QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR
FUNDHOLDERS

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$10 MILLION COMMITED TO RACIAL EQUITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE

ORGANIZATION FEATURE: MOHAWK VALLEY JUNIOR FRONTIERS

STEPPING UP IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19
The word “unprecedented” doesn’t begin to capture the events of recent months.

From the widespread impact of the global pandemic to the national and international distress and unrest that have brought renewed attention to racial equity and social justice issues, the year 2020 has challenged all of us in ways that were unthinkable just a few months ago. Fortunately, thanks to you and others who strive for a better community, investments to address many of our most vulnerable continue to make a real difference.

This issue focuses on the many donor-advised funds that have and continue to address pandemic impact by generously supporting our nonprofit partners. And I’m pleased to share that the family fund my husband, Bob, and our children, Meredith and Abi, established last year has made its first set of grants to The Community Foundation’s Racial Equity and Social Justice Fund and the jointly established Mohawk Valley COVID-19 Response Fund. We’re happy, in a modest way, to join those of you who have long supported community needs in significant ways.

Also, I hope you enjoy learning more about the important work the Mohawk Valley Junior Frontiers organization is doing. Given our continuing and growing efforts to address racial equity and social justice in partnership with community organizations and residents, you’ll be hearing more about this remarkable organization in the near future.

While responding to continuing community needs stemming from the impact of the global pandemic, we are preparing to address longstanding inequities that have prevented many from enjoying all that our two-county community has to offer. Through this new work, I know that, together, we can realize The Community Foundation’s vision: “a vibrant region with opportunity for all.”

Thanks for all that you do for our community, and best wishes for a safe and healthy summer and fall.

Sincerely,

Alicia Dicks
President/CEO
The Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties
The Community Foundation Board of Trustees on July 16 approved a $10 million plan, the largest single investment in the organization’s history, as an initial 10-year commitment to address racial equity and social justice issues. The Board action means that The Community Foundation will work with multiple partner organizations, local governments and residents to launch a two-county initiative to address systemic and systematic racism in Herkimer and Oneida counties, and to advance implementation of “impact centers” in targeted locations.

“This is a critical time for our community and the country,” said David Manzelmann, Board chair. “The Community Foundation is building on its past work in taking this major step toward realizing its vision, ‘A vibrant region with opportunity for all.’”

Manzelmann said since the Board adopted the organizational vision statement in 2017, the words “opportunity for all” have taken on increasing urgency especially in recent months with renewed focus on equity and justice locally and in communities around the world.

“Nationally and indeed globally people have been horrified and disgusted by the killings of people of color, and many are calling this time a turning point unlike any we’ve seen in decades, a time when we as one community can explore and realize real change,” said Jawwaad Rasheed, the Board’s chair-elect. “The Board’s bold commitment will facilitate this community collaboration to face and finally address systemic and systematic racism and underlying causes of so much that troubles our society.”

While The Community Foundation expands its ongoing community engagement efforts to help partners develop a collaborative, coalition-style model to work toward systemic change, it will also advance development of “impact centers,” reimagined community centers that provide space for multiple nonprofit partners and agencies to serve families in high-needs neighborhoods.

In addition to the overall initiative and impact centers, The Community Foundation established the Racial Equity and Social Justice Fund in June with a $50,000 commitment and a $50,000 grant from the Ronald and Sheila Cuccaro Family Fund.

“We’ve all seen the news and heard the terrible stories from across the country. Some might say we’re fortunate in this community that those awful things have happened someplace else. But these issues touch us here, too—and everywhere. We have to take a stand as people who care about Utica and the Mohawk Valley that we will do more. We’re challenging individuals and organizations to do what they can to support this effort,” said Ron Cuccaro, Board member. “Our family feels this deeply—that all of us who have the ability to help financially have a responsibility to do everything that we can to make a difference, and that this time, now, is a critical turning point for our community and the nation.”

