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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **12 Youth Sports and Recreation Projects Awarded \$143,400 in Grants to Improve, Expand Programs**

Rochester Area Community Foundation is awarding \$143,403 to 12 local youth sports and recreation programs from its **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 nearly \$1.6 million in local programs over the past six years.

The 2023 grants range from \$5,800 to \$20,000 and support projects that will have a direct impact on thousands of youth in Monroe and Ontario counties. Four projects were fully funded and eight received partial funding.

The 2023 grant recipients and details on their projects are:

**Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Greater Rochester:** This grant will support Sports Buddies, a pilot program that matches adult mentors with youth who have a shared interest in sports, fitness, or being active. Mentoring relationships develop through weekly activities and monthly group events — all fun and positive — yet leading to life-changing results such as greater social acceptance, confidence, improved mental health, and high school graduation. \$15,000

**Boys & Girls Clubs of Rochester:** The Weekend Sports Program will provide non-club youth access to safe and engaging activities that will include basketball, rock climbing, and golf on Saturdays. Along with sports, the club will conduct weekly sessions using the Street SMART curriculum to combat rising incidents of violence. \$20,000

**Garth Fagan Dance:** This dance troupe will offer a moderate-to-rigorous dance program for up to 20 youth of African heritage between the ages of 5 and 18 and from low-income households. Students participate in 200 hours of physical activity from September through June under the instruction of highly trained, professional dancers. Two levels of instruction will be offered based on students' developmental stages. \$7,500

**Mary Cariola Center:** Funding will support an inclusive outdoor sports, recreation, and sensory area designed to meet the unique needs of children and youth with multiple, complex disabilities and high behavioral and emotional needs served by the center. \$20,000

**Monroe Community College Foundation:** This funding will support the “Be a Healthy Hero Summer Camp,” a five-week program that serves children from Rochester. Campers experience group and individual sports, academic enrichment, and leadership skill development. Social-emotional learning is integrated throughout the camp. This summer, the camp will incorporate intentional, pre-planned free play activities into the curriculum for first-grade participants. \$7,500

**Monroe Milers:** This running group will engage youth from underserved communities in a low-cost sport that can have lifelong health benefits. The program offers two training sessions — one in the fall and one in the spring. Over eight weeks, participants meet twice a week to train for a 5K or a one-mile race. Registered youth receive a pair of running shoes, socks, a Tshirt and any other gear needed to participate. \$7,103

**Nativity Preparatory Academy of Rochester:** This charter school in Rochester wants to expand and enhance its youth sports offerings. Since pandemic restrictions have been lifted, the school restarted its step dance and basketball programs and, with this funding, will add volleyball, kickball, and soccer, and provide uniforms, transportation, team and individual photos, and an end-of-season family gathering for each activity. \$13,500

**RiverFlow Soccer Club Inc.:** This funding will be added to the program’s Financial Aid Fund to offset registration costs for families who cannot afford the cost of participation. This volunteer-led group, formed in 2002, uses soccer as a vehicle for positive change and wants to provide more opportunities for children from underserved communities. \$5,000

**ROC City Sailing, Inc.:** The grant will support sailing programs for Rochester youth on Irondequoit Bay. The program includes an introductory course for 15 per session and an adventure class on the water for 12 per session to explore the environment of the bay and some free play. \$20,000

**Rochester School for the Deaf:** To add a Gaga ball pit at the school to provide deaf- and hard-of-hearing students with the opportunity to safely engage in free play and community sport. Gaga is an inclusive, accessible game uniquely well-suited to the social, emotional, and physical needs of the school’s multi-age student population. \$5,800

**Seneca Sailing Academy:** This program, hosted by Seneca Yacht Club on Seneca Lake offers a variety of instructional programs to youth affiliated with the Boys & Girls Club of Geneva, Ontario County. A full week-long program includes basic water safety, water games, the purpose of masks and goggles, and an introduction to a variety of non-motorized boats (rowboats, canoes, kayaks, paddleboards) and small sailboats. \$12,000

**Vertus High School:** This charter school for young men will expand its sports programming so students can sample multiple sports within the academic year. These sports — including after-school clubs — will teach students teamwork, leadership, and other valuable skills in addition to providing valuable opportunities and a safe place for them to understand their own worth. \$10,000