THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

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2025 Philanthropy Award Honorees Call for Hope and Action

On November 20, more than 400 people gathered for Rochester Area Community Foundation's *Celebration of Giving* to recognize the local and lasting impact of philanthropy.

The evening featured stories of philanthropy in action, highlighting individuals, nonprofits, and communities who are innovating through challenging times for the public sector.

The String Queens — a Washington DC-based trio that has performed at the Rochester International Jazz Festival and The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts — performed for guests in the Hyatt Regency Rochester ballroom. As part of their visit to Rochester, The String Queens taught a masterclass for third through sixth grade students in the Strings for Success program at Rochester City School District's Dr. Charles T. Lunsford School No. 19, organized by the Community Foundation.

This year's Philanthropy Award honorees were Laurie and Richard Riedman, receiving the Joe U. Posner Founder's Award, Philip L. Burke, Esq, receiving the Community Bridge-Builder Award, and Jerry Fisher, Phd, and Jonathan Rosenfeld receiving the Philanthropy Award.

The Joe U. Posner Founders Award is named after the Community Foundation's founding chair, an insurance salesman who believed in putting community first.

The Riedmans' professional expertise — Laurie in communications and Rich in IT and logistics — once launched a public relations firm that started with a fax machine in their living room. Today, it makes them invaluable volunteers.

Richard Riedman, owner of Riedman Workflow Design, serves on the board of Ontario Cares and facilitates men's groups through the ManKind Project. Rich served on the Community Foundation's Board of Directors for over a decade — a role his father filled before him.

Laurie Rieman has applied her skills in public relations to support many nonprofits, like the Community Foundation and Woman Within. Libraries played a central role in her childhood and continue to hold a special place in her heart. She recently served as Vice President of the Friends of Wood Library in Canandaigua. Laurie is a published author, whose memoir, "Diamonds in the Dirt" describes a life of joy as well as trauma.

"We've learned that even just two people can create real impact," Rich and Laurie reflected. "There's a formula: Action – even small action – combined with community creates hope."

The Community Bridge-Builder Award, new this year, celebrates a professional advisor who fosters meaningful partnerships and advocates for the value of philanthropy. The inaugural recipient is Philip L. Burke, Esq, a local trusts and estates attorney with Woods Oviatt Gilman LLP. Phil helps clients align their values with meaningful charitable strategies.

Phil fondly remembers working with a client to set up a fund at the Foundation that upkeeps graveyards in rural communities. His introductions have led to several gift commitments, including a multi-generational estate plan that could yield more than $10 million in charitable impact.

Phil's giving is rooted in love of family. Inspired by his wife's story of adoption, he has volunteered with Families Thrive, formerly known as Children Awaiting Parents. After his father's cancer diagnosis, Phil helped bring the national Gilda's Club model to Rochester. Phil sings with the Rochester Oratorio Society and serves on the boards of both the Society and Geva Theatre.

Alongside his wife, Sharon, Phil has called Rochester home for 44 years. Today, he says, "If you earn here, give here."

Philanthropy Award honorees Jerry Fisher and Jonathan Rosenfeld share a commitment to making giving more inclusive, more impactful, and more joyful. As a proud member of the LGBTQIA2+ community, Jonathan sees philanthropy as a way of building unity in a divided world. "We have an amazing opportunity to show what a community does when we are united," he says.

Jerry and Jonathan support collaborative giving initiatives at the Community Foundation like the LGBT+ Giving Circle, NextGen Giving Circle, African American Giving Initiative, and the Black Giving Collective — where people come together to pool resources and build community.

Successful careers have fueled the Orleans couple's capacity to give. Jonathan has specialized in marketing and brand building across the fashion, automotive, and healthcare industries. Jerry earned a PhD in business administration and consulted with Fortune 500 companies. In 2016, they founded Innovating Edge, Inc, to help organizations build successful teams.

Through the Philanthropy Awards, Rochester Area Community Foundation has been recognizing the contributions of generous individuals and families since 1991.

About Rochester Area Community Foundation

In partnership with generous philanthropists and community partners, Rochester Area Community Foundation works to improve the quality of life for people who live and work in the eight-county region through its leadership and strategic grantmaking. As a leading grantmaker, the Foundation is focused on two broad goals: creating an equitable community and strengthening our region's vitality. Since 1972, the Community Foundation has distributed more than $740 million in grants and scholarships.