



2024 - 2025

ANNUAL REPORT



Rochester Childfirst Network

SERVING CHILDREN SINCE 1857

Dear RCN Friends,

At **Rochester Childfirst Network**, every child's potential is a story waiting to unfold—and thanks to your support, these stories are filled with learning, laughter, and new possibilities. As we reflect on the past year, I'm proud to share how RCN continues to grow, adapt, and deepen our impact with children and families across our community.



Ann Marie Stephan, MS, EI
Executive Director

This year, we've seen the power of early education, out-of-school enrichment, and specialized support working together to prepare children for bright futures. Our dedicated staff meet each child where they are, nurturing social-emotional skills and sparking curiosity through hands-on learning.

We know families continue to face barriers to affordable, quality education—but together, we are part of the solution. RCN remains committed to expanding access, innovating programs, and advocating for the needs of children and families.

Looking ahead, we're excited to build on our strong foundation with new programs, partnerships, and projects. Thank you for being part of this journey. Your belief in our mission fuels our work and reminds us that together, we can create a future where every child thrives.

Ann Marie Stephan

Mission

Rochester Childfirst Network believes in the inherent potential of every child, regardless of their background or needs. We promote equitable access to comprehensive services by providing innovative early care and educational programming for young children and their families in a safe, diverse, and nurturing environment.

Vision

Every child grows up safe and strong, able to achieve his or her full potential.

Values

RCN is... **Inclusive, Nurturing, Professional, Compassionate, Accountable**

Brand Promise

Only RCN is relentless in its pursuit of educational and social-emotional growth for every child. We put children and families first, offering comprehensive in-house resources and support. Our children thrive in an inclusive, fun-loving and curiosity-inspiring environment, centered around intentionally designed indoor and outdoor spaces.

Our Network of Programs

RCN impacts the lives of **more than 1,600 children and families** in the Rochester area annually. RCN provides whole-child, early childhood education services to children through Universal Prekindergarten, child care, special education, wrap-around care, and in-home childcare support.



More than **HALF** of RCN families are eligible for nutrition and/or tuition assistance programs.

