



RWGC

Rooted in Purpose

Growing in Impact

Spring Circular 2025

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The Annual Grant Awards Gala **Highlights from the 18th Annual Grant Awards Celebration**

June 18, 2025 at Temple Sinai

This year's Gala, held on what will be remembered as one of Rochester's stormiest evenings, was a true celebration of people making a positive difference in all of our lives. Twinkle lights glowed, a pianist was playing, and there was delicious food and drink. The centerpiece on each table was an arbor vitae, tree of life, a veritable 'mother tree'.

Our circle began with our founding 'mothers' Alyce VanPatten, Shirley King and Paula Carter, who with their deeply rooted convictions, planted seeds to grow an organization with its mission to enrich and support the girls and women of our community. More than 140 RWGC members, their guests, and representatives from this year's eight selected grantee organizations, came to Temple Sinai to celebrate the

hard and vital work being done each day so that our Rochester community's girls and women may lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

Melinda Andolina, Chair of RWGC's Leadership Team warmly welcomed everyone and described to us the grantmaking and intensive grantee vetting processes. Linda Josephs, Partner Committee Chair, offered inspiring descriptions of this year's eight grantee organizations who received Circle funding in 2025.

This evening, filled with laughter, the pride of accomplishment, and the feeling of real hope for the future, was uplifting. Nancy Hessler and Teri Davis, Co-Chairs of the Membership Committee, really know how to throw a party and we are so grateful to them and their 2025 Grants Event Committee members.

If you were not able to attend this year's celebration, we look forward to seeing you next year - you will leave smiling, maybe even joyful.

2025 Grantmaking Committee

A special RWGC thanks is given to those who served on the 2025 Grantmaking Committee:

Chair persons - Kathy Hagen, Carol Hidy and Sue Moore
Committee members - Martha Blair, Nicole Botti, Jane Colangelo, Rita Garretson, Sandy Greer, Lauren Hider, Barbara Hufsmith, Linda Josephs, Emily Lambert, Cheryl Lawless, Susan Motten, Laurel Pace, Marjorie Perlman, Sarah Swan and Ellen Tuohey

2025 Grant Awards

Agape Haven of Abundance:

Urban Youth Empowerment Program - \$25,000.

The Center for Teen Empowerment:

Young Women's Leadership and Employment Project - \$25,000.

The Center for Youth:

Flower City Changemakers -
Young Women at Promise - \$25,000.

Flower City Noire Collective, Inc.:

Flower City Noire Collective - Petals Mentoring Program - \$25,000.

Foundation for Women's Financial Education:

Financial Coaching for Social Service Organizations - \$8,250.

Goodwill of the Finger Lakes:

Goodwill Learning Academy - \$25,000.

The Unity Hospital of Rochester:

Project Independence at Healthy Moms - \$25,000.

YWCA - Rochester & Monroe County:

Equity Through Development Project - \$25,000.

2025 RWGC Partners for Grantees

Agape Haven of Abundance - Jeanne Morey

The Center for Teen Empowerment - Joanne Guarnera

The Center for Youth - Cathleen Clancy

Flower City Noire Collective - Sarah Swan

Foundation for Women's Financial Education - Emily Lambert

Goodwill of the Finger Lakes - Laurel Pace

Unity Hospital of Rochester - Krestie Utech

YWCA- Rochester & Monroe County - Claudia Weber

2025 Grants Event Committee Members

Sarah Bullard, Vicki Burns, Cindy Christy, Cathleen Clancy,

Joanne Guarnera, Roberta Kaye, Linda Kilbourne,

Stephanie Murphy, Jeanne Stillman Morey, Judy Straw,

Laura Trusso and Betsy Waugh

2025 Grantees with Linda Josephs and Melinda Andolina



Our Leadership Team News – Updates June 2025

There have been several recent changes to the Leadership Team. **Kathi Albertini** has moved from Knowledge Management to fill the open role of Co-Chair of the Education Committee. **Annette Meade** has moved from Knowledge Management to become Co-Chair of the Communications Committee. **Martha Blair** has joined the team as Co-Chair of Knowledge Management and new member **Rebecca Toner** has joined the team as Co-Chair of the Communications Committee. **Cheryl Lawless** has joined in a new role - Member at Large.

