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## **The Community Foundation Addresses “Rural Blindspot” with Targeted Investment in Orleans County**

In an effort to expand its support for the Greater Rochester-Finger Lakes region and tackle what is called the “Rural Blindspot,” Rochester Area Community Foundation awarded more than \$146,000 to 11 nonprofits serving Orleans County.

“The Rural Blindspot” is an insight coined in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* indicating that communities where people live farther apart are often overlooked in grantmaking when compared to their more populated neighbors, even when the need for resources is great. According to the data, these rural communities are some of the least likely to both apply for and receive funding to address inequities.

For the Community Foundation, equitable grantmaking means unlocking the potential for those who have had less access to the resources needed to thrive. It means strengthening relationships with community partners who have their finger on the pulse of resident needs. Orleans County has dedicated nonprofits, kind neighbors, and deep roots, but faces a childhood poverty level of 20 percent.

“The Community Foundation service area covers eight counties in our region, not just Monroe,” says Senior Program Officer Sara Bukowiec. “This dedicated funding was part of an intentional shift in our approach to make our grantmaking opportunities more inclusive of rural counties.”

The Foundation historically received few applications from counties like Orleans, but suspected this underrepresented the community's need for resources and support. In response, the Foundation set aside money and spread the word to nonprofits, community leaders, and chambers of commerce across Genesee, Livingston, and Orleans counties that at least \$50,000 in grants would be available for each county. A two-part application process made it easier for nonprofits to apply and for the Foundation to spot opportunities for collaboration and to combine funding from multiple sources.

Twenty-two letters of intent seeking a total of \$462,077 were received from nonprofits serving Orleans County, which clearly outlined the need for investment. The uptick in applications and diverse sources of funding identified to satisfy 11 of these requests bolstered the Foundation's new regional approach.

Community Foundation funding for this grantmaking initiative came from its Community Impact Fund, which pools contributions from more than 100 permanent funds established specifically to support changing community needs, along with dollars from the Greater Rochester Women's



Fund, The Sarah Collins Fund, Fox-Knoeferl Family Fund, VJ Stanley Sr. Fund, Robert C. and Jane K. Stevens Legacy Fund, and Edward R. Lane Fund.

Grants supporting Orleans County:

**Alianza Agrícola Inc\*:** Provides transportation for immigrant farmworker families to various events and activities to increase participation and engagement across a five-county service area. **\$50,000**

**Arc GLOW\*:** Provides transportation for an estimated 40 children, with and without disabilities, to Camp Rainbow in Lyndonville for a five-week summer camp where kids can grow emotionally and physically through inclusive outdoor experiences. **\$19,700**

**Cancer Support Community Rochester\*:** The “Mapping My Journey in Rural Communities” outreach program will provide cancer screening and support services to underserved groups in Orleans, Livingston, and Genesee counties. **\$5,000**

**First Presbyterian Church Albion:** To provide free English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and high school equivalency exam preparation to serve the Spanish-speaking migrant agricultural worker community. **\$3,500**

**Genesee Country Village & Museum\*:** The Rural School Admission Support program provides subsidized, reduced-rate, and/or fully-funded in-person educational opportunities to schools with financial need. **\$7,500**

**Hands 4 Hope Street Ministry:** This Albion-based program helps maintain personal hygiene and dignity by providing laundry products to all clients, many of whom are burdened by the costs associated with public laundromats. **\$2,560**

**Orleans County Adult Learning Services:** Supports advertising and outreach materials to increase community awareness of its free adult and childhood literacy tutoring services. **\$3,000**

**P.Raising Kids Child Care Center:** To purchase outdoor storage in order to free up space for play and learning inside this center in Medina where kids of any economic situation can grow and flourish. **\$4,600**

**PathStone Foundation:** Addresses critical building improvements to the domestic violence shelter, built around 1900, that supports Orleans and other nearby counties. Work will include painting, plumbing, and security measures in order to continue providing a safe and supportive environment for survivors. **\$20,500**

**United Way of Orleans County:** To commission a Housing Action Strategy in coordination with key stakeholders, with the goal of increasing the availability of affordable housing over three years and focusing on low-to-moderate income residents. **\$10,000**

**Visually Impaired Advancement\*:** Supports a part-time outreach staff position to provide 2-1-1 navigational services and outreach in Orleans and Genesee counties. **\$20,000**

*\*Grants that also support Livingston County and/or Genesee County.*