrilled to create a true partnership with Freedom Federal Credit Union and its Bright Beginnings program. We are honored to be the first early childhood education providers selected to pilot these grants. The \$8,000 in grant funding, which will be shared across seven programs under Huffman Family Brands, will help enhance classrooms, strengthen school environments, and enrich the overall educational experience for hundreds of children and families.”

Huffman Family Brands is a suite of organizations focused on early childhood education, business growth, and community impact. Through Celebree Schools, Caliday programs, and the Huffman Family Foundation, the organization is committed to strengthening communities and supporting the next generation of learners.

The Bright Beginnings Grant Program reflects Freedom Federal Credit Union’s ongoing commitment to investing in education and empowering educators to bring innovative ideas to life. Building on the success of Freedom’s Golden Apple Awards, which has supported PreK-12 educators for 14 years, Bright Beginnings focuses specifically on early childhood learning environments, fostering creativity, confidence, and foundational skills that benefit children both inside and outside the classroom.

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About Freedom Federal Credit Union

Freedom Federal Credit Union is a community-chartered federal credit union offering business banking services and consumer financial services to those who live, work, volunteer, worship, attend school, or have family in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Carroll County, and Harford County. Freedom was founded in 1953 and currently has eight locations throughout Harford and Baltimore Counties. To learn more, visit freedomfcu.org.

About Huffman Family Brands

Huffman Family Brands (HFB) is a unified platform company dedicated to fostering social development, innovation, and community empowerment through its portfolio of powerful and beloved brands. Led by founder Richard Huffman, HFB builds on decades of success with brands like Celebree School, Caliday School Age Programs, Celebree Enterprise, and more. Together, all operating brands under HFB provide early childhood education, enrichment programs, franchise opportunities, and philanthropic support to communities across the United States. With over 150 locations open or in development in 15 states, Huffman Family Brands continues to lead the way in supporting families, entrepreneurs, and communities. For more information, visit huffmanfamilybrands.com.