



JOHN R. OISHEI FOUNDATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



An aerial photograph of Buffalo, New York, showing a dense residential area with many houses and trees. In the background, the city skyline is visible under a blue sky with a few clouds. A large white quote is overlaid on the left side of the image.

“ Trust is not something we declare.
It's something we build. ”

A MESSAGE FROM CHRISTINA ORSI AND GLENN JACKSON

Dear friends—

2024 was a year of significant transition at the Oishei Foundation—one defined not only by a bold new strategic direction but by the work of aligning every part of our organization to support that vision.

We made key shifts this year to ensure our values are visible in our actions. We restructured our internal team and began developing new ways of working that reflect who we are becoming. That included deep work around race, power, and privilege, as well as examining how our structures and culture need to evolve to truly embody equity.

While much of this work may not have been immediately visible to the outside world, it was critical to building the foundation needed to move forward with integrity and impact. These changes were, and continue to be, essential to moving from traditional philanthropy to a foundation that actively supports systems change to advance financial prosperity for all.

The Board began its own evolution, building on more than a decade of our colleague Bill Gisel's impactful stewardship and welcoming dynamic new leadership and new perspectives, including the addition of Chandra Redfern as a trustee.

We supported long-term grantee partners with transitional funding, recognizing the importance of giving organizations space to adapt as we shift how and what we fund. At the same time, we sharpened our focus on nonprofit capacity building, especially for Black-led and equity-centered organizations on Buffalo's East Side.

We also acknowledge the transitions within our team. After a remarkable 20-year tenure at the Oishei Foundation, Blythe T. Merrill retired in 2024. Her leadership, integrity, and impact have shaped this institution in countless ways. We also lost a dear colleague and friend, Larry Cook. Larry's presence—his care, wisdom, and commitment to this work—continues to guide us and will always be part of our story.

We've learned that change—real change—is not a straight line. It's a series of intentional steps, missteps, and course corrections. Leading while learning is challenging. But it's also necessary. We've had to be patient, to listen more closely, and to question long-held assumptions. Through this process, we've been reminded that trust is not something we declare—it's something we build.

Where we're headed.

We are more aligned and focused than ever before. Our long-term commitment is to racial equity and financial prosperity, starting with communities on Buffalo's East Side. That commitment means grounding our work in community relationships, sharing power, and using every tool available to us: grants, investments, partnerships, leadership, and policy.

We are shifting not only how we fund, but why, and with whom. We are investing in change that's rooted in lived experience and driven by collective effort. And we're doing it with clarity of purpose and a deep respect for the work already happening in community.

To everyone who's walked with us during this year of change: thank you. For your honesty, your patience, your partnership, and your belief in what's possible. We know there is much work ahead. And we remain committed to doing it—together.

With gratitude,

Christina Orsi
President, Oishei Foundation

Glenn Jackson
Chair, Board of Trustees

OUR TEAM

- Esther Annan
- Lawrence H. Cook II (in memoriam)
- Natalie Cook
- Allison Geddes, MSW
- Linda Gloss-Ball
- Tah'jai Johns
- Blythe T. Merrill (retired)
- Christina P. Orsi
- Geoffrey Pritchard
- Curtis Robbins
- Mark Scott, Ph. D.
- Annie Todd, MSW

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Donald Boswell
- Maureen Hurley
- Glenn Jackson, Chair
- Luke Jacobs
- Yvonne Minor-Regan, Vice Chair & Secretary
- Chandra Redfern
- Michael Ulbrich
- Francisco Vasquez, Treasurer
- Melva Visher

“ The truth is that we can achieve lasting equitable outcomes, but only when people and communities that traditionally don't have power are able to change the rules and help secure a thriving future. ”

Rashad Robinson
Executive Director, Color of Change

2024 Grants

Detailed here is the 2024 funding distributed. The majority of grants align with our previous strategic focus areas. These grants are part of our commitment to provide transition funding to help grantees navigate the Oishei Foundation's strategic shift or to honor prior funding commitments.

716 Squash	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$15,000
African Cultural Center of Buffalo Inc.	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$20,000
2024 Pine Grill Reunion	\$20,000
Akron Newstead Senior Citizens Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$4,000
American Red Cross	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$13,000
Assembly House 150, Inc.	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Back to Basics Outreach Ministries, Inc.	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
BISON Children's Scholarship Fund	
BISON K–8 scholarship support	\$234,500
General Operating Support 2024–2026	\$234,500
Blessed Trinity RC Church	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	
for Helping Hands Food Pantry	\$2,000
Boys & Girls Clubs of Buffalo, Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$20,000
Bread of Life Outreach of Colden New York, Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$5,000
Buffalo Arts Studio	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Buffalo Center for Arts & Technology (BCAT)	
Capital Campaign	\$500,000
General Operating Support 2024–2026	\$400,000
General Operating Support	
in honor of the retirement of	
Executive Vice President, Blythe T. Merrill	\$20,000
Buffalo Center for Health Equity	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$5,000

Buffalo City Mission	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	
for the Cornerstone Manor	\$67,500
Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers, Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$10,000
Buffalo Fine Arts Academy (dba Albright-Knox Art Gallery)	
AK360 Campus Development	
Project (2023–2025)	\$300,000
Buffalo Funk Fest Foundation	
Friday Night on Jefferson/Funk Fest	\$40,000
Buffalo Maritime Center Inc.	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$10,000
Buffalo Prenatal-Perinatal Network	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Buffalo Prep	
College Prep	\$175,000
General Operating Support	\$350,000
General Operating Support	
in honor of the retirement of	
Executive Vice President, Blythe T. Merrill	\$15,000
Buffalo Society of Artists	
Resource Development	
Community Outreach Staff	\$25,000
Buffalo String Works, Inc.	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$20,000
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Buffalo Urban League, Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$10,000
Canisius College	
Canisius College Science Hall	\$250,000
Care Management Coalition of Western New York, Inc.	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$15,000
Catholic Charities of Buffalo, NY	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$45,000
Cattaraugus Community Action, Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$5,000
Causewave Community Partners	
Nextwave Mission Accelerator Program	\$250,000

Center for Exploratory and Perceptual Arts, Inc.	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$15,000
Center for Regional Strategies	
Regional Revitalization Partnership—	
East Side Avenues	\$300,000
Chautauqua County Rural Ministry, Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$12,000
Child & Family Services	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$5,000
Christ Redemption Tabernacle Church	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	
for Transformation Through Revitalization	\$5,000
Clean Air Coalition of Western New York Inc.	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Community Action Organization of Western New York Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$15,000
Community Connections of NY Inc.	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Mobile Safety-Net Team (MSNT) 2024	\$303,000
Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, Inc.	
43 x 79 Stanford Lipsey Scholarship Fund	\$750
Fund for the Arts 2024–2025	\$75,000
John R. Oishei	
College Scholarship Fund 2024–2026	\$100,000
Community Health Center of Buffalo Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	
for Buffalo Community Fridges	\$3,000
Community Missions of Niagara Frontier, Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$40,000
Compeer of Greater Buffalo	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Staff Capacity Building	\$40,000
Computers For Children Inc.	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
CoNECT	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Confident Girl Mentoring Program Inc.	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$15,000

Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Buffalo Inc.	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Cornell Cooperative Extension Association of Erie County	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$10,000
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025.....	\$6,000
Cradle Beach Inc.	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$15,000
Create a Healthier Niagara Falls Collaborative, Inc.	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$20,000
Daemen College	
Institute for Mobility Innovation & Technology....	\$100,000
Dale Association, Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025.....	\$1,500
East Buffalo Development Corporation	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$20,000
ECMC Foundation Inc.	
Expansion of Innovative Outpatient Behavioral Health Programs.....	\$102,118
Education Collaborative of WNY, Inc.	
2023–2024 Scholarship Program	\$420,354
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$20,000
2024 Scholarship Program	\$930,000
2024 Academic Excellence for All (DEI)	\$372,000
2024 General Operating Support.....	\$175,000
Evergreen Health Services Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$12,000
Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition Inc.	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$20,000
Erie Regional Housing Development Corp.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	
for the Belle Center	\$10,000
Every Bottom Covered, Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$6,000
Faith Based Fellowship	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$5,000
Family Help Center Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$20,000

Family Promise of WNY	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$5,500
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
FeedMore WNY	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$100,000
First Baptist Church of Newfane Food Pantry	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$5,500
First Presbyterian Church in Springville	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	
for the Springville Concord Food Pantry.....	\$2,500
FISH of East Aurora, Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$5,000
Friends of Night People, Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$25,000
Gateway-Longview Inc.	
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) Strategic Planning Initiative	\$78,600
Genesis Center	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	
for the Genesis Center	\$7,500
Gerard Place Housing Development Fund Company Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$20,000
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Grassroots Gardens of Western New York	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Habitat for Humanity Buffalo	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$10,000
Healthy Community Alliance Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$4,000
Heart, Love & Soul Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$35,000
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Hearts and Hands—Faith In Action	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$4,000
Hearts for the Homeless of WNY Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$5,000
Hispanos Unidos de Buffalo Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$10,000
Home Beneath Our Feet	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$20,000

Hopebound Ministries, Inc. dba Sister Mary Josette Food Pantry	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	
for the Sister Mary Josette Pantry	\$3,000
Jericho Road Ministries	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$35,000
JIJ Ministries	
Igniting Hope in Education: Elevating the Student Voice with Buffalo Education Task Force	\$25,000
Journey’s End Refugee Services, Inc.	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$15,000
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$20,000
Kenmore New Covenant Tabernacle Inc	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	
for the Food Pantry	\$5,000
Kenmore United Methodist Church	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$1,000
Library Foundation of Buffalo and Erie County Inc.	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$10,000
Lockport Cares	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$3,500
Love Inc of the Greater Gowanda Area	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$9,000
Love Inc. of Springville NY	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$6,000
Madonna of the Streets Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	
for St. Luke’s Mission of Mercy	\$20,000
Masons Mission Foundation Inc	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Mental Health Association of Erie County Inc.	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Metro Community Development Corpora	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	
for the Delavan Grider Community Center	\$2,500
Most Valuable Parents of Buffalo NY	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$15,000
Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$6,500

National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) Buffalo & Erie County	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$10,000
National Federation for Just Communities of WNY	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$20,000
Native American Community Services of Erie and Niagara Counties Inc.	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Network Religious Communities Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025 for Food for All	\$15,000
Newfane Community Food Pantry	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$3,000
Niagara Arts & Cultural Center Inc.	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$20,000
Niagara Community Action Program Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$30,000
NY Funders Alliance	
Liftoff WNY 2024–2025	\$30,000
Nonprofit Support Group 2024–2025	\$275,000
Nonprofit Support Group’s Fund Development Boot Camp series	\$50,000
Old First Ward Community Association, Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$4,000
Omega Mentoring	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$15,000
Open Buffalo Inc.	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Pappy Martin Jazz Legacy Collective	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$20,000
Pappy Martin Legacy Masten Jazz Festival	\$20,000
Pinnacle Community Services	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	
for Casey House and Passage House	\$12,000
Polish Community Center of Buffalo Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$20,000
Providence Farm Collective Corp.	
WNY Foundation/Oishei Foundation Capacity Building Support	\$33,864

RAHAMA (Resources and Help Against Marital Abuse, Inc.)	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Read to Succeed Buffalo Inc.	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Resource Council of WNY	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$5,000
Restoration Society Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$8,000
Resurrection Life Fellowship	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025 for the Food Pantry	\$12,500
Road Less Traveled Productions Ltd.	
General Operating Support in tribute to Bill Gisel and Ted Walsh	\$10,000
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
RLTP Bridge Program	\$20,000
Rooted in Love, Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$3,000
Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship, Inc.	
Boys and Men of Color Initiative	\$149,710
Boys and Men of Color Initiative 2024–2026	\$300,000
General Operating Support for the Boys and Men of Color Initiative in honor of the retirement of Executive Vice President, Blythe T. Merrill	\$15,000
Service Collaborative of WNY, Inc.	
Buffalo Futures: Voices of Buffalo Documentary	\$25,000
Society of St. Vincent de Paul	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$12,500
Springville Center for the Arts Inc.	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
St. Adalbert's Response to Love Center	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$27,500
St. David's Episcopal Church	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025 for the West Seneca Community Cupboard	\$3,000
St. John de LaSalle Community Care	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025 for Community Cares—Food Pantry	\$3,000
Teacher's Desk, Inc.	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$10,000

The Rural Outreach Center, Inc.	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$15,000
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$30,000
Springville Regional Coalition	\$15,000
The Salvation Army	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$40,000
The Salvation Army Niagara Falls	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$3,500
The Salvation Army of Lockport NY	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$8,500
The Salvation Army of the Tonawandas	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$3,500
Tri-Community Food Pantry Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$5,000
Ujima Company, Inc.	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
United Way of Buffalo and Erie County	
Community Resilience Fund 2024–2025	\$25,000
Upward Designs for Life	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$20,000
Valley Community Association Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$10,000
Veterans One-Stop Center of WNY Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$12,500
West Side Community Services	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025 for Provisions 139 Food Pantry	\$7,500
Wings Flights of Hope	
2024 Capacity Building Micro Grant	\$10,000
WNY Rural Area Health Education Center, Inc.	
JRO Transition Fund	\$50,000
Word of Life Church, Buffalo Ltd.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025 for The Buffalo Dream Center	\$22,500
YWCA of the Niagara Frontier	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$15,000
YWCA of Western New York Inc.	
Basic Human Needs 2024–2025	\$3,000
GRAND TOTAL	\$9,466,396

Financial Year In Review

Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Assets (Modified Cash Basis)

ASSETS	2024
Cash & cash equivalents	\$63,292
Investments	\$329,413,339
Program-related investments	\$500,000
	\$329,976,631
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	
Net assets without donor restrictions	\$306,773,592
Net assets with donor restrictions	\$23,203,039
	\$329,976,631

Statement of Revenue, Expenses, and Change in Net Assets (Modified Cash Basis)

	2024
Investment activity	\$25,778,280
Net assets released from restrictions	\$889,354
Other revenue	\$4,239
Total revenue & support	\$26,671,873
Grants paid	\$9,466,396
Other program expenses	\$2,087,017
Total program expenses	\$11,553,413
Administrative	\$1,804,941
Total expenses	\$13,358,354
Change in net assets without donor restrictions	\$13,313,519
Change in net assets with donor restrictions	\$995,624
Total change in net assets	\$14,309,143
Net assets — beginning	\$315,667,488
Net assets — ending	\$329,976,631



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