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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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2026 Juneteenth Festival & Parade with Headliner Danielle Ponder

The 2026 Juneteenth Festival, taking place June 19–20 at Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park, will feature more of everything: two days of celebration, two stages of live entertainment, more vendors, a lively parade, and thousands of people coming together to celebrate.

Mayor Malik Evans announced Rochester-born, internationally renowned soul and R&B artist Danielle Ponder as the festival's headliner.

"Juneteenth is more than a holiday. It's a testament to resilience, freedom and the strength of people who never gave up," said Nikia Washington, program officer at Rochester Area Community Foundation who is coordinating the Juneteenth festival for the third year. "Here in Rochester, we show up for that, and we always have."

For the past 40 years, the Greater Rochester Martin Luther King Jr. Commission has worked to carry forward Dr. King's legacy in Rochester. Simeon Banister, president & CEO of Rochester Area Community Foundation, announced that the Community Foundation will serve as the organizational home supporting the Commission's vision and continuing stewardship of the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration and the Juneteenth Festival. Banister currently serves as chair of the Commission, a role previously held by his mother, Iris Banister.



This year's festival theme, "Beloved Community," honors Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of a society based on justice, equal opportunity, and love of one's fellow human beings.

"In this moment of division, we choose connection," said Banister. "So, if you are with us for this moment, then we encourage you to find a way to get involved in making this the best Juneteenth Festival that we've had."

Josie McClary, volunteer parade coordinator, and Rashaad Parker, MLK Commissioner, outlined the parade route, entertainment, and ways to participate. Businesses are encouraged to sign up as vendors, parade participants, or sponsors by June 5, 2026.

More details at racf.org/Juneteenth.

Day 1 — Honoring, Educating, and Celebrating

Friday, June 19 | 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm

- Elders circle
- Education on the history and significance of Juneteenth
- Honoring past and present MLK Jr. Commissioners
- Performers and entertainment

Day 2 — Parade and Festival

Saturday, June 20 | 11:00 am to 8:00 pm

- 11:00 am – Freedom parade begins (lineup starts at 10:00 am)
- 12:00 pm to 8:00 pm – Festival and performances
- Rock climbing, face painting, hair cuts, local food and vendors, and more — featuring Danielle Ponder

About Rochester Area Community Foundation

In partnership with generous philanthropists and community partners, the Community Foundation works to improve the quality of life for people who live and work in the eight-county region through its leadership and strategic grantmaking. Since it was founded in 1972, the Foundation has distributed more than \$780 million dollars in grants and scholarships.