

# **\$1.3M Quarterly Grant Distribution is Largest Ever**

Rochester Area Community Foundation's board of directors has approved 36 grants totaling \$1.3 million – the largest-ever quarterly grant distribution in the Foundation's history.

The grants represent the Community Foundation's shift to fewer, larger grants with particular focus on the Foundation's two broad goals for grantmaking and leadership – creating an equitable community and strengthening regional vitality.

“By purposefully aligning our grantmaking with these two main goals, we are committed to transforming the greater Rochester region by tackling some of our toughest issues with help from our nonprofit partners as well as the community philanthropists who make this possible,” says Hank Rubin, vice president for community programs.

This round of grants also dovetails with the Community Foundation's leadership efforts in the areas of education, poverty, early childhood, and race. Because the equity and vitality goals are so broad, each is accompanied by detailed action areas that focus on challenges confronting our communities: From reducing the academic achievement gap and fostering racial and ethnic equity to preserving historical assets and promoting vibrant and diverse cultural offerings.

Under the “Creating an Equitable Community” goal, \$1,070,909 was approved to support 24 grants. Among those grants are five, totaling \$465,000, that comprise a comprehensive approach to evaluating, improving, and sustaining effective and accessible out-of-school-time programs. These programs include before-school, after-school, expanded learning, and summer enrichment. This investment includes:

A \$160,000 grant – \$40,000 each to four organizations

providing out-of-school-time programming – will be used to conduct a deeper, more intensive review of programs for Rochester City School District students that are operated by Quad A for Kids, the Boys & Girls Clubs, Community Place, and the YMCA of Greater Rochester. Employees in these test programs will receive additional coaching and training and be connected with necessary outside resources. Program data will be reviewed and compared to student performance in school to see if what is happening before or after school is influencing academic achievement.

- A \$140,000 grant to the Greater Rochester After-School Alliance will strengthen this informal volunteer committee of funders, policymakers, researchers, and family and provider representatives, which serves as the community's primary out-of-school-time organization. The group, established in 2001 by the Community Foundation, has benefitted from a full-time contract consultant funded by the Ford Foundation since 2012. With a new, full-time director and part-time support staff, GRASA will now be able to coordinate the system-wide training, coaching and technical assistance that are linchpins of the other four grants.
- With a \$30,000 grant, GRASA will introduce the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) tool to all out-of-school-time programs to measure the social, emotional well-being and personal skills of their students. Research shows that student performance in reading and in school overall can be explained by their social and emotional competence, which includes responsible decision-making, ability to relate to peers, and social awareness.
- To help ensure that adults work effectively with students in out-of-school-time programs, a \$100,000 grant will support implementation of the Youth Program Quality Improvement (YPQI) process to help program staff get the training and coaching they need to improve their

own skills as well as the experience for participating youth. This coordinated approach will be supported locally by the Children's Institute and Coordinated Care Services and the national Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality.

- A \$35,000 grant to the American Institutes for Research will provide independent, in-depth evaluation of the four programs listed above (Quad A, Boys & Girls Clubs, Community Place and YMCA) by reviewing student data from the programs and the City School District on social and emotional well-being, grade point averages, school attendance, and engagement in school. This will provide insight into whether the programs are helping young people to thrive, be successful and have the capacity to continue to be effective in the future.

“National research indicates that significant, sustained participation in out-of-school-time programs contributes to youth success in school and in life. The initiatives supported by these grants will provide the data needed to determine if our strategic investments in youth are paying off,” says Jennifer Leonard, president and CEO of the Community Foundation.

Also falling under the “Equity” goal is a related grant of \$60,000 to the Public Policy & Education Fund, Inc., which will continue to staff the Community Task Force on School Climate. The grant supports organizing and planning for this grassroots collaboration charged with transforming the teaching and learning environments in Rochester city schools. The task force developed a draft Code of Conduct (now open for comment on the District website) and expects to finalize it in the coming year. The Code is aimed, in part, at reducing school suspensions, introducing resources to help all school personnel use restorative approaches to classroom discipline, and engaging a number of “model schools” to implement and evaluate the new Code.

Under the “Strengthening Regional Vitality” goal, 10 grants totaling \$183,250 will assist historical preservation projects. These include support for restoration of an historic house at Genesee Country Village & Museum, the East Porch at George Eastman House, a Civil War sesquicentennial monument in Mt. Hope Cemetery, the gardens greenhouse at Sonnenberg Gardens & Mansion State Historic Park in Canandaigua, and a chapel in the Orleans County town of Clarendon. The Community Foundation is the region’s largest private funder of historical preservation efforts.