Student Demographics

49% BLACK
27% WHITE
17% HISPANIC
7% MULTIRACIAL/OTHER

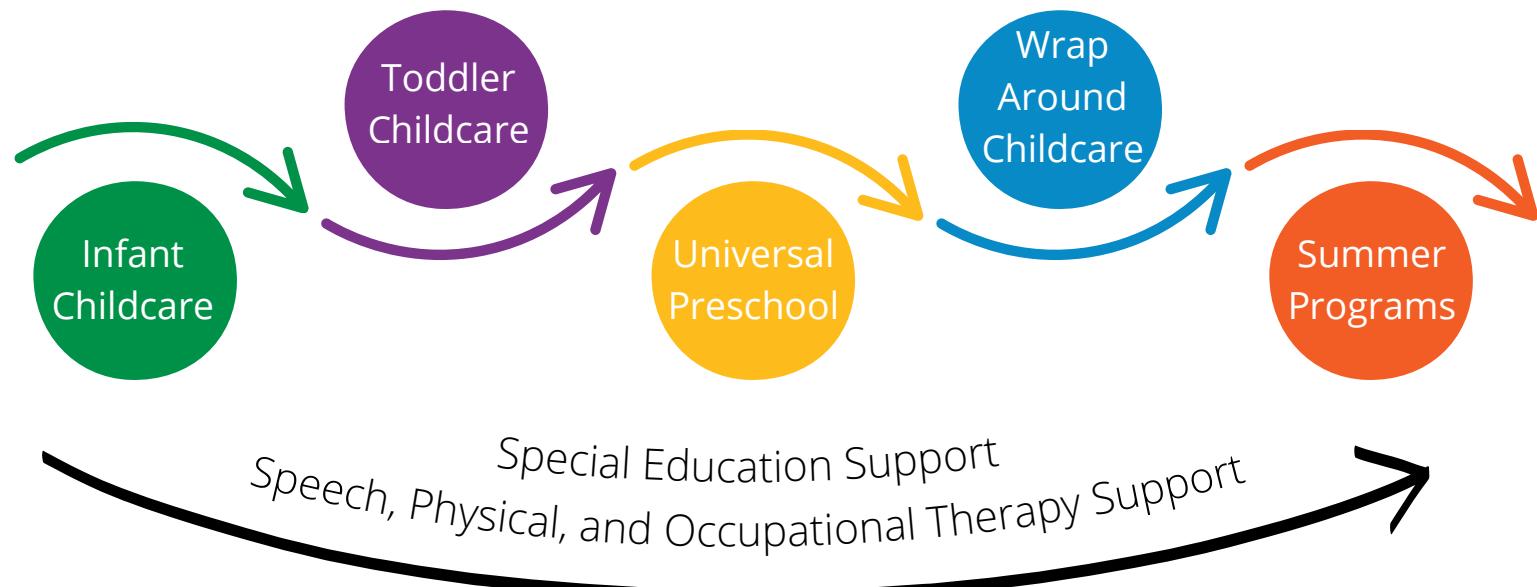
30%

of all RCN children have special needs with full access to physical, occupational, and speech therapy support.

Continuum of Care & Support

At RCN, we provide a unique **Continuum of Care** that supports the whole child from **infancy through age 12**. Our integrated programs include **childcare, early education, universal pre-K, special education services, before and after school care, school break programs, and summer enrichment** — all designed to grow with each child.

By building lasting relationships and providing consistent, high-quality care and education at every stage, we help children **thrive emotionally, socially, and academically** — setting them up for success in school and in life.



- **Continuity Matters:** Children benefit from continuity in caregivers and educators. Stable relationships reduce stress, build security, and support better emotional and cognitive development.
- **Preventing Learning Loss:** Our year-round, progressive programs ensure consistent social-emotional learning, mitigating learning loss during school breaks and summers.
- **Special Education Integration:** RCN is one of the few providers that integrate special education services seamlessly within typical childhood programming, ensuring inclusion and accessibility.



SMILE: Successful Milestones in Learning Environments

RCN's **SMILE Program** (Successful Milestones in Learning Environments) is a **New York State Education Department-approved 4410 Preschool Special Education Program** designed to support children ages 3-5 with unique learning needs who thrive with personalized support and instruction.

Through a blend of **special education services, speech & language, occupational, and physical therapies**, SMILE helps each child build the skills they need to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. Our team provides individualized student-focused support in integrated classroom settings, guided by each child's **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**.

By providing early, targeted interventions during these crucial developmental years, the SMILE Program gives every child the opportunity to grow with confidence and reach their full potential. Thanks to your support, we are proud to help children take these important first steps in their lifelong learning journey.

RCN is **1 of only 4**
Community Based NYSED
approved programs in
Monroe County to offer
**Integrated Special
Education Classrooms**

43% of RCN 3- and 4-year-old
students receive SMILE services

Motor Room

RCN's 600-square-foot motor room is a dedicated space with sensory swings, balance beams, therapy balls, and other specialized tools for children receiving physical or occupational therapy. It gives staff a safe, controlled environment to deliver individualized interventions and integrate therapy goals into daily routines. Few early childhood centers offer such a purpose-built space. By fostering motor skills, sensory regulation, and physical confidence early, RCN helps children reach milestones faster, focus better in the classroom, and build a strong foundation for school readiness.



With gratitude to the Waldron Rise Foundation

RCN is grateful to the **Waldron Rise Foundation** for their generous support of our special education and therapy services. Their support enabled us to enhance our programs through new assistive technology, updated therapy equipment, and vital staff development.

Cassidy's Journey: A Story of Growth and Support



Cassidy arrived at RCN at just 14 months old, facing serious health and developmental challenges—including feeding difficulties, a cleft lip, and delayed speech. Her father, Dan, sought not just care but meaningful support. “I felt super supported from day one,” Dan says. “Everyone always knew Cassidy, no matter the classroom.”

With a personalized plan in place, Cassidy received speech, occupational, and physical therapy. RCN’s nurturing staff listened closely, supported her feeding needs, and helped her build confidence at her own pace. Over the years, Cassidy progressed from a shy toddler to a joyful, independent 5-year-old thriving in our Universal Pre-K program.

“RCN isn’t just about ABCs,” says Dan. “It’s about learning to manage emotions, build friendships, and grow as a person. Cassidy has incredible self-awareness now—and that’s because of the people here.”

Thanks to the dedication of our staff and the generosity of our supporters, Cassidy’s early years have been filled with progress, confidence, and community.

From Parent to Teaching Assistant — Sade’s Journey with RCN

When **Sade** enrolled her twin boys, **Jaiden and Kaiden**, in RCN’s SMILE special education program in 2018, they were only three years old and mostly nonverbal. Within two years of integrated speech and occupational therapy, her sons were confidently communicating with peers and teachers. “They hardly talked when they came here... now you can have a whole conversation with them,” she recalls. “RCN was a big part of getting my kids where they needed to be.”

