

To the Town of Hamden,

I'm writing with reference to suggestions for the distribution of ARPA relief funding. Our community, and most notably our youth has been hurt by the pandemic, and we need to invest in many avenues to address learning loss, and increased anxiety now present. **I propose we provide the non-profit, We Are The Village, Inc with 2 line items of \$100,000 per year for FY 23, and FY 24.** This would be approximately 1.61% of the allotted funds to our town, which would help cover rent, utilities, wifi, and a few part-time staff at Pershing St. This funding would go a long way to lessen the impact that the pandemic has had on our children. Let me tell you why I think this is an invaluable investment for our town and community.

These funds are categorized into buckets, of which I think We Are The Village, Inc fits nicely into #2. **“Respond to the far reaching public health and negative economic impacts of the pandemic,** by supporting the health of communities, and helping households, small businesses, impacted industries, nonprofits, and the public sector recover from economic impacts.”

We Are The Village, Inc is a non-profit that was founded by Melissa Atterberry-Jones, to create a safe-space for our youth. Over the past two years she has serviced hundreds of kids in the Hamden/New Haven area and has created something really special in our town. The Village services kids aged 10-18 after school from 230-630pm. But most importantly this is a place for kids with troubled home lives to be safe. Melissa has put together many productive workshops like teaching kids how to manage finances, teaching them martial arts and boxing, and having journal time for kids to express themselves.

As the pandemic reemerged this fall The Village had to temporarily shut down. Even when shut down they managed to organize 2 school supply giveaways, a coat drive, and a holiday toy drive. We Are The Village, Inc recently reopened and is servicing kids again and we are looking to make it sustainable and long lasting.

I met Melissa when I was campaigning in the summer, and immediately saw the value in her program. I talked to thousands of people in Hamden and one of the recurring themes that people voiced was “our kids have nothing to do, so they get in trouble.” This winter, Melissa asked me to join the volunteer board at We Are The Village, Inc, and I agreed because I think what she is providing addresses this specific issue. I heard it from residents time and time again, and see this as being a productive solution to address the root cause of some of the violence we are seeing in our community.

We are committed to seeking a multitude of revenue sources, in addition to fundraising. But we think it would be incredibly valuable to have the town as a partner on this, as we look to address the needs of our children and build a brighter future for Hamden.

To me, I really think this is a small investment to create something really special for our children, and I'd be happy to talk more via phone/text (203-654-1799), or email [petercyr@berkeley.edu](mailto:petercyr@berkeley.edu). And I also would love to show anyone the space if you want to see our new awesome game room, pool, and ping pong table. -Peter Cyr, Hamden resident.