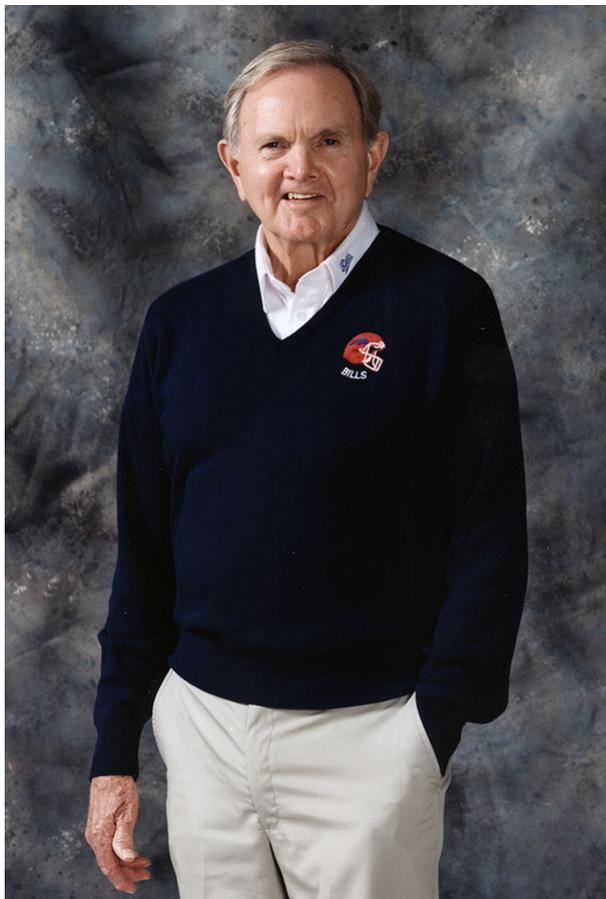


Ralph C. Wilson, Jr.'s Legacy and Love of Sports Continue



Ralph C. Wilson, Jr.

Rochester Area Community Foundation is awarding \$285,660 to 16 local youth sports and recreation programs from the **Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Fund for Youth Sports**. The fund, created by the private foundation of the late founder and owner of the Buffalo Bills to benefit the Greater Rochester region, has now invested more than \$1.2 million in local programs in just four years.

The 2021 grants range from \$10,000 to \$25,000 and support projects that will have a direct impact on thousands of youth and several dozen adult coaches in Monroe, Ontario, and Wayne counties. Of the 16 grant recipients, seven were new applicants and received funding from this fund for the first time.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed a number of challenges for the fund's fourth grant round. When the grant opportunity was announced in October 2020, many potential applicants didn't know what to expect for 2021, schools were still operating remotely, the vaccine was not yet available, and health officials were warning of a post-holiday surge of cases. Last year, 36 applications were received; this year there were only 20.

The pandemic, along with social justice and economic impacts of the past year, led the advisory Youth Sports Task Force to approve funding for as many programs as possible to support children's engagement in active play and sports opportunities – many of which had been previously canceled.

2021 grant recipients and explanations of their projects are:

AutismUp: Supports 12-week multi-sensory learning classes for children, teens, and young adults on the autism spectrum starting in September and running through June 2022. These classes offer opportunities to learn and play a variety of sports and activities at each individual's pace and with extra support, as well as increasing socialization and working on fundamental life skills. \$10,000

Brighton Little League: To make baseball fields at Meridian Centre Park safer for athletes and coaches. Plans are to convert the field surfaces to clay, make the four dugouts larger and accessible to wheelchairs and other mobility apparatuses, and provide better visibility for game spectators. \$12,000

Children's Institute: For a 16-week virtual training series for coaches to introduce social emotional learning core competencies and best practices that the agency developed with its first grant from the fund in 2019. At the end, a final focus group of coaches will evaluate the training and materials. \$18,000