That transformation inspired Sade to join RCN as a **UPK Teaching Assistant in 2021**, drawn to the organization’s inclusive approach and family-like environment. “No matter what, you’re welcome at RCN,” she says. “They don’t exclude kids — everybody is included and cared for.”

Today, her youngest son **Kobe** is thriving at RCN with speech therapy, strong friendships, and a favorite teacher, Mr. Rick, who plays action figures and “digs for treasure” with him on the playground. Kobe’s experience mirrors his brothers’: an environment where he feels secure, loved, and supported to reach milestones once out of reach.

Sade’s perspective as both parent and staff highlights RCN’s unique impact: **inclusive classrooms, individualized support, and dedicated staff who help every child reach their potential**. She’s also seen firsthand how RCN’s enrichment sparks curiosity and builds confidence. “Your child is always going to feel welcomed here,” Sade affirms. “They’re going to get everything they need.”

This dual journey captures the heart of RCN — **expert care, deep relationships, and proven results** for children and families alike, showing how a nurturing, inclusive approach transforms lives across generations.



Financials

Fiscal Year 24/25: July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

Revenues

Program/Service Revenue*	\$5,019,105
Grants	\$302,868
Fundraising	\$269,876
Foundation Support	\$240,144
Other Income	\$11,075
Total Revenue	\$5,843,068

Expenses

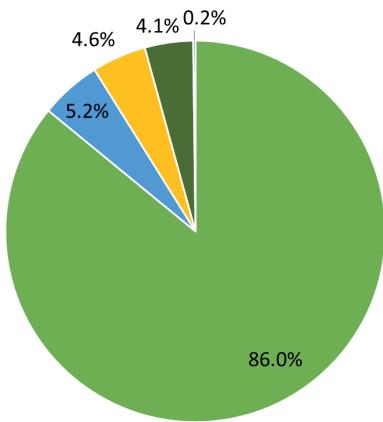
Personnel	\$3,154,677
Family Child Care Reimbursement	\$1,113,340
Occupancy	\$488,298
Professional Fees	\$404,219
Management & General	\$277,162
Depreciation	\$87,597
Total Expenses	\$5,525,294

Surplus/(Deficit) **\$317,774**

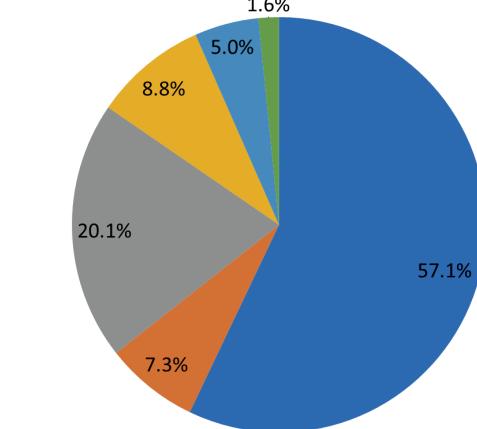


* = Includes Prior Year Program Revenue received in FY24/25

Revenue Sources



Expense Categories



█ Program Revenue █ Grants █ Fundraising
█ Foundation █ Miscellaneous Revenue

█ Personnel █ Professional Fees
█ FCC Provider Reimbursement █ Occupancy
█ Management & General █ Depreciation

A Note on Financial Stewardship

From the Board Treasurer, Jeri Rombaut

RCN entered FY24/25 after one of our most financially challenging years. In response, we took decisive, proactive steps to strengthen our financial health—partnering with a trusted external finance firm, reducing expenses, addressing debt, and engaging our board more deeply in financial planning. Our FY24/25 year-end reflects the positive impact of these efforts, and we are already seeing the results of those hard decisions. This work continues as we build a more sustainable, resilient RCN—ready to serve our mission well into the future.

Bright Spots

Mr. Jeff Builds More Than Just Maintenance



At Rochester Childfirst Network, every staff member is part of our children's learning journey—even those working behind the scenes. This **Bright Spot** highlights how our Maintenance Technician **Mr. Jeff** turned a routine day into an unforgettable learning experience.

One morning, Mr. Jeff visited a classroom whose weekly theme was construction. He began by reading *Pete the Cat: Construction Destruction*, captivating the children with the playful story. Then he brought the lesson to life—rolling in his real tools and explaining how construction, repairs, and maintenance keep RCN running smoothly.

