

JANUARY 2025

Niagara Area Foundation Community Connections



Niagara Area Foundation

A division of the Community Foundation
for Greater Buffalo

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

For 25 years, dozens of leaders with deep roots in Niagara County have served on the NAF's Council and guided the mission forward.

Current Council members are listed below:

Officers

Jennifer Pauly, *Chair*

Patricia Wrobel, *Vice Chair*

Margaret Nucci, *Secretary*

Brenda Dysinger, *Treasurer*

Council

Julie R. Berrigan

Allen Booker

Jane Killewald

Marianne E. Koenig

Michelle Vanstrom

Michael Williamson

Richard Zucco

25 Years of connecting people, ideas and resources to improve lives in Niagara County

Dear Niagara Area Foundation clients and community partners:

Happy New Year! 2025 marks 25 years since the Niagara Area Foundation (NAF) was established to connect people, ideas and resources to improve lives in our beloved Niagara County. We are honored to celebrate this milestone and share insight into how you help make a difference!

For its 2024 competitive grants process, the NAF considered applications from organizations with the maximum positive impact in Niagara County that align with at least one of its two goals:

Youth Enrichment: To build stronger communities through the enrichment of youth, positive youth development, and equity and inclusion.

Environment: To support and enhance education and awareness about the importance and creation of a healthy, vibrant, and safe ecosystem for Niagara County residents.

You can read about the 2024 grantees on page 2. Since it was established as a division of the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo in 2000, NAF funds have awarded \$5.9 million in grants and scholarships. The NAF has also grown its assets to more than \$11 million with more than 35 funds under its umbrella. We are committed to being stewards of these resources to inspire positive change.

In this newsletter, we hope you enjoy learning about some of the individuals who make our work possible and the impact the NAF is making. Thank you for your ongoing support as we continue to advance the Niagara region together. We are inspired by your generosity and dedication to our region and all that is possible because of it.

With gratitude,

Jennifer Pauly, Chair



The Niagara Area Foundation held its June meeting at the Niagara Falls Country Club, where Council members heard from local leaders about opportunities to collaborate. Pictured, from left: Patricia Wrobel, Jane Killewald, Allen Booker, Marianne E. Koenig, Michelle Vanstrom, Margaret Nucci, Jennifer Pauly, Brenda Dysinger, Julie R. Berrigan and Richard Zucco.

NIAGARA AREA FOUNDATION FUNDS

Henry E. & Susan W. Beamer Endowment Fund	Stanley A. Brzezinski Memorial Fund	Laird Family Foundation	Our Lady of Lebanon Fund	Wilson Free Library Forever Friends Endowment Fund
Thelma L. & Milfred R. Beck Fund	Jerry and Liz Canada Fund	Lockport Public Library Endowment Fund	Patricia L. Parkinson Scholarship Fund	Youngstown Free Library Foundation
Martha H. Beeman and Judge William L. Kellick Endowment Fund	Joanne and Franklyn Collins Fund	Stephen C. McKinney Scholarship Fund	Positive Youth Development Philanthropic Fund	YWCA of Niagara Fund
The Lorraine M. & Eugene P. Brady Memorial Scholarship Trust	Eugene A. DeFelice, M.D. & Maryanne Harvey Fund	Joseph and Riva Mehr Fund	Say Yes Niagara Falls	YWCA of Niagara Munk/Human Memorial Scholarship Trust
BRI-NK Foundation	Ross & Mary Alice Eckert Fund	Niagara Area Foundation Endowment Fund	The Thomas K. Singer Charitable Trust	YWCA of Niagara Ruth N. Downes Fund for Domestic Violence
Barbara C. and Edward M. Brink Fund	Barbara Ennis Endowment Fund	Niagara Education Foundation Fund	Daunt & Irene Stenzel Scholarship Fund	
Agnes Clarke Brown Memorial Scholarship Fund	Grace Foundation	Fund for Niagara Hospice	Jacklin B. Stopp Bequest Fund	
	Theresa Elizabeth Insana Memorial Scholarship Fund	Elsie & Eugene Oliver Memorial Scholarship Trust	Fern J. White & Neva A. Jackling Scholarship Fund	

