

Foundation of Former Bills' Owner Endows Half-Million-Dollar "Smart Strategy" Fund

The foundation created by Buffalo Bills founder Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. has awarded \$525,000 to Rochester Area Community Foundation to find, analyze, and share data that can advance powerful solutions for positive community change.

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Fund for Smart Strategy will provide annual and ongoing grant support for expert research, evaluation, intelligence gathering, and assessment of best practices for community improvement. In addition to the \$500,000 gift to establish this fund, [The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation](#) also awarded a grant of \$25,000 to start the necessary data gathering and analysis immediately.

"Today's announcement marks yet another milestone in The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation's commitment to charities and communities throughout Rochester and Western New York," said Mary Wilson, wife of Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. "Ralph cared deeply about this community and it is wonderful to see that this donation will be used in such an impactful way – especially during this time of year. We are proud to be a part of today's announcement to help ensure a strategic community investment approach in Rochester."

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation was created with \$1.2 billion from an irrevocable trust after Wilson passed away in March 2014. This grantmaking foundation, based in Grosse Pointe Farms, Mich., is dedicated primarily to sustained

investment in the quality of life for the people in Western New York and Southeastern Michigan. Per Wilson's directive, the foundation's assets will be spent over the course of 20 years.

A native of Detroit, Wilson considered Western New York his adopted hometown because of his passion for the Buffalo Bills football team, which he founded in 1959. Rochester's connection to the Bills became even stronger in 2000 when the team moved its summer training camp to St. John Fisher College in Pittsford. About 15 percent of the Bills' 60,000 season ticketholders live in the greater Rochester area.

"We are honored to help The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation continue Mr. Wilson's philanthropic legacy in greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes region," said Jennifer Leonard, president and CEO at the Community Foundation. "We so appreciate the Foundation's investment in our community's capacity to invest smartly in our future, at a time when the Finger Lakes region is preparing for a \$500 million infusion from New York State to fund projects, create jobs, and support our community's work to reverse the trajectory of our extreme and concentrated poverty."

The Community Foundation will use the current \$25,000, in part, to update and analyze poverty information for the nine-county region using the most recent U.S. Census information from the American Community Survey (2010-2014). This report will help provide baseline data for measuring the anti-poverty efforts, which officially got underway earlier this year.

This \$500,000 gift and the creation of the Smart Strategy fund is part of a Transitional Legacy Grant Program that trustees

for The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation initiated this year to distribute a limited number of grants before launching its formal grant cycle in 2016.

In early November, the Foundation awarded \$4 million to the University at Buffalo to support its sports medicine program. Later in the month, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo received \$7 million to establish endowments to provide annual support forever to three areas of interest that were important to Mr. Wilson – cancer care, community assets, and youth sports – as well as endowments for Hunter’s Hope, the Western New York Amateur Football Alliance, and the Buffalo foundation’s leadership work.

To date, The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation has provided more than \$20 million in gifts to support organizations in Western New York.