



## **Give Us the Floor Launches Dedicated App to Provide Safe Peer Support for Struggling Teens**

*New app offers anonymity and engagement for innovative program that helps 89% of participants*

San Francisco | March 15, 2022 – As President Biden is making plans to study social media’s role in the mental health crisis among teens, nonprofit Give Us the Floor (GUTF) is leveraging teen devotion to their mobile devices to create a safe, online community where they can learn how to share and listen to each other and their own emerging voices and

identities. A new app developed specifically for GUTF’s supportive group chats helps provide the fundamental lifeline of positive peer relations, especially for teens who identify as LGBTQIA+. In 2021, 85% of GUTF participants said they felt less lonely after one month and 89% said the program had helped them with their struggles after three months of participation.

“Give Us the Floor is doing a great deal to help teens; offering peer support for helping them deal with what’s going on in their lives,” says GUTF Advisor Dr. Robin Stern who is the co-founder and associate director for the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence and an associate research scientist at the Child Study Center at Yale.

“Teens need their peers more than ever in these challenging times,” continued Stern. “We know from research that social support is a key pathway to building resilience and can buffer against loneliness and isolation. Developing connections with others holds the promise of creating safe and brave spaces where healing can happen and all feelings are welcome. This new app will allow GUTF to support even more teens seeking connection.”

In every GUTF supportive group chat, teens help teens in distress without fear of stigma, taboo or shame. The organization started in 2015 with in-person groups and moved online when it was determined that anonymous interaction was more helpful. The new app, available for Android and iOS, provides a private, safe home for groups originally formed on Snapchat. Trained teens facilitate each group of 12 to 15 members who help each other with common mental health and social issues such as depression, isolation, anxiety, body image, bullying and relationships.

“As a teen, I didn’t have much support with mental health issues, and this left me feeling like something was wrong with me; that I was abnormal,” said Julia Esposito, who participated in the GUTF program for several years and now serves as a junior adult advisor. “GUTF challenged that mentality, and I met others with similar experiences. It was invaluable support.”

As the program has grown, GUTF has primarily attracted participants from the LGBTQIA+ community, with 86% of supportive group chat members indicating that they identify as LGBTQIA+. GUTF has served more than 6,000 teens since the first online supportive group chats were formed in 2018.

“The new app allows us to provide additional security and complete anonymity to the youth we help, which encourages sharing,” says founder Valerie Grison-Alsop. “We have also added new features like crisis reporting which allows every participant to escalate a perceived crisis, or inappropriate content or behavior to the adult team. In combination with our new automated training, the new app will allow us to scale and support even more teens now and in the future.”

For more information: [www.giveusthefloor.org](http://www.giveusthefloor.org).