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Women's philanthropy group awards \$190,000 in grants

By: Velvet Spicer June 19, 2019

The Rochester Women's Giving Circle on Wednesday awarded nearly \$200,000 in grants to local organizations to support women and girls.

This year's recipients were chosen from 28 proposals totaling more than \$518,000. The 10 awards range from \$6,000 to \$25,000. Grants were awarded to the following groups:

- Cameron Community Ministries, \$25,000
- Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Rochester, \$17,500
- Friends of the Garden Aerial, \$15,000
- Girl Scouts of Western New York, \$15,000
- Judicial Process Commission, \$25,000
- Mary's Place Refugee Outreach, \$25,000
- Society for the Protection and Care of Children, \$25,000
- Spiritus Christi Prison Outreach, \$22,500
- Unity Hospital of Rochester, \$6,000
- Veterans Outreach Center, \$14,000



RWGC Co-chair Nancy Bloom (Photo by Lori Farr)

RWGC was founded in 2007 by five women. Paula Carter, Alyce Van Patten, Amy Irish, Shirley King and Ellen Bevan envisioned the power of women supporting women through hands-on philanthropy. The group has grown to 185 active members and has distributed more than \$1.5 million to nonprofit organizations in Monroe County.

In 2015 the Giving Circle's membership approved a high impact grant of \$100,000 over two years to Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection. It provided support and mentoring to 40 young women, 20 each year, as they transitioned from high school to post-secondary education.

Carl Hagen, a professor of particle physics at the University of Rochester, recently awarded RWGC a "very significant" donation in honor of his late wife and RWGC member Suzanne Hagen.

"Suzanne Hagen was an individual who really cared about the plight of people who were suffering from injustice," RWGC Co-chair Nancy Bloom said at Wednesday's breakfast event. "As a guidance counselor, she used to champion students who were the underdogs."

After her retirement, Hagen set out to make the world a better place, Bloom said, through political and nonprofit work.

"She was passionate about our mission to help women and girls transition to a lifetime of economic independence," Bloom added. "She was an active participant in our meetings and a dedicated volunteer on the membership committee."



RWGC Co-chair Melinda Andolina speaks with donor Carl Hagen at Wednesday's grant event. (Photo by Lori Farr)

For the last several months, RWGC has worked to find a focus area where the donation can have a significant impact. To that end, the organization has chosen to focus the grant on an organization that helps women who have been incarcerated address challenges related to employment. She said the group has reached out to related nonprofits to seek letters of intent.

"We think that this focus area reflects a group that Suzanne would have cared about because they are disproportionately affected by discrimination and by poverty," she explained.

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