As the Community Equity Initiative and impact centers take shape in the coming months, The Community Foundation will actively engage prospective donors and supporters to rise to the Cuccaro family’s challenge and expedite the funding of organizations and other projects. Additional support will be pursued from major funders and willing partners, including national and private foundations, all levels of government and the private sector. Investments in partner nonprofits that have already demonstrated successful outcomes in addressing obstacles to success for persons of color, such as Mohawk Valley Junior Frontiers, will be the fund’s immediate focus.

The Community Equity Initiative, impact centers, and the Racial Equity and Social Justice Fund will be part of The Community Foundation’s continuing commitment to view all of its efforts through the lens of improving racial equity and social justice outcomes and addressing systemic and systematic racism in Herkimer and Oneida counties. In addition to committing significant charitable assets, The Community Foundation will build on years of community engagement to ensure that these efforts remain inclusive, and that all those willing to work toward a better future community can participate.
Academic excellence, professional development, civic service, and self-esteem are the four foundational elements that comprise the methodology of success for the Mohawk Valley Junior Frontiers. Committed to helping local youth rise to excellence in the Utica community and beyond, the Junior Frontiers engage and advance underrepresented students in the community while promoting and enhancing their personal excellence.

Focusing on the needs of underserved and underprivileged students, Mohawk Valley Junior Frontiers was established in 1996 as a student component of the Mohawk Valley Frontiers Club. Junior Frontiers is the largest all-voluntary civic youth organization in Central New York predominantly serving students of color.

Participants in the program, mostly from Utica, Rome, Syracuse, and Buffalo, make use of the organization’s growing list of services, including tutoring, recognition programs, community service projects, lectures from community leaders, internship programs, senior citizen luncheons, college preparatory courses, adopt-a-school programs, and more.

“We assist our students in every aspect of their developing lives,” says Jawwaad Rasheed, president of the Mohawk Valley Frontiers Club and co-director of the Mohawk Valley Junior Frontiers. “Our four guiding principles are pivotal to all the programs, events, and activities that we do.”

Those four principles guide experiential activities and opportunities for students to strengthen résumés, guide individual growth, and encourage excellence in higher education. For example, Junior Frontiers visit college campuses annually to help students identify their passions and find institutions they may want to attend. Organized campus visits take the students to Ivy League colleges, historically black institutions, and local schools such as Utica College and Mohawk Valley Community College.

“Every year, we put students in these different schools to pursue their dreams,” says Rasheed. “We have an extensive college search and match program, and a financial aid network where we work to help students receive aid. We walk them and their families through the process and prepare them to fulfill any needs to achieve their goals of admittance to these schools.”

The organization also emphasizes self-esteem. Aside from educational goals, Junior Frontiers promotes a positive mindset and self-image, both instrumental to accomplishing life goals.

“Historically, for children of color, the images they have of themselves are not their own, so we try to provide them with goals they can aspire to achieve so that they can look in the mirror and say, ‘I, too, am beautiful. I, too, am powerful. I, too, can do this,’” says Rasheed. “We let them know that they’re perfectly okay in the skin they’re in and can accomplish anything by working hard for it.”

Since 2013, the Mohawk Valley Junior Frontiers has received more than $62,000 in grants from The Community Foundation to help students meet college-related needs and accomplish their goals.

“Donor-advised grants from The Community Foundation have allowed us to fill up many students’ financial pitchers,” Rasheed says. “Often
“We try to provide them with goals they can aspire to achieve so that they can look in the mirror and say, ‘I, too, am beautiful. I, too, am powerful. I, too, can do this.’”

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, members of the Junior Frontiers alumni group came up with an opportunity to help the organization serve its community through public health education and community engagement. Dr. Shyqual Lewis and medical students Samantha Tavarez and Alexandria Paul introduced the concept of a COVID-19 mitigation taskforce to educate the community about the virus.

“It’s been great seeing our work pay off in the long run for our community,” says Rasheed. “Our alumni are paying it forward, and it’s a great thing. We go out every Friday into underserved areas of Utica and give out masks, sanitizers, hand soap, and educational material about COVID-19.”

