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Charles Settlement House and The Community Place of Greater Rochester Announce Affiliation

After three years of close collaboration, Charles Settlement House and The Community Place of Greater Rochester will become permanently affiliated on Oct. 1. This affiliation allows both agencies to maintain their identities, while strengthening and growing the programs and services they provide in the neighborhoods of northwest and northeast Rochester.

Since 2018, Charles Settlement House and The Community Place have operated with a shared chief executive officer, and they have shared some administrative services, such as finance and human resources.

While not a merger, this affiliation makes these arrangements, which have been renewed annually by both agencies' boards of directors, permanent. It allows Charles Settlement House and The Community Place to continue operating as separate organizations, but under the governance of a joint board of directors that includes members of each agency's original boards. All administrative functions will be shared, and there will be no cutbacks or reductions in staffing.

"Our three years of collaboration made it clear that we could improve our services and become stronger organizations by making this affiliation permanent," said Scott Benjamin, who has served as CEO for Charles Settlement House since 2006 and for both Charles Settlement House and The Community Place since 2018. "We share many of the same programs for youth, families, and seniors and will be able to leverage expertise across both agencies. At the same time, the savings of a combined administration and governance will be reinvested into our programs and employees — providing opportunities to grow and serve more people."

The combined board of directors will be led initially by co-chairs John Olsan, currently board chair at The Community Place, and Lydia Fernandez, currently board chair at Charles Settlement House.

"I am very excited and proud about our new affiliation with Charles Settlement House," Olsan said. "After sharing an executive and working collaboratively for the past three years, the affiliation is the next logical step. Both organizations will be stronger by having combined governance. We will be able to address the service needs in our respective areas with more

resources. Additionally, our organizations will maintain their identities, which reflect years of service to the Rochester community.”

“We are excited to extend our collaboration with The Community Place,” Fernandez said. “Working together has allowed us both to remain strong, trusted resources in our neighborhoods, and this affiliation will provide the agility necessary for our organizations to continue meeting the changing needs of our community. The combined experience of these organizations represents nearly 400 years of service to Rochester.”

The Community Place, established in 2001 from the merger of Lewis Street Center, Genesee Settlement House and Eastside Community Center, serves residents in northeast Rochester. More than 10,000 individuals utilize its programs and services.

Charles Settlement House, established in 1917, serves Rochester’s northwest neighborhoods, including JOSANA, Edgerton, Dutchtown, Brown Square, Lyell-Otis, Maplewood and Charlotte. More than 3,000 individuals utilize its programs and services.

Settlement houses have played an important role in American history. They originated in the late 19th century with the purpose of supporting the growing immigrant populations and building community. Rochester’s settlement houses continue to bolster their surrounding neighborhoods through a variety of