Melinda Andolina continues as Chair; **Kathy Hagen**, **Carol Hidy** and **Sue Moore** continue as Co-Chairs of the Grantmaking Committee;

Linda Josephs continues as Chair of the Partner Committee and **Nancy Hessler** and **Teri Davis** continue as Co-Chairs of the Membership Committee. **Rita Garretson** continues as Secretary and **Jill Miller** continues as Treasurer.

As we move forward, the Leadership Team is currently seeking a Co-Chair for our Education Committee. This committee is tasked with choosing individual speakers or representatives from community organizations to present programs to our members about their missions, passions, and the vital work they do. Our Education Meetings are much anticipated by our members and serve to expand our understanding of the profound work being done each and every day in our community.

Interested in knowing more? Please get in touch with Melinda Andolina mdandolina@gmail.com

A Co-Chair for Knowledge Management is also needed.

Knowledge Management is the Circle's way of electronically maintaining records of all of our activities, plans and communications using Dropbox.

Interested in knowing more? Please contact Melinda Andolina mdandolina@gmail.com

Education Meeting - February 2025

RWGC Education Committee Member **Jean Maess** introduced Guest Speaker, Miriam Moore to the February 25th Education Meeting. Moore received a historical appointment by the Town of Brighton as the town's first Chief Diversity Officer. She said that "the day after the election, the air felt different. I'm proud of the town's recommitment to DEI, but it's still a tightrope". Moore hopes that "seasons will change and that we will not spend too much time in despair".

Miriam Moore stood before us and said, "I am a black woman, a black woman with a disability, and someone not often seen in these spaces". She told us about her upbringing and the challenges of race growing up.

Moore has southern roots (Georgia and South Carolina) and told us about her maternal grandmother, who, coerced into marriage, had to abandon college. The family moved north, to Rochester, for better work opportunities. Her mother was the youngest of sixteen children and worked in the homes of white people. Her words to her daughter were unequivocal: **Break the Cycle!**

Moore attended elementary school #4 in Rochester and wondered why the white students were being funneled into MAP (Major Achievement Program) and riding buses away from #4. From the age of 7 through her high school years, Moore was a member of the famous Black Seeds and performed all over the world. Black Seeds founder, James Perkins, was

instrumental, along with Moore's mother and father, in building her confidence. She emphasized, "If you build up a woman, you build up a family."

Social - April 2025

In early April, nearly 40 members of the Circle gathered for a lively and meaningful social event at Temple Sinai. This gathering wasn't just an opportunity to connect, it also offered a firsthand look at the power of our collective giving in action. Attendees heard an inspiring update from one of our grantees, **Project Independence at Healthy Moms**, a program dedicated to supporting new and expecting mothers on their path to self-sufficiency.

MaryAnn Brady gave a brief overview of the Program, **Tchianna McPeak** talked about the vocational counseling and job training aspects of the program and then the highlight was hearing Project Independence participant **Letoya Palmo** talk about her experiences. She was 9 months pregnant with her third child and described her challenges with domestic violence, incarceration and bringing up a child with a disability. It was amazing to hear how determined and positive she is to overcome her circumstances and to succeed in life. She expressed gratitude to the women at Project Independence and Healthy Moms who have provided her with extended and heartfelt support, giving her the confidence and resources she needs to reach her goals. MaryAnn updated us at the Gala Event that Letoya gave birth to a healthy baby boy!!

RWGC members asked a lot of questions and wanted to know how they could make donations. MaryAnn subsequently provided us with this information:

To donate to the Children's Clothing Closet, there is a drop off bin located inside the St. Mary's Campus where Healthy Moms is located at 75 Genesee Street. To donate non-perishable foods for the Food Pantry, contact MaryAnn Brady at 368-3478.