While the pandemic’s local impact has challenged many of the organization’s youth programs, such as its in-person STEAM classes and standardized test preparation courses, the Junior Frontiers are excited to explore new avenues of learning to ensure that they continue to serve the community’s youth. “Every setback,” Rasheed tells students, “is an opportunity to move in a new direction.” The organization is making sure that students acquire and develop online engagement skills that will serve them well now and as their careers blossom in the years to come.

Junior Frontiers has set an example for making a difference and building a future for its students and the entire community, one for other nonprofits to follow, as the region continues to progress toward greater equity and opportunity for all.
The events that 2020 had in store for the world could not have been predicted. With the recent past being replaced by a new normal, communities struggle with the effects of the global pandemic, families try to meet basic needs and cope with a new educational environment—while nonprofit organizations attempt to keep up with the growing need for their services. Times like these prompt heroic efforts from those ready to support the community in any way possible.

As an initial reaction to the anticipated needs that local organizations would require, The Community Foundation established the Mohawk Valley COVID-19 Response Fund with the United Way of the Mohawk Valley, directing funding and donations to nonprofits providing critical pandemic-impact-related resources. The response from those who wanted to help was immediate. Within the first week, the joint fund attracted nearly $270,000, which was quickly distributed where it could do the most good.

Residents, businesses, corporate contributors, and many Community Foundation fundholders stepped up. Overall, support to the fund helped award more than $1 million to over 60 organizations, making an impact on thousands of residents of Herkimer and Oneida counties. The grants helped to feed families, secure essential medical equipment and supplies, meet basic needs—and more.

In total, donor-advised funds committed more than $390,000 to this effort. In addition, donor-advised fundholders awarded 85 grants exceeding $761,000 directly to nonprofits for emergency needs, general support, and food security.

It was encouraging to see the creative ways fundholders supported relief efforts. The Rising Phoenix Fund, established in 2019 to aid recovery efforts for natural disasters, launched a matching employee gift program. The campaign surpassed its goal of $7,500 in employee donations which could be made to a charity of the employee’s choice anywhere in the country. In total, Rising Phoenix Holdings Corporation (RPHC) donated more than $29,000 through matching contributions and direct donations to support COVID-19 relief.

“Since Rising Phoenix Holdings Corporation was founded 35 years ago, our priority has always been helping local communities benefit from our success, and that focus will continue,” said Ron Cuccaro, executive chairman of RPHC and Community Foundation fundholder and Trustee. “This matching gift program just seemed like the perfect thing to do at a time when it was needed the most. It gave our employees the opportunity to support charities that are important to them, and I am so impressed and proud at how they rose to the challenge.”

Utica National Insurance Group used its fund—the Utica National Insurance Group Foundation Fund—to address food insecurity in Herkimer and Oneida counties. The fund has always focused on addressing the community’s greatest needs, and with food insecurity a growing challenge...
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Our community is well-known for coming together in a time of crisis. We would like to offer our sincere thanks to the many Community Foundation fundholders who joined us and contributed to the Mohawk Valley COVID-19 Response Fund or directly granted to a nonprofit organization to assist with COVID-related needs.

A. Richard Cohen Family Fund
Adirondack League Club Community Fund
All In For Vin Memorial Fund
Andy Mazloom Fund
Bull Family Fund
CG Philanthropic Fund
Christopher and Deborah McGrath Family Fund
Clark Family Fund
David and Janet Griffith Family Fund
Dicks Family Fund
F.X. Matt II Memorial Fund
Hero Fund America Fund
Janice Luck O'Connor Friends Fund
Joan B. and William F. O'Shea Family Fund
Kevin “Bing” Crossley Memorial Foundation Fund
M&T Bank/Partners Trust Bank Charitable Fund
Macartney-Wallace-Weiler Family Fund
Margarets Gaffney & Van Waes Fund
Martin and Susan Bull Family Fund
Mele Family Fund
Michael and Lois Silverman Family Fund
Nazareth Community Impact Fund
Raymond L. and Linda G. Allen Fund
Richard L. and Jean P. Williams Fund
Rising Phoenix Fund
Robert and Sara Smith Fund
Ronald and Sheila Cuccaro Family Fund
Senator James H. Donovan Memorial Fund
Utica National Group Foundation Fund
Utica Python Foundation Fund
Vogel Family Fund

