Philanthropy Award Recipients

On September 17, 2022, we hosted a gala at the Convention Center to celebrate the Community Foundation’s 50th anniversary and to honor our Philanthropy Award recipients.

For Judy, the importance of giving back to your community is something she learned from family.

Her grandparents were active in the community in a variety of ways as were her parents, Nancy and the late Joe Briggs. Judy has continued that family tradition with her board service for Planned Parenthood — also a role that her grandmother, mother and brother played — Rochester Institute of Technology (her grandfather and father before her), and the Community
Foundation, a board on which her dad previously served.

During Judy’s 12 years on the Foundation board, she led several committees and lent her strategic approach to every discussion and every initiative. Most recently, she served as chair and later co-chair of the 10-year effort to increase endowment and unrestricted gifts for future grantmaking.

Judy and Erik have been Foundation donors and fundholders since 1989 and in 2022 became champions for the Foundation’s Racial Equity and Social Justice Fund, matching gifts up to a total of $50,000 to support current and future grantmaking to ensure that people of all races and ethnicities have opportunities to realize their fullest potential.
During the Community Foundation’s early years, board members were each asked to make a contribution annually to help cover operating expenses. Jon, then a trust officer at Genesee Valley Union Trust Company, suggested to fellow Foundation board members that the fundraising focus be shifted to building an endowment for the future.

Jon’s next “endowment moment” came in 1996. During a meeting to brainstorm ways to mark the Foundation’s 25th anniversary, Jon shared an idea to create a special permanent fund and asking folks to contribute in honor of the Foundation’s special anniversary. The 21st Century Fund was a great success.
Now called the Catalysts for Change Fund, it contributes up to $125,000 a year for grants supporting current and changing needs deemed critical by the Foundation.

Endowment is also at the heart of a fund Jon set up to provide scholarships to graduating seniors from his own high school in a small community in Montgomery County so they have opportunities to broaden their futures.
deep roots that began in the South more than 150 years ago. After slavery was ab
old and his great grandfather was set free, he acquired land and donated
a portion to build the Cedar Grove Baptist Church. Over time, several newer
and bigger churches were built on family land as the congregations grew. This church
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Emerson witnessed how his own parents gave back to their community and stepped in to support extended family members after a tragedy.

These events greatly influenced Emerson. During his 36-year career at Xerox, he held leadership positions in several national and worldwide divisions. But he always made time to serve on boards of various corporate, higher education, and nonprofit organizations — including the Community Foundation.

Supporting young people in their educational journeys is important to Emerson and his wife, Vernita. They have established scholarships at Monroe Community College and the University of Rochester, and three in his home state of North Carolina. Plus, Emerson and his lifelong friend Kenneth Johnson have raised more than $250,000 since 1995 through an annual golf tournament for scholarships to help seniors who graduate from North Carolina high schools.
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you can’t do that without including her late hu
sb and, Jacques. With every request for funding that came their way, they would de
Their philanthropic focus is primarily arts and health — cancer specifically — with most of their giving supporting Rochester because this is where Jacques grew up and had his medical career.

Dawn’s and Jacques’s generosity has resulted in many accolades from organizations they support and their names on many things. But it was the creation of the Lipson Cancer and Blood
Disorder Institute at Rochester Regional Health where Dawn’s involvement in and passion for the project was most evident. She worked with architects on the design, chose the paint colors, carpeting, furnishings, and even art for the walls because she and Jacques wanted patients to immediately feel comfortable as soon as they walked through the door.

The Lipsons, who have served on many nonprofit boards in our community, volunteered for those roles to watch over investments they made or because their expertise and connections could be useful. As Dawn looks back on what her philanthropy has accomplished and what impact her future giving might have, she likes to share a quote from her friend, the late real estate developer Elliott Landsman: “It is always better to give with warm hands.”

On August 12, 2021, we hosted our annual philanthropy celebration outside at Frontier Field. Learn more about our wonderful honorees below.

While we usually host our Philanthropy Awards and Annual Report to the Community Luncheon at the Joseph A. Floreano Rochester Riverside Convention Center, our 2020 celebration was the first virtual event of its kind. Our philanthropy award recipients embody the event theme: “Generosity Can’t Be Quarantined.” Here is the full recording of our livestream from September 23, 2020, and you can scroll further below for excerpts featuring our honorees.

José Coronas, Joe U. Posner
Founders Award

Born in Cuba, José came to Rochester for a summer job at Kodak and returned after graduating from college for a full-time job
there. When the division he led was sold to Johnson & Johnson Ortho-Clinical Diagnostics, he became its president. After retiring, he and two others who spent their careers at Kodak started Trillium Group, to provide seed funding to help start new businesses.

José’s earliest connection to the Community Foundation was while he served on the board of Ibero-American Action League, which then established a scholarship fund at the Foundation to support Hispanic high school students going on to college. José and his wife, Karen, also created a scholarship at St. John Fisher College to support Hispanic students there. The Coronases split their time between Canandaigua and Florida.

Nancy Robbins

This native of Pennsylvania was recruited by a headhunter in 1961 to be a buyer at the former Sibley’s department store. Throughout her life, Nancy has volunteered on many boards, including serving as president of the now-defunct Women’s Education and Industrial Union. She chaired the downtown festival during Rochester’s sesquicentennial in 1984 and also WXXI’s auction. But Nancy is best known for being the lead volunteer and fundraiser for the Ronald McDonald House, which opened 30 years ago just a few streets away from the Golisano Children’s Hospital. She also served as that organization’s first board chair. Nancy, who lives in Pittsford, regularly engages her two daughters and five grandsons in recommending grants from the family’s charitable fund at the Foundation.

Mary-Frances Winters

Named by *Forbes* magazine as one of 10 trailblazers in diversity and inclusion in 2019, Mary-Frances got her start in
this important work when she launched The Winters Group in 1984 after she left Kodak. A longtime Rochester resident who now lives in North Carolina, Mary-Frances served on the Community Foundation’s board of directors and established The Winters Group Fund to Promote Diversity & Inclusion in 1996. That fund has awarded more than $200,000 in grants to support innovative efforts at nonprofits across the country to improve diversity and inclusion. Mary-Frances is also a prolific author. Her latest book, Black Fatigue: How Racism Erodes the Mind, Body, and Spirit, was released in the fall of 2020.