Welcome Our Newest Members

Lauren Hider, Rebecca Toner and Laura Trusso

We are so glad to have you with us.



New Members Cohort 2nd Event

The New Members Cohort is for RWGC members who joined in 2023, 2024 and 2025. It is a wonderful way to ease into the mission and culture of our awesome volunteer organization.

With leadership from **Marsha Boelio**, new members enjoyed getting together and learned more about the mission and culture of RWGC. The group gathered in the late afternoon on June 3rd at Tinker Nature Park in Henrietta. Our goals: get to know others who've recently joined RWGC, snack and sip together (of course), share a bit about ourselves, know that when we engage in broadly attended RWGC events, we have connection and friendship.

Lucky for us, the weather was cooperative for an outdoor get together, and the setting was ideal for those who opted to take a brief stroll through the lovely woods. It was an ideal way to immerse ourselves in a truly significant Rochester enterprise. Plans will evolve to continue these get-togethers.

Rochester Women's Giving Circle Summer 2025 Bicycle Rides

The first ride of the season will be “The Strawberry Shortcake Ride” on June 24 at 10 am. The ride will be about 14 miles starting in Fairport, riding to Chase Farms for a wonderful strawberry shortcake* and then return to Fairport. Most of the ride will be flat and on trails. About a mile of it is on a road with one long hill (that can be walked).

This year the strawberry shortcakes are around \$8. You will not need lunch, maybe not even dinner, the shortcake is so big!

Please contact either Nancy Hessler 223-2229 (home) or nhessler3@gmail.com or Dianne Newhouse 585-749-4912 (mobile) or Dianne.newhouse@gmail.com for more details for this first ride or others throughout the summer.

*not a bike rider? Consider meeting the group at Chase Farms for the strawberry shortcake. Contact Nancy or Dianne.



Grantee Shout Outs -

Graduation for the Current Cohort of the Equity Through Development of the YWCA

From member Claudia Weber:

RWGC was well represented at the YWCA Equity Through Development Graduation yesterday!!! Abbie Schonfield, Connie Rice, and I attended. We all found the stories and accomplishments of the 10 graduates to be inspirational. Seeing their confident talks, their proud families (including children and husbands) in attendance, and hearing the closing remarks by Dr. Myra Henry (President and CEO of the YWCA) were great opportunities. The graduates still have to complete their capstone projects by the end of July, but they have completed all the "course" work.

RWGC was recognized as one of their key supporters. We received many thank you's from YWCA staff and graduates. Simeon Bannister, CEO of the Rochester Area Community Foundation, was there. He came over to greet us after the program and congratulated the RWGC for our support of this effective program. Connie and I had a chance to talk with several of the graduates during the networking session after the program and were really impressed with their passion about what they had learned and the confidence that they had gained from the program. We even met a graduate from last year's cohort who came back for this year's graduation!!!

Carrie Michel-Wynne, VP of Strategic Partnerships at the YWCA, said that she had highlighted the Equity Through Development program at a conference in Washington state (I think that's where it was). It sounds like this program is the only one of its kind in the country, but the conference participants were impressed with what had been accomplished in Rochester, NY!!! The YWCA's hope is that this be a "pilot" program that can be replicated elsewhere.

I'm so proud to be their partner, and that the RWGC has chosen to support them.

From the Goodwill Learning Academy's recent Newsletter

A note from Robin [the Director]

"We are excited to announce that we have received second year funding from the Rochester Women's Giving Circle. As our first grant

funder, we would like to thank them for continuing to support our work and helping make GLA possible."

The Membership Committee

A great group of women work together to make in-person meetings fun with good food and beverages. So sometimes it is not glamorous work doing set ups for events or clean up, BUT....we make it fun! Please contact either Teri Davis (teridavis60@gmail.com) or Nancy Hessler (nhessler3@gmail.com) to let them know of your interest.