fueled by increasing family need, the fund advisors reached out to Community Foundation staff to see how they could help. After researching and assessing the needs of local food pantries and soup kitchens, staff and fund advisors implemented a food security program that awarded more than $300,000 to organizations providing nourishment to families in need. The funding’s impact was wide-ranging, from providing individual meals from local restaurants to soup kitchens for distribution to restocking food pantries’ shelves with essential items.

“During these difficult times, helping to minimize the food insecurity in our communities and helping local restaurants weather the storm is vital,” said Bernard Turi, chair of the fund’s screening committee and Utica National’s senior vice president, general counsel, general auditor, and chief risk officer: “We appreciate all that the nonprofit organizations do on a daily basis for everyone, and this is our way of giving back to them.”

In addition to these examples, some donor-advised fundholders were inspired to make their first grant—others, their largest-ever award—to support the overall effort.

“The unity and togetherness that we witnessed from our fundholders and community members during some of the most difficult days we’ve seen was just incredible,” said Alicia Dicks, president/CEO of The Community Foundation. “It’s so special and reassuring to know that our fund partners stand behind us and are willing to help in any way that they can, even during a crisis. There’s much recovery work to be done, but the support from these funds helped organizations keep up with the increasing demand that they experienced.”

During challenging times, focusing on the good things happening in the community is more important than ever. Thanks to generous donors that keep our work at the forefront of their minds, we have been able to stay true to our mission and our purpose, helping to keep this community bright even in a dark moment in time.
INVEST IN YOUR Community

Our NEWEST funds

ASF CZECH FUND
A donor-advised fund established by Magdalen M. Czech for general charitable purposes.

ASF CZECH SCHOLARSHIP FUND
A scholarship fund established by Magdalen M. Czech to provide support for students attending Union College in Schenectady.

BONNIE AND DARREN WOODS FAMILY FUND
A donor-advised fund established by Bonnie and Darren Woods for general charitable purposes.

GENUNG FAMILY FUND
A donor-advised fund established by Frederick M. Genung for general charitable purposes.

KIRKLAND TRAILS FUND
An agency fund to benefit Kirkland Trails, a nonprofit organization that is developing a network of multiuse trails, paths and bike lanes owned by the Town of Kirkland.

STREICHERT FAMILY FUND
A field-of-interest fund established in memory of Catherine H. Streichert to benefit and enhance the lives of residents of the City of Utica.

WAYS TO GIVE

MAKE A GIFT
Cash
Real Estate
Stocks & Securities

CREATE A FUND
Donor-Advised Scholarship Field-of-Interest

PLAN YOUR LEGACY
Bequests
Future Fund Life Insurance

GENERATE AN INCOME
Retirement Plans Charitable Gift Annuity Charitable Remainder-Trust

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DTC #: 0547
Account #: 1854-6383
Account Name: The Community Foundation

Notify Nick Grimmer, director of giving strategies, 315.731.3737, ngrimmer@foundationhoc.org, that a gift is being transferred. Provide the donor name, number of shares, and the name of the stock or the stock code, as well as the designation.

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A copy of our most recently filed financial report is available from the Charities Registry on the New York State Attorney General’s website (www.charitiesnys.com) or, upon request, by contacting the New York State Attorney General, Charities Bureau, 28 Liberty Street, New York, NY 10005, or The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties, 2608 Genesee Street, Utica, NY 13502. You also may obtain information on charitable organizations from the New York State Office of the Attorney General at www.charitiesnys.com or 212.416.8401.