



Giving Together so Women and Girls Can Thrive

July 15, 2026

When 170 people choose to give what they can, and give together, they accomplish more than any of them could alone.

This year, members of the [Rochester Women's Giving Circle](#) awarded a record \$265,000 to 12 nonprofits helping women and girls build lasting financial independence — the largest annual investment in the Giving Circle's 19-year history.

That investment comes at a critical time. The needs of local women and families are more complex and interconnected than ever. High housing costs, economic instability, and mental health challenges are a heavy burden for many households throughout our community.

“Nonprofits are dealing with the loss of other funding sources at the same time they are trying to meet surging demand for services,” says Dawn Perry, Collective Giving Officer at Rochester Area Community Foundation, where the Giving Circle is held. “The size of this grant round now, made possible by people who refuse to let this work falter, is incredibly meaningful.”

Since 2020, programs funded by Giving Circle members have:

- Served more than 3,200 women and girls.
- Helped more than 1,000 women obtain employment.
- Supported women in earning diplomas, gaining job skills, and moving toward long-term financial stability.

From First Investment to First Graduates

In 2024, the Giving Circle became the first donor to invest in the [Goodwill Learning Academy](#), which helps adults earn their high school diploma through free, flexible classes designed around the realities of adult life.

Two years later, 25 women are on track to graduate, while another 58 are beginning the program.

“It is unequivocal that the attainment of a high school diploma dramatically changes the trajectory of our graduates’ lives,” said Robin Mitchell, Director of Goodwill Learning Academy.



Members Give, Learn, and Grow

For members, the Rochester Women’s Giving Circle offers more than an opportunity to give.

“The Giving Circle has connected me with an incredible group of dedicated, intelligent and supportive women,” said Rebecca Storke, member since 2025. “I’m inspired by the collective impact we’ve been able to make.”

Members can choose to take part in the grant review process, spending six weeks learning about local nonprofits, reading proposals, interviewing applicants, and making funding recommendations together. Many say it’s one of the most rewarding parts of being part of the Circle.

Even deeper involvement is possible. One member is assigned to each grantee for the year after the grant is awarded. This person serves as a champion of the nonprofit, offering support, answering questions, attending events, and educating others about its mission along the way.

How the Giving Circle Works

- Give \$450 or more each year.
- Join a community of people committed to helping women and girls thrive.
- Pool your gift with others to make larger grants possible.
- Stay connected through volunteer opportunities and relationships with grantees.

Every year, ordinary people come together to create extraordinary opportunities for women and girls in our community.

Learn more about making our community more equitable through the [Rochester Women’s Giving Circle](#), [LGBT+ Giving Circle](#), [Black Giving Collective](#), or [Latino Giving Circle](#).

2026 Grantees

Agape Haven of Abundance: Out of School Time/Youth Empowerment, \$25,000

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Rochester: Community Mentorship Program, \$20,700

The Center for Teen Empowerment: Young Women’s Leadership and Employment Program, \$25,000

Center for Youth: Flower City Change Makers, \$25,000

Foundation for Women’s Financial Education: Financial Planning for Social Service Organizations, \$4,300

Goodwill of the Finger Lakes: Goodwill Learning Academy, \$25,000

Greentopia: Green Visions: Growing Healthy Futures, \$25,000

Judicial Process Commission: Women Forward Work Ready Program, \$25,000

Mary Cariola Children’s Center: Teacher Aide to NYS Teacher Assistant Certification Program, \$15,000

Society for the Protection and Care of Children: Project Equip, \$25,000

The Unity Hospital of Rochester: Project Independence at Healthy Moms, \$25,000

Urban League of Rochester NY: ROC Women’s Business Center Pathways to Economic Independence for Women, \$25,000

[« Back to News](#)

- [Mission & Vision](#)
- [Community Impact](#)
- [Staff](#)
- [Board](#)
- [History](#)
- [News](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Permanent Funds](#)
- [Financial and Legal Information](#)



PHONE 585.271.4100 | **FAX** 585.271.4292
500 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14607

Rochester Area Community Foundation is a tax-exempt 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization.
Your gift is tax-deductible as allowed by law.

NEWS SIGNUP

Email Address

go

© 2026 Rochester Area Community Foundation. Site Developed by [Mason Digital](#).

[Web Accessibility](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms and Conditions](#)

