CNY Community Foundation Commits $1 Million toward Racial Equity

June 18, 2020 - The Central New York Community Foundation announced today that it will be investing $1 million over the next few years toward efforts that work to achieve racial equity in the region. Its new Black Equity and Excellence funding priority will be used to support Black-led nonprofit organizations and projects that counteract systemic racism.

“As a community, we cannot continue to stand by as a large portion of our Black community continues to be marginalized as a result of centuries-old inequities in education, housing, healthcare, and employment opportunities,” said Tim Penix, vice president of Syracuse Educational Opportunity Center and chair of the Community Foundation’s Grants & Initiatives Committee.

While details of how the funding will be used are still being developed, the Community Foundation expects to focus on activating community dialogue, increasing the capacity of Black-led organizations that support historically underserved communities, and advocating for change.

“We cannot put slavery behind us because its legacy surrounds us in 400 years’ worth of oppression – it structures our schools and workplaces, economic situations and the health and living conditions that disproportionately expose so many Black Americans to COVID-19,” said Peter Dunn, Community Foundation president & CEO. “As a civic leader for the Central New York region, we must use our platform and resources to take action.”

According to Dunn, the Community Foundation’s staff and board were driven to take action from the recent racial tragedies and ensuing national conversation regarding racial inequities. He says the organization will first spend the next few months listening to residents, nonprofit organizations, civic leaders, foundations and government partners to determine how best to focus funding and amplify efforts already in place.

“We consider this to be an imperative, and long overdue, investment in our community that will go beyond our grantmaking and be woven into everything we do,” said Dunn. “We also acknowledge that we don’t have all the answers. We commit to asking questions, listening and creating a space for all voices to be heard, and being part of the solution.”

Organizations interested in convening around this issue, or receiving funding, will be asked to submit a letter of interest outlining their efforts and commitment toward building racial equity.

Contributions may be made to the Black Equity and Excellence Fund at cnycf.org/equity or by contacting Thomas Griffith, vice president, development at tgriffith@cnycf.org or 315-883-5544.

The Central New York Community Foundation is a public charity established in 1927 that collects contributions from donors, manages them to grow over time and then distributes funding to local charities to help them thrive. It is the largest charitable foundation in Central New York with assets of nearly $260 million and has invested more than $200 million in community improvement projects since its inception. As a grantmaker, civic leader, convener and sponsor of strategic initiatives, the Community Foundation strives to strengthen local nonprofits, encourage better understanding of the region and address the most critical issues of our time.

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