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Former Strasenburgh Planetarium Director's Gift to Double Rochester Area Community Foundation's Support for Historic Preservation

ROCHESTER, NY — A recent gift from the estate of Don Hall, former director of the Strasenburgh Planetarium, is adding \$2.73 million to the philanthropic fund at Rochester Area Community Foundation he established in 2006 to support historic preservation.

Starting in 2027, Hall's estate gift will double the Community Foundation's annual historic preservation grantmaking. The historic preservation grant program protects significant historic assets and connects residents to the full history of our region.

"Don Hall's gift will expand the scale of historic preservation in Greater Rochester," says Annette Jiménez Gleason, Senior Program Officer at Rochester Area Community Foundation. "Next year, we will be able to say 'yes' to more proposals aiming to protect aging structures and more widely share the many stories that make our region special."

In 2026, grants were awarded to 28 nonprofits totaling more than \$365,000, representing 42% of the total dollars requested. These grants are used to restore aging historic buildings, digitize pieces of our community's history, and increase access to historical assets.

During his career, Don Hall lead innovations in technology that brought worldwide recognition to Rochester's astronomy offerings and even trained astronauts in NASA's space program, including Neil Armstrong. When he retired from the Strasenburgh Planetarium in 2005, after 27 years, his maximum salary was \$60,000.

"I want my gift to show others in the community that they have the ability to become a philanthropist," said Hall in a 2020 interview with Rochester Area Community Foundation staff.

For information on how to get involved with historic preservation through the Community Foundation, visit racf.org/historic-preservation.

Photo: Don Hall, curtesy of the RMSC: [link](#). Don Hall photo by Matt Wittmeyer: [link](#).

About Rochester Area Community Foundation

In partnership with generous philanthropists and community partners, Rochester Area 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 \$800 million dollars in grants and scholarships.