The Education Committee

The Education Committee welcomes ideas for programs and speakers. New members for the Education Committee are always welcome. Please contact Kathi Albertini (kathialbertini@gmail.com) to share your thoughts and ideas for future Circle Education Meetings or to join this vital committee.

Growing Our Circle

Current members are our Number 1 key resource for new members joining The Rochester Women's Giving Circle.



A one-on-one conversation or a personal invitation to a program or event is often appreciated. Continue to help grow the success of our mission by reaching out to those you know who might be interested in joining or in hearing about our Circle. You or someone you know can contact Nancy Hessler, Membership Co-Chair, at nhessler3@gmail.com for more information about becoming a member of The RWGC.

Here is some ready information to share with others:

Our Mission:

We strengthen our community by enabling women and girls living in poverty to transition to a lifetime of economic self-sufficiency

Our Values:

Collaborative investing. Accountability, Fiduciary Trust, Excellence, Change Agent, 100% Volunteer

Our Vision:

We are responsive to the needs and resources available to women and girls in Monroe County, working with community partners and RWGC members to promote racial equity and reduce poverty



Membership Structure

In September 2022, the RWGC members approved, by electronic voting, a change in our Articles of Operation. It impacts our hope to be a more diverse and inclusive organization as well as our commitment to collective giving and growing our capacity for grant making. The monies collected in each calendar year become the amount available for Grants the following spring. Our collective giving capacity is dependent on *annual membership financial contributions* and any other monetary gifts the RWGC receives in a given calendar year.

There are two options for *annual membership financial contribution*. Regardless of the option, all members are equal shareholders in the activities and giving of the RWGC:

Sustainer is an Annual contribution of \$1050* or more.

Catalyst is an Annual contribution of \$450* - \$1049*.

\$50 of each contribution supports our operating expenses.

The entire amount is tax-deductible.

There are two ways to send your annual membership contribution.

By check, make your check payable to **Rochester Area Community Foundation**.

Please write "RWGC" on the memo line.

If you are a new member, please write "new member" on the memo line as well.

Mail check to:

Rochester Area Community Foundation

500 East Avenue

Rochester, NY 14607

By credit card, you are able to make a secure credit card donation through the Rochester Area Community Foundation's website

Click here for [Contribution by Credit Card](#)

in the space for Additional Comments, please write For RWGC 2025 membership contribution

**An additional \$30 is needed if paying by credit card to cover the credit card processing fees.*

More Ways to Increase Our Grant Dollars

Everyone I know has someone for whom picking out the perfect gift is IMPOSSIBLE! Why not give the gift that



delights the receiver and strengthens the community? Honor a friend's birthday. Celebrate a daughter's or granddaughter's new job. A gift to the RWGC in honor of someone special in your life is a thoughtful and meaningful choice.



Whether long standing or new, membership in our Circle is meaningful to our members. The RWGC is an important commitment that we make in our lives. When the time comes to memorialize a life we have loved, please consider giving to the Circle in honor of that cherished member.

The RWGC carefully invests every gift in worthy ways to lift up our community.

If you would like to make a gift to the RWGC, please contact

Melinda Andolina mdandolina@gmail.com



Keep Us Up to Date on Contact Information

Members, Please keep us up to date on your contact information. You can reach Teri Davis, Membership Co-Chair, at teridavis60@gmail.com to let us know of changes in your email, phone or mail address. We try to keep our Circle membership informed and up to date so we want to be able to reach you. Thank you.



Save the Date

Coming Up in 2025

Social (Guests Welcome)
Thursday, July 31 - 5 PM – 7 PM
at the home of member Jill Miller

Education Session (Guests Welcome)
Tuesday, September 9 - 5 PM – 7 PM
Asbury First United Methodist Church,
Gathering Center

Social (Guests Welcome)

Thursday, November 13- 5 PM – 7 PM
Temple Sinai Lounge

Rochester Women's Giving Circle | 500 East Avenue | Rochester, NY 14607 US

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