



In our community, many nonprofit organizations work to make life better for all. To do their work, hundreds of nonprofits in Oneida and Herkimer counties need money, which they get from various sources: individual donors, government, and other funders.

One such funder is the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, which has channeled more than \$100 million to hundreds of nonprofits in the two counties over the last 70 years. Like other place-based foundations across the country, the community wealth that made that funding possible was generated, historically, mostly by a philanthropic minority of our residents.

Careful stewardship of those growing assets resulted in thousands of relatively modest grants. In recent years, as our invested donor dollars continued to grow, the organization has begun broadening and diversifying its engagement to include partners and supporters at all levels, and made more substantial, longer-term commitments—most recently a \$10 million, 10-year racial equity and social justice initiative through 2030.

Community foundations across the country exist to meet local needs, and ours has dedicated itself to that work by supporting nonprofits large and small over the years. Throughout our history of our funding, for a number of reasons, nonprofits led by people of color did not always get an equitable share of funding. We continue to build on investments we have made over many years, while at the same time partnering with new and/or different organizations of color that have stepped up to meet the changing and prolific needs of communities of color.

To continue to support good works that meet people's needs and enhance opportunity for all, we are building on a history of funding Black-led nonprofits and other organizations serving our remarkably diverse two-county community, including: the Cooperate Association for Community Understanding (CAMCU), Cornhill Community for Change, Cornhill People United, the Cosmopolitan Community Center, For The Good, Johnson Park Center, Midtown Utica Community Center, Mid-Utica Neighborhood Preservation Corporation, Mohawk Valley Frontiers and Junior Frontiers, Mohawk Valley Latino Association, Oneida County NAACP Youth Council, Rome NAACP, and Utica/Oneida County NAACP.

Times and community needs change, and some of the organizations we've supported no longer exist. The key for current and future nonprofits' success—to support and enhance high-need neighborhoods—is collaboration. Working together our nonprofit partners can achieve more, and the Community Foundation can even more fully support solutions to longstanding challenges that afflict those in greatest need.

In 2022, the community will begin to see some major investments take shape in our high-need neighborhoods as part of the Community Foundation's 10-year equity initiative. These will be substantial, but like the initiative itself, they will be just a beginning.

Here and across the country positive interaction and collaboration will bring about change, while living in the past will only take away from current and future possibilities. We believe that our planned funding of hundreds of nonprofits, including those led by and meeting the needs of people of color, has made and will continue to bring about positive change far greater than the politics of division.

The community's future is one that willing partners will build together: residents, nonprofit organizations, funders, local governments; all who recognize that we can make a great place to live, work and raise a family even better. Or as the Community Foundation's vision sums it up: "A vibrant region with opportunity for all."

*Jawwaad Rasheed*  
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