



UNITED WAYS MERGE TO EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY MOBILIZE RESOURCES AND STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES ACROSS SIX-COUNTY FOOTPRINT

**Alignment Across Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Wayne, and Wyoming Counties
Positions United Way to Create Greater Impact Throughout the Region**

**Merged Organization Set to Return to Pre-Pandemic Funding Levels
and Announces Additional \$125,000 in Grants Across Communities**

Rochester, NY – Today, six United Ways officially announced their merger and the creation of a powerful and aligned organization: United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes, serving the counties of Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Wayne, and Wyoming.

The organization, which altogether raises and distributes more than \$30 million annually, now encompasses 5,144 square miles of rural, suburban, and urban neighborhoods, and brings together more than 50,000 donors, 1,300 workplaces, 1,000 nonprofit partners, and thousands of volunteers to address the region's biggest human services challenges.

All current team members across the six counties remain with the organization, bringing a breadth of hands-on experience, in-depth understanding, and increased peoplepower to the expanded footprint. Jaime Saunders will serve as the merged organization's President & CEO, with Cicely Strickland-Ruiz as Chief Operating Officer, Jennifer Cathy as Chief Impact Officer, Barbara Pierce as Chief Development Officer, and Laurie Ganon as Chief Financial Officer. Former Regional Directors will continue to serve in leadership roles: Kari Buch as Associate Director of Community Impact, and Tammy Hathaway and Carol Pettis as Senior Regional Development Managers.

The six United Ways have worked together for decades, with Monroe County providing back-office services including financial, IT, marketing, and human resources functions for all. The new structure, proven during the organization's spring 2021 campaign season, streamlines the organization's front-end processes. Its success helped United Way rebound to pre-pandemic levels of funding for its human services partners.

"People and businesses function across local geographic boundaries," said Jaime Saunders, President and CEO, United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes. "Working together more cohesively across the region will make it easier for our business partners and donors to share resources, and our nonprofit partners to get elevated support so they can remain focused on providing services."

What will not change is United Way's commitment to local communities. Dollars raised in an area will stay committed to that area. Donors will also retain the ability to direct their contributions to the causes they feel strongest about. United Way will remain committed to its three core impact areas, providing meaningful Community Impact Fund Impact Grants to its nonprofit partners supporting Health, Education, and Economic Mobility, and short-term Community Impact Fund Innovation Grants for Crisis Response, Synergy, and Equity.

“The real power of United Way comes from the community,” said Lauren Dixon, Board Chair of United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes, and an Ontario County resident and Monroe County business owner. “As neighbors come together in support of neighbors, United Way becomes a conduit for connecting those resources to the most pressing needs of each community. This merged organization will combine the power of the entire region with an intensely localized focus.”

The combined United Way has created a new Regional Advisory Council and Regional Cabinets to advise and inform strategies and ensure local communities from across the region are represented in the new organization. In addition, its Board of Directors has added members from the previous United Ways’ leadership, who will work alongside those who already live and work across county boundaries.

In its first public announcement, United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes not only confirmed that it will recover to pre-pandemic levels of Community Impact Fund support totaling \$12.9 million to 190 programs region-wide, but also announced \$125,000 in new, multi-county allocations to nonprofits in Genesee, Livingston, Ontario, Wayne, and Wyoming Counties. The funding, \$25,000 in each county through the organization’s Project Uplift initiative, has been committed to existing nonprofit partners to support and administer direct, discretionary interventions for community members experiencing barriers to well-being and economic stability. It is the first of many multi-county funding initiatives United Way anticipates rolling out across the region in the coming years.

In an effort to hear and learn from the community, over the coming months, United Way’s Community Impact team will conduct a listening tour with human service agencies across the six counties. The effort will be focused on aligning approaches and systems to maximize outcomes without creating additional burden for service providers.

“We will maintain the consistency of funding as we coordinate processes and procedures on our end,” said Jennifer Cathy, United Way’s Chief Impact Officer. “We will take the next few years to synchronize six distinct grant cycles and application timelines into one, all with an eye to improving the experience for – and supporting the outcomes of – our partner agencies.”

Workplaces and donors will notice simplification of some processes immediately, but otherwise United Way’s Annual Campaign will remain unchanged. It will kick off its region-wide Campaign in January, and year-round efforts will continue to help the organization raise needed funds to respond to community needs.

“We remain focused on providing local workplaces, donors and volunteers with easy and meaningful ways to make a big difference across our region,” said Barbara Pierce, United Way’s Chief Development Officer. “In addition to maintaining our current channels for giving, we will also continue to innovate and create new funds like our recently introduced Equity Fund, so donors can support the causes that are most important to them.”

United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes has launched its new website in conjunction with the announcement, and more information can be found at www.UnitedWayROCFLX.org.

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The mission of United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes is to unite the goodwill and resources of the entire region so everyone can thrive. United Way mobilizes thousands of workplaces, tens of thousands of donors, thousands of volunteers, and hundreds of human service agencies in coordinated and critical action, to achieve what no one individual or organization can do alone. Please visit us online at UnitedWayROCFLX.org.