



THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

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Jennifer Leonard, Longtime Community Foundation CEO, to Retire in 2022; Simeon Banister Promoted to Executive VP

Jennifer Leonard, who has led Rochester Area Community Foundation as its president and CEO for 28 years, will be retiring in September 2022. She is the Foundation's third top executive — and longest serving — in the organization's 49-year history.

Simeon Banister, the Community Foundation's vice president for community programs, has been promoted to executive vice president. This Rochester native will work closely with Leonard to ensure a smooth leadership transition during the coming year as the Foundation marks its 50th anniversary.

"The Community Foundation's board of directors enthusiastically looks forward to working with Simeon in his new role and unanimously approved this transition plan in support of the Foundation and the community," said Tom Richards, board chair.

Before joining the Community Foundation in 2017, Banister's career spanned public and private sectors and included the New York State Senate, state Department of Taxation and Finance, the State University of New York, and several private commercial real estate firms.

When the Foundation and United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes launched the Community Crisis Fund in March 2020, Banister co-led the committee that met every day for several months to review and approve grant requests. Nearly \$7 million was distributed by that committee during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A graduate of North Carolina Central University and the Princeton Theological Seminary, Banister is a sought-after speaker, most recently on Rochester's history of redlining and racial inequities. For several years, he has been president of the Greater Rochester Martin Luther King Jr. Commission and serves on the boards of the University of Rochester Medical Center, The Children's Agenda, Genesee Land Trust, and the Congressional Award Foundation. He is a former member of the Rush-Henrietta school board. Banister and his family live in Rochester.

During Leonard's tenure, the Community Foundation's assets that benefit the Greater Rochester-Finger Lakes region have grown from \$32 million to \$578 million, nearly two-thirds of which is permanently endowed. The Foundation distributed \$34 million in grants and scholarships last year and more than \$547 million since it was established in 1972.



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“The mark that Jennifer made on this community and everyone she worked with will be present for years to come,” said Richards. “She has been an outstanding leader who encourages and nurtures community-minded donors to address tough issues here at home and skillfully engages community partners to make our region a better place to live, work, and educate our children.”

Leonard, a resident of Brighton, has been active in the community on many fronts. She helped to establish the ROC the Future education initiative and served as its board chair along with positions on the boards of Center for Governmental Research and Causewave Community Partners. She has participated in many community-based groups, including the steering committee for the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative, which was established after the Foundation and ACT Rochester released their first in-depth reports on poverty in the region.

Before moving to Rochester in 1993, Leonard was vice president of the California Community Foundation in Los Angeles and a national writer and consultant in philanthropy.

She has been recognized locally and beyond for her many contributions. In 2010, Leonard received the Athena Award from the Women’s Council of the Rochester Business Alliance (now the Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce). In 2007, the *Rochester Business Journal* named her one of “20 business people who have made the biggest impact on Rochester over the past 20 years.” In 2019, she was one of 10 women inducted into RBJ’s Circle of Excellence and earlier this year was named to the business newspaper’s Power 100 list. *City & State New York* named Leonard to its first-ever statewide Philanthropy Power 50 list in 2020 and its inaugural Western New York Power 100 list in 2021.

About Rochester Area Community Foundation:

Rochester Area Community Foundation, in partnership with generous philanthropists and community partners, works to improve the quality of life for people who live in the eight-county region through its leadership and strategic grantmaking. Known as the steward of charitable funds and endowments, the Community Foundation connects donors with the region’s current and evolving needs. As the region’s largest grantmaker, the Foundation focuses on two broad goals — creating an equitable community and strengthening our region’s vitality. The Community Foundation has distributed more than \$547 million in grants and scholarships since its founding in 1972. For more, visit www.racf.org.