2024 GRANTS TOTALING MORE THAN \$60,000

Arts for Learning WNY
\$8,375 for Arts After School

Be-A-Friend Program, Inc., Big Brothers Big Sisters of Erie, Niagara and the Southern Tier
\$5,000 for Mentoring Program in Niagara County

EPIC - Every Person Influences Children
\$5,515 for Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) Stepping Stones

Imagine Community Gardens, Inc.
\$5,000 for ICG 2024 Niagara County 3 Gardens Support Funding

Pinnacle Community Services
\$10,000 for Casey House--Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter—Youth 24/7 Crisis Hotline

Royalton-Hartland Agriculture Foundation
\$10,000 for Visiting Farm Animal Program

VIA Visually Impaired Advancement
\$6,310 for Providing Teachers for the Visually Impaired and Orientation & Mobility Specialists to Niagara County children who are visually impaired

Youth Mentoring Services of Niagara County
\$10,000 for Links

Jerry and Liz Canada A driving force for Niagara County



Let us take you back to Niagara Falls in 1981. The Turtle, a landmark that celebrated Native American culture, opened to the public. The holidays brought the inaugural year of the world-famous Festival of Lights that quickly became one of the most popular seasonal attractions in North America. And an inspired love story that has spanned more than four decades began.

Liz and Jerry Canada both grew up in the LaSalle neighborhood of Niagara Falls, although they didn't meet until high school. "We met through track and started dating when we were 16 and 17," Liz said. "We signed each other's yearbooks and the rest is history!"

After high school, Jerry attended Canisius, majoring in computer science, and Liz attended Buffalo State, where she majored in education. In 1986, they married and started a family.

Liz went on to spend 33 years teaching in the City of Niagara Falls, retiring in 2020. Meanwhile, Jerry co-started a successful software company that he and his partners sold in the early 2000s, staying on to work under the new management.

As Liz and Jerry's love for one another continued to grow, so did their love of the county that they still call home today. They knew they wanted to continue to support the region forever. The Canadas were introduced to the Community Foundation by their tax advisor and were happy to learn more about the Niagara Area Foundation, a division of the Community Foundation focused on strengthening Niagara County.

"One of the values we saw right away from working with the Community Foundation is that it is a good source of coordinating things to connect us to opportunities that will have the impact we want to achieve," Jerry said.

In 2015, Liz and Jerry established a fund to support causes that were meaningful to them, including cultural events, education and minority entrepreneurship. To date, their fund has supported numerous organizations in Niagara County that align with those causes.

Looking ahead, they hope to get their two grown sons involved to carry on their legacy of giving. "We rely on the Foundation to educate us a little more as to where the needs are and where we can be supportive so we can truly make a difference in Niagara County and beyond," said Liz.

The Niagara Area Foundation is ever growing and seeks to provide its community with more grants each year. For more information, visit [TheNiagaraAreaFoundation.org](https://www.niagaraareafoundation.org).



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for Greater Buffalo*

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

c/o Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
726 Exchange Street, Suite 525
Buffalo, NY 14210

Grantee Spotlight

KENAN CENTER

Pictured, from left: Lea Sobieraski, Assistant Director and Bill Patti, Executive Director, Kenan Center, inside the computer lab made possible by a 2023 NAF grant.



A 2023 Niagara Area Foundation grant was awarded to the Kenan Center, which works to enrich lives by providing the community with cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities on its Lockport campus, for its Kenan ACRES (arts, culture, recreation, education, sports) computer lab.

“We have a fully functioning ACRES program, mainly for kids, and we really wanted to develop the STEAM education piece of that curriculum but we didn’t have the equipment to do it,” said Bill Patti, Executive Director, Kenan Center. Noting that the Kenan Center serves Lockport students, many of whom don’t have access to technology, the importance of a computer lab became evident.

The NAF grant made it possible, allowing the Kenan Center to convert a large former storage closet into a lab with eight state-of-the-art computers.

“We were thrilled to receive the grant from the Niagara Area Foundation,” said Bill. “Now kids who didn’t have access to technology can learn STEAM, how to code, or even do gaming, and have an opportunity to do that with their peers in a safe space.”

Additionally, two introductory programming classes—for ages 8-12 and 13-18— will be offered by seasoned instructors in the space.

“We want to continue providing more services for the kids in our community. This lab allows us to do that. We’re excited to start at the ground level and keep expanding those classes,” noted Bill.



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