

Supporting Arts and Culture

It's important for the arts to be available to everyone in our community. And the Community Foundation's support of the Rochester International Jazz Festival ensures that free musical performances are available every day of the festival.

With support from the Community Foundation, Gibbs Street, which is dubbed "Jazz Street" during the nine-day festival, becomes a gathering place for music lovers with 40-plus free performances by about 20 local high school musical ensembles in addition to other local, professional, and international acts. Hundreds toting their own folding chairs or borrowing the ones already lined up on the street are treated to a great variety of musical talent six hours each night. The festival estimates that about 5,000 people attend these free concerts each night.

Marc Iacona, co-producer of the event held in late June, said the festival's mantra each year is to affect the quality of life of the community in a positive way. "Without the continued participation and partnership with the Community Foundation, we would not be able to sustain the variety of performances that are produced on Jazz Street for nine consecutive nights," he says.

In 2019, the festival had 20 venues where individuals who bought tickets or passes could go to see more than 320 shows. Free performances were quite plentiful, with more than 90 musical acts performed on nine stages – including the Community Foundation-supported Jazz Street Stage.

Impressed with the Foundation's efforts to make music more accessible, Rick Williams created the Jazz Street Fund in

hopes that others would join him in underwriting the free music stage. Because the stage is jointly sponsored by the City of Rochester, Williams says the fund could help offset the Foundation's \$30,000 sponsorship and free up more money for other community needs. He also points to one very tangible benefit to consider: "There are probably hundreds of kids who get up there and are able to experience performing."