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COMMUNITY

Grants awarded to help women and girls living in poverty

By MALAK KASSEM | June 11, 2025



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Rochester Women's Giving Circle 2024 grant recipients and members.

The Rochester Women's Giving Circle (<https://therwgc.org/>) has awarded grants to eight organizations committed to assisting women and girls living in poverty with finding opportunities for education, training, skills and jobs.

It marks the 18th year that the initiative, which is a community of women, has made these grants. Since its inception, RWGC has distributed more than \$2.6 million to agencies that connect with the organization's mission to help women and girls who live in poverty transition to self-sufficiency. Annual contributions made by members are used for community grants in the following year.

This year, the circle, an advised fund at the Rochester Area Community Foundation, received 38 applications, a 40 percent increase over the average of the last decade, officials say. Applicants noted that they are trying to expand services to meet growing demand in the community.

The 2025 recipients have various objectives, including improving mental health, training for career-based skills, lowering barriers to obtaining a high school diploma, and assisting low-income mothers.

RWGC awarded funds to:

- Agape Haven of Abundance's Youth Empowerment Program, an out-of-school, community-based program in the Edgerton neighborhood. The program offers at-risk youth educational enrichment, mentorship, life-skills development and mental health resources
- Center for Teen Empowerment's Young Women's Leadership and Employment Project, which equips and positions young women in prominent, role-model positions where they drive social change in the community, while also building career-ready skills and securing meaningful employment.
- Center for Youth's pilot program, Flower City Change Makers—Young Women at Promise, for leadership development at the Bridge to Peace site. Young women of color receive mentoring, training in youth development, workforce skills, and job responsibilities.
- Flower City Noire Collective's Petals Mentoring Program, which offers arts, cultural, and educational experiences for girls in Rochester's southwest quadrant.

- Foundation for Women's Financial Education. Its program, Financial Coaching for Social Service Organizations, provides financial classes and coaching for low-income women employees of selected social service organizations.
- Goodwill of the Finger Lakes. The Goodwill Learning Academy works with adults who don't have a high school diploma. It provides education success coaching and helps keep students on track to complete their academic or career training program within 12 months.
- Unity Hospital of Rochester's Project Independence at Healthy Moms, a personalized job training and placement program that helps low-income mothers with children under four overcome employment barriers, ultimately leading to meaningful work and increased self-sufficiency.

(<https://beaconcommunitynewsfund.betterworld.org/campaigns/beacon-community-news-fund>).

- YWCA – Rochester and Monroe County's Equity Through Development Project, which offers women of color a pathway to become fundraisers and development professionals through training, hands-on experience, and mentorship.

Seven of the eight organizations were awarded \$25,000 each. Foundation for Women's Financial Education received \$8,250.

The RWGC will hold a gala celebration honoring grant recipients on June 18 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Temple Sinai on 363 Penfield Road.

Malak Kassem is a graduate of St. John's University and a member of the Oasis Project's second cohort.

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