EquiCenter, Inc.: Provides horsemanship and healthy movement programs for school-age youth from the Rochester City School District who have intellectual and developmental disabilities, multiple barriers to recreation and play, and are primarily from low-income households. The two-hour group sessions will be held at its 200-acre farm in Mendon for up to six weeks and also include nature-inspired play and exploration of the fields, ponds, and greenhouse from September 2021 through June 2022. \$20,000

Geneva Athletic Booster Club: To increase overall participation in youth sports in this Ontario County city by fostering collaboration with all organizations that offer youth sports, identifying the barriers to sport for families, recruiting and supporting coaches, and promoting the benefits of play and sport. Plans include creation of a central hub to provide resources for families and community members in one place. \$14,300

Girl Scouts of Western New York: To expand access to high-quality sports and play activities at Camp Piperwood in Fairport for 500 girls ages 5 to 17 from high-need urban and rural communities. Also planning to broaden activities to include disc golf and a jumping pillow and encourage more sampling of sports based on skill levels. \$20,000

Living Word Temple of Restoration: Introducing a multi-session, multi-sport program for urban and refugee youth ages 4 to 14 in the Sebastian Park neighborhood in Northwest Rochester. This will include weekly two-hour, in-person sessions that will offer various sports, along with online exercise challenges and field trips. \$25,000

Lyons Community Center: This rural Wayne County community wants to revitalize its in-town basketball leagues by offering midnight basketball, four-day tournaments, coaches' training, and resurfacing a portion of the parking lot with the addition of two hoops to make new space for pick-up games. \$20,000

ROC City Sailing, Inc.: Provides two new and free sailing programs for City of Rochester youth ages 8 to 18 in partnership with the City of Rochester Department of Recreation and Human Services at the Rochester Canoe Club on Irondequoit Bay. "Learn to Sail" will be two half days for up to 15 beginners, and "Adventure Sail" is five half days for 6 to 12 youth. \$17,000

Rochester Accessible Adventures: To implement an inclusive wheelchair basketball program in Monroe County for youth ages 9 to 17, with and without disabilities. The Rochester Wheels adult wheelchair basketball coach and players will facilitate practices. This funding also will include the purchase of sports wheelchairs, gym rental fees, and a stipend for coaching staff. Organizers would like to expand the sport into urban, suburban, and rural settings. \$20,000

Rochester City Soccer League: In addition to continuing its girls' soccer initiative with the City School District, the league plans to start this winter to integrate age-appropriate educational assistance (including mentoring and tutoring from college soccer players); youth development, leadership, and employment opportunities; college visits; and other community and family services. The goal is to transform students' lives on and off the field. \$25,000

St. Peter's Community Arts Academy: For a new dance floor in this arts center in Geneva, Ontario County, to provide safer surfaces for dancers and help avoid injuries. \$11,400

Seneca Sailing Academy: During the pandemic, this Ontario County academy heard from students new to sailing that with little or no experience in water recreation, they wanted more basic orientation before getting sailing instruction. The academy is adding three-hour sessions each week that will accommodate more kids in water and boating recreation and educational activities and free play while continuing "Open Sail" (free play) for past and current sailing students, and

expanded free “First Sail” sailboat rides, in addition to traditional sailing instruction. \$18,000

Town of Greece Department of Parks and Recreation: Supports transforming an asphalt area into a trailhead to access the 390 Multi Use Trail at Basil Marella Park, with landscaping, signage, and benches, along with improvements to the trail to make it safer and more accessible. \$20,000

Victory Sports Global Outreach, Inc.: To distribute 600 Play Packs – which contain a cinch bag, Frisbee, jump-rope, playground ball, pedometer, and exercise band – to children in six counties in our region (100 in each county) with assistance from community partners serving low-income families. In addition, this Erie County nonprofit wants to award 10 youth organizations in Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes \$500 worth of new and gently used sports equipment. \$14,960

Western New York Pop Warner: To help revitalize youth football and cheer in the City of Rochester and make these sports safer through the replacement of older and outdated equipment. This effort also will assist coaches with the cost of necessary training and certifications required to work with youth. \$20,000

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation established two legacy funds at the Community Foundation. Learn more about their focus areas and impact.