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Rockland Community Foundation's Mission to Improve Quality Of Life In County (VIDEO)

Foundation seeks to match donors with community needs for education, parks, arts and more
By [Robin Traum](#) [Email the author](#) 5:50am

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(Left to right) Rockland Community Foundation (RCF) member Neil Winter, student Johny Tholany, English Teacher Karen Czajkowski, RCF President Patrick Byrne, RCF Vice President Rhea Vogel, Clarkstown North Principal Harry Leonardatos and student Nicole Cember (in front) participated in the award presentation. Credit [Robin Traum](#)

Students and [teachers](#) alike have benefitted from awards presented by The Rockland Community Foundation this year. Next on the [foundation's](#) list is a Tuesday, Oct. 25 event to raise money for local food pantries, collect non-perishable food items for the Haverstraw Holiday Meals Fund and increase awareness of the organization.

"The purpose is to raise funds so that we can continue our good work that we do each year around the holiday time of providing gift cards for the area food pantries," said Rhea Vogel, foundation vice president/secretary.

At the Oct. 25 event, the Foundation will recognize its 2011 Chazen Spirit of Rockland Scholarship Winner Danyel Semple, a graduate of Ramapo High School. Semple will receive \$1,000 for each of four years. Organizers hope the major fundraiser will bring in more donors interested in learning about the foundation's efforts.

The foundation will also acknowledge the 2011 Innovative Teaching Grant Winners: Karen Czajkowski, an English teacher at Clarkstown High School North, who received \$500 from the Education Fund and Debra Levy and Heather Schucker, science teachers at A. MacArthur Barr Middle School in Nanuet, who received \$500 from the [Environment Fund](#). This is the second year; the foundation awarded a scholarship and teaching grants.

For the past four years, the foundation with matching grants from Shop Rite Supermarkets has contributed \$5,000 to local food pantries. A minimum

donation of \$75 is suggested for the event on Oct. 25 beginning at 5:30 p.m. at La Terrazza Restaurant in New City to help area food pantries.

The foundation's stated objective is to help improve the quality of life for all county residents through increased charitable giving and by connecting donors to community needs of concern to them. The organization is a registered, tax-exempt 501c3 nonprofit corporation. Rockland's foundation is the newest of the 17 community foundations in existence throughout New York and is working to make itself known.

"We continue to reach out to businesses and we have a very aggressive campaign that is about to start with all of the businesses in Rockland County as well as individuals," said Patrick Byrne, foundation president. "We are very hopeful in terms of increasing donations and making people more aware of what's happening in Rockland County with our foundation."

Byrne said Active International of Pearl River established one of the newer funds. The foundation can assist donors with creating funds or directing their philanthropic contributions to specific causes. According to the foundation, its staff and board members investigate grant applications, monitor use of funds by recipients and evaluate program results.

Seven years, a bequest from the estate of Andrew Norman helped to launch the Rockland Community Foundation. The \$100,000 donation established the organization's primary funds for the Arts, Education, Environment, Women & Girls, Health and Human Services and the Andrew Norman Social Justice.

Since then the organization has grown and eight donor directed funds have been added:

- The Welles Remy Crowther Fund
- Clarkstown Friends of the Parks Fund
- Fleming/Fleur Children's Advocacy Fund
- The Chazen Spirit of Rockland Scholarship Fund
- The High Tor Preservation Fund
- The RCF Founder's Fund
- The Haverstraw Holiday Meals Fund
- The Active Cares Fund

Interested contributors can choose from a menu of different types of funds that require varying amounts to establish: Donor Advised Funds, Designated Funds, Scholarship and Memorial Funds, Field of Interest Funds and Project Funds. The organization works to raise money from private, corporate, public and foundation sources. Membership in its Founders Circle entails pledges of \$500 or more per year for a period of four years to build the foundation's endowment.

The foundation's Board of Directors and Advisory Board represent a cross-section of Rockland's business, government, educational and community services organizations. Members of the Board of Directors include: Debra Thomas; Dennis Fleming; Frank Borelli; Simona Chazen; Lawrence Codispoti; Jefferson Crowther; Emily Dominguez; Jeffrey Keahon; Michael Rundle; Gordon Wren, and Neil Winter. The Advisory Board is made up of Lanie Etkind; Diane Hess; Barry Lewis; Stella Mars; Harold J. Peterson; Paul Trader; Richard Voigt and Dr. Cliff L. Wood.

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