Children were eager to touch, ask questions, and see how things work. They learned about safety, problem-solving, and teamwork—skills that apply far beyond the classroom. Mr. Jeff's visit even sparked a few dreams of becoming builders one day.

Moments like these show that at RCN, **learning happens everywhere and with everyone**. Our teachers, support staff, and maintenance team alike share their knowledge, nurture curiosity, and open doors to new experiences. This **Bright Spot** celebrates Mr. Jeff for going above and beyond—not just fixing things, but helping children learn, explore, and grow.

Nourishing Kids, Every Single Day

Behind the scenes at RCN, **Kitchen Manager Jermaine and Kitchen Assistant Josh** quietly perform one of the most essential jobs in our building—preparing and serving **over 200 healthy meals every day** for our children. From early morning prep to midday clean-up, they ensure every breakfast, lunch, and snack meets strict **USDA guidelines and New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) regulations**.

Their work is part of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a federal initiative that reimburses child care programs for serving nutritious meals to children. Thanks to Jermaine and Josh's dedication, every child at RCN receives meals that fuel learning, play, and healthy development—often when those meals mean the most.

"Jermaine and Josh are the heartbeat of our nutrition program," says **Ivelisse Marrero**, Director of Family Child Care & CACFP. "They work tirelessly, with care and consistency, to make sure every child is fed well and fed right. Their impact reaches every classroom, every day—and we're so grateful for their commitment."

Their work may be behind the scenes, but their impact is front and center—nourishing young minds and growing bodies with every plate they serve.



Family Child Care

110+

Family Child Care providers supported

97%

are Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises (MWBEs)

1,600+

children and families served



Investing in Child Care, Empowering Neighborhoods

In 2024, RCN received a **\$300,000 grant from the Monroe County Industrial Development Agency (COMIDA)** to strengthen and expand **Family Child Care (FCC)** across our region. This investment supported local entrepreneurs—home-based child care providers—by helping them launch or grow their small businesses. Through targeted outreach, startup support, and a selective grant process, RCN provided over 100 FCC providers with educational tools, safety equipment, toys, and active play materials.

These providers don't just offer care—they serve their own communities, helping working families stay in the workforce while nurturing the children in their neighborhoods. By supporting FCC providers, RCN and COMIDA helped strengthen the local economy and increase access to quality child care where it's needed most.

Testimonials:



Outdoor play for a provider can be a challenge at times. When Genesis Family Child Care was awarded the COMIDA grant we focused a vast majority of the funding on outdoor play equipment. The children in daycare are now able to have a variety of play activities outdoors. The children are enjoying their new taxi bike, water table, and caterpillar climber. Thank you for helping Genesis Family Child Care with improving our outdoor environment.

-Jade Lewis, owner of Genesis Family Child Care

The learning materials and toys we received through the COMIDA grant have made a tremendous impact on the children attending Monarch Montessori Daycare. The quality and variety of the resources have sparked their curiosity and creativity, helping them engage in more hands-on learning experiences. From educational games to developmental toys, every item has been designed to foster critical thinking, motor skills, and social interaction. My kids are not only having fun, but they're also making noticeable strides in their cognitive and emotional development. I'm incredibly grateful for the support from COMIDA, as these materials have truly enhanced the quality of care and education I can provide. Thank You so Much.

-Trinity Roulo, Owner and Provider at Monarch Montessori Daycare



TRUNK OR TREAT

Our Trunk-or-Treat event was a spooktacular success, filled with costumes, candy, and contagious laughter! Families wandered from trunk to trunk, collecting goodies and giggles at every stop. With decorated cars, festive attire, and smiling faces everywhere, the parking lot turned into a playground of pumpkins, pirates, and pure joy. It was a frightfully fun way to celebrate the season and bring our community together for safe, silly, and sweet Halloween memories! 🧟⭐



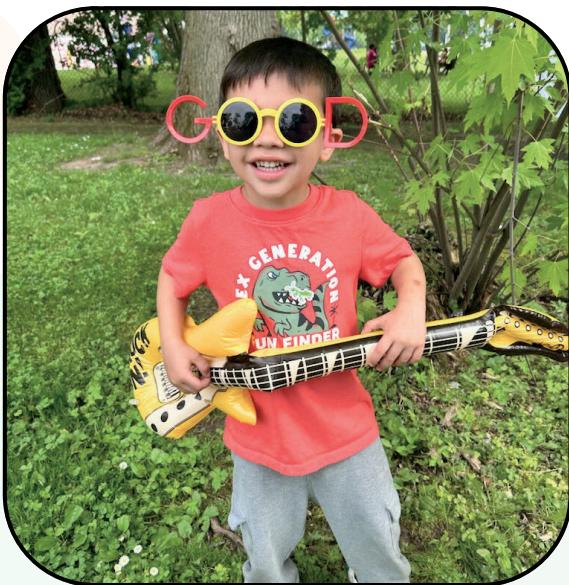
... Family ... Fun Night

Family Fun Night was full of laughter, learning, and little proud moments as kids became tour guides for the evening! Families explored classrooms, peeked into cubbies, sampled family-style dining, and saw firsthand the places where curiosity and creativity bloom every day. The photo booth added a touch of silly snapshots and sweet memories—capturing smiles that say it all. It was a heartwarming night of connection, celebration, and community! ❤️



STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

Strawberry Festival was a berry sweet celebration packed with face painting, cotton candy clouds, buttery popcorn, and big smiles all around! Kids played games, families won fabulous raffle prizes, and everyone enjoyed tasty treats and community cheer. With berries, laughter, and sunshine in the air, it was a joyful day of fun, food, and festive family memories—one we won't soon forget! 🍓🎨



Thank you to our generous Corporate Sponsors!

Critical Investments in Our Future

In early 2025, we completed a transformational capital project—replacing the entire roof of our main facility (excluding the historic carriage house). This multi-year effort, representing **Part II of our Capital Campaign**, marks one of the most significant infrastructure investments in RCN's modern history and reflects our unwavering commitment to providing a safe, secure, and healthy learning environment for the children and families we serve.

The total project cost exceeded **\$1.2 million**, funded primarily through the extraordinary generosity of **individual donors, private foundations, and several New York State grant programs**, with over **\$1 million raised from non-operating sources**. We are deeply grateful for every gift that made this achievement possible—and for the steadfast leadership of our **Board of Directors and Staff Leadership Team**, who guided this complex project through planning, fundraising, and execution.

This project was critical and urgent. Sections of the original roof, **built in 1954**, had **never been replaced** and were in a severe state of disrepair. Water leaks were disrupting classrooms, and emergency repairs were no longer sustainable. When work began, **unexpected challenges** emerged—**asbestos and mold remediation**, as well as **critical utility infrastructure updates**, were required once the existing roofing was removed. These added costs and complexities made the project even more essential—and more remarkable that we were able to complete it successfully.

This investment ensures that RCN's children, educators, and families will benefit from a **safer, healthier environment for decades to come**. It also signals another important chapter in our **160+ year legacy** of evolving to meet the needs of Rochester's children and families.

A special note of appreciation goes out to Spring Sheet Metal & Roofing for being such a great partner on this project. To everyone who contributed to this milestone—from major donors to project partners—**THANK YOU**. You've helped secure the future of RCN and the children we are so proud to serve.



Before



After



Shaping the Future - One Legacy at a Time

Legacy Society members are building a stronger tomorrow for the children of today.

Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Andrews

Mr. Timothy Cosgriff

Mrs. Elaine Cole

Mrs. Marsha Dumka

Mr. & Mrs. Gary Lehmann

Mrs. Marcia Nabut

Mrs. Barbara Reifler

Mrs. Jeri Rombaut

Mrs. Jennifer & Steve Takatch

Dr. and Mrs. Andrea Zuegel



The **RCN Legacy Society** recognizes individuals who have made a powerful, forward-looking commitment to Rochester Childfirst Network by including RCN in their estate plans. These generous supporters are not just imagining a brighter future for children—they are actively creating it. Through their planned gifts, Legacy Society members help secure RCN's **long-term sustainability**, ensuring that high-quality early education and care will continue to uplift generations to come. Their decision reflects not only generosity, but vision—the kind that builds **lasting change**.

Interested in becoming part of this meaningful legacy? We invite you to consider joining the RCN Legacy Society by including RCN in your will, trust, or beneficiary designations. Your future gift can have a profound, lasting impact—and we would be honored to talk with you about how to shape your legacy through RCN. To learn more, please contact our Director of Development at (585) 473-2858 x225 or visit www.rcn4kids.org/legacy.

Tribute Listing

Tribute gifts received July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025

In Honor of and with Appreciation for the Teachers and Staff of RCN:

Kathryn Austin

In Honor of Barbara Reifler

Jeff Hoffman
Mrs. Marjorie Grinols
Ms. Lois Jones

In Honor of Jean Williams

Mr. Geoffrey Lawrence

In Memory of Muriel D. Steinberg

Ms. Sandra Berbeco

In Honor of Jeff Hoffman

Mrs. Kim Weick
Dr. Lisa McCabe

In Memory of Joan Hultberg

Ms. Jane W. Hultberg

In Honor of Kim Frame Weick

Elisabeth Wehmiller

In Memory of Jean Sloan and Donna Lamendola

Ms. Michelle Streicher

In Honor of Mad Hatter Tea Party

Mr. and Mrs. Norene Green
Ms. Stephanie Snow

In Memory of Bernard Dumka

Nancy Brown
Mr. and Mrs. Norene Green
Mrs. Barbara Reifler
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Powell
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Swartz
Joseph Goyette
Jeri Rombaut
Ms. Mary Louise Musler

In Honor of RCN Toy Drive

Mr. and Mrs. Norene Green

In Memory of Bill Grant

Mr. and Mrs. Sue Murphy

In Memory of Judy Metzler

Mrs. Ann Kanthor



RCN Honor Roll of Donors

Individual gifts received July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025

Mrs. Gay Abbey
Ms. Sophia Abramson
Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Andrews
Ms. Carol Aroesty
Ms. Kathryn Austin
Ms. Lillian Babcock
Mrs. Ruth Baltzer
Ms. Jean Bechtold
Ms. Sandra Berbeco
Ms. Selma Berger
Mrs. Toby Berke
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Mr. Charles Zettek Jr.
Dr. and Mrs. Andrea Zuegel

*** = Monthly Donor**



Foundations & Donor Advised Funds

Grants & Contributions received July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025

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Avangrid Foundation
Canandaigua National Bank
ESL Charitable Foundation
Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation
Max and Marian Farash Charitable Foundation
Glover Crask Charitable Trust
Greenfield Fund
Greater Rochester Summer Learning Association (GRSLA)
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Marcia Nabut Charitable Fund
Nessler Trust
PEAK Family Foundation
Rite Aid Foundation

Rochester Female Charitable Society
Robert C. & Jane K. Stevens Legacy Fund
Robert C. & Jane K. Stevens Legacy Fund
Dr. Valenti Community Health Fund
Veniskey-Prince Family Fund
Waldron Rise Foundation
Workforce Development Institute



In-Kind Gifts & Business Support

In-kind gifts & business support received July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025

Rochester Americans (Amerks)
Bailey The Business Advisor
Bailey the Business Advisor
Bill Gray's
Blackfriars Theatre
Can Kings of Rochester
Century Liquor and Wines
Cheesy Eddie's
City Blue Imaging
Ms. Barbara Clemons
Clubhouse Fun Center - Henrietta
Colonial Belle
Corning Museum of Glass
Costco Wholesale
Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation
Dr. and Mrs. William Dingus
The Distillery Restaurant
Dogtown
Jenna and Wayne Evans
Excellus BlueCross BlueShield
Genesee Country Village & Museum
George Eastman Museum
Geva Theatre
Ms. Michelle Halloran
Ms. Jeanne Herrick

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The Home Depot - Irondequoit
Mr. Mike Hoskins
Mr. Stephen Howles
IDEX Health & Science
ISmash Rochester
Dr. Jara Johnson
KeyBank of New York
Rochester Knighthawks
LaBella Associates
Lewis General Tire
Long Acre Farms
Marketview Liquor
Dr. Lisa McCabe
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Monroe County Youth Bureau
Ms. Marcia Nabut
On Cue Content, LLC
Rochester Red Wings
Mrs. Barbara Reifler
ROC BBQ Supply
Rochester Museum and Science Center
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Seabreeze Amusement Park
Seneca Waterways Council
Simon Business School
Spiritus Christi Church
Mrs. Georgine Stenger
Ms. Ann Marie Stephan
Strong Museum of Play
Tim Horton's Iceplex
Tops Friendly Market - Brighton
Tru Yoga
USI Insurance
Van Bortel Auto Group
Wegmans Food Markets, Inc.
Wickham Farms



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Stephen Howles, CFP, Modern Wealth Management



Rochester Childfirst Network

SERVING CHILDREN SINCE 1857

www.rcn4kids.org

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