



## YMCA of Greater Cincinnati

The mission of the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all. The organization welcomes all without exception, and with a commitment to strengthening and uniting diverse communities.

“Both on a local level and nationwide, the Y is on a journey to become an anti-racist, multicultural organization that values human diversity in all its forms and actively opposes racism by connecting and educating people and mobilizing community action,” said the organization’s nominator.

Through collaborations with community and national partners, the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati launched the Better Us Initiative in 2020 as an embodiment of its mission to serve all. The initiative, which unifies the organization’s approach to racial equity work and aligns these efforts to its mission, began with a review of current offerings and a vision to expand its reach. Examples of this work include:

- **UNDIVIDED:** The YMCA collaborated with the local nonprofit LivingUNDIVIDED on the UNDIVIDED program, which “takes participants on a six-week journey to racial healing and solidarity.” Each cohort included 30 participants and highlighted the voices and experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. The program was offered to YMCA staff, members, and community organizations and partners to reach as many as possible.
- **Teen programs:** A relaunch of teen programs focused on racial and gender equity to support Boys and Young Men of Color. Included are a civic engagement program inspiring interest in state and local politics, activism and organizing, and political transparency and integrity; Black and Latino Achievers, a college-/career-readiness program providing students with the tools to develop social-emotional capacities and identify career paths; and 1:1 Reach and Rise Mentoring, a program using a therapeutic mentoring model to provide teens of color with individual mentoring, case management resources, and trauma-informed mental health counseling.

The organization’s nominator notes its mission’s connection to Dr. King’s dream of equal rights through nonviolence.

“At the core of our mission lies the understanding that strengthening and uniting communities is the most important work we can do. We operate community centers where folks from all walks of life – differing in race, age, socioeconomic background – come together to learn, grow, and thrive.”

## Organization Award

*Award criteria: Nominees must be organizations that have made significant contributions toward building a sense of unity among Ohio citizens. Nominees must have used Dr. King’s vision of nonviolent social change to successfully bring people from diverse backgrounds together to build a better community and advance equity.*