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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Community Foundation's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Features Free Admission to Varied Cultural Venues Across Region**

To mark its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Rochester Area Community Foundation will underwrite free tickets or admission to a wide range of arts and cultural sites and performances throughout the Greater Rochester-Finger Lakes region. The yearlong program, called "Gifts for Good: Sampling Cultural Gems Across Our Region," runs from this month through March 2023.

"We want to support our nonprofit arts organizations, many of which were shuttered or temporarily sidelined by the pandemic," says Jennifer Leonard, the Foundation's president and CEO. "We hope that providing opportunities for free attendance will attract new patrons who will come back again in the future."

The first of the 24 free opportunities is the Gateways Music Festival's orchestra concert on Wednesday, April 20, at the Eastman Theatre. The Community Foundation will provide up to 400 free seats in the 2,400-seat Kodak Hall. Founded by an Eastman School of Music professor, the seven-day festival features classical musicians of African descent who come from all over the country to perform together in Rochester. The Gateways Orchestra, with nearly 100 members, will go on to New York City for its debut at Carnegie Hall on Sunday, April 24.

"Bringing people and music together has been part of Gateways Music Festival's purpose since our founding in 1993. We are profoundly grateful to the Community Foundation for its steadfast support of our 'Made in Rochester' festival and for providing access to 400 members of our community to experience the orchestra," says Lee Koonce, Gateways' president and artistic director.

Other opportunities include a performance by Garth Fagan Dance, an evening of *a capella* music by two University of Rochester groups at Cobblestone Performing Arts Center in Ontario County, several films as part of the ImageOut's 30th annual fall festival, and visits to some of the region's smallest and biggest museums.

"As one of the region's most significant arts funders, we believe that offering a free sampling of some of our cultural gems is an appropriate way to mark our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. If you have never visited the Jell-O Museum in Genesee County or the National Warplane Museum in Livingston County, or seen a Finger Lakes Opera performance, now's your chance," says Simeon Banister, the Foundation's executive vice president. He will become president and CEO in late September when Leonard retires after nearly 30 years at the helm.

These Gifts for Good include free admission or a specific number of tickets and, in two cases, complimentary rentals of outdoor equipment at cultural institutions that offer different experiences in the summer and winter.

In December, visitors to Genesee Country Village & Museum can “tour” the grounds of the historic village in Mumford on snowshoes or cross-country skis. On the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend, the Foundation will underwrite a community paddle (kayaks and canoes) at the Finger Lakes Museum on Keuka Lake in Yates County.

“As the Finger Lakes Museum strives to inspire appreciation of the cultures and ecology of the vast Finger Lakes Region, one of the best ways to do this is to get people outside and engaged in the natural world,” says Debbie Lyon, program director of the museum located in Branchport. “One of the most rewarding parts of my job is getting people of all ages out in kayaks to explore from the water, giving them a different perspective of the wonders that surround us.”

On Saturday, June 18, the Foundation will partner with The Strong once again to provide free admissions for the museum’s Juneteenth celebration and various on-site activities. As a bonus, the pedestrian entrance to the museum closest to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park at Manhattan Square will be open to allow guests to go between the museum and the park where related festivities will be held.

A detailed list of each month’s free activities and how to access them can be found at [www.racf.org/50](http://www.racf.org/50).

The Community Foundation will officially celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a gala on Saturday, September 17 at the Joseph A. Floreano Rochester Riverside Convention Center.

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If you are interested in joining the Community Foundation in supporting the arts, consider making a gift to the Arts and Culture Fund. Learn more at [www.racf.org/arts](http://www.racf.org/arts).

#### **About Rochester Area Community Foundation:**

*In 1972, a group of local residents founded Rochester Area Community Foundation as an endowment to provide ongoing and long-term support for the Rochester-Finger Lakes region. The Foundation works with individuals, families, businesses, and other nonprofit organizations to establish charitable funds or contribute to existing permanent funds that help address the region’s current and evolving needs.*

*Today, the Community Foundation is the largest grantmaking foundation in our region and second largest in Central and Western New York. The Foundation’s discretionary grantmaking and community initiatives currently focus on building an equitable community and strengthening the vitality of our region.*

*In its first 50 years, the Foundation has distributed more than \$600 million in grants and scholarships throughout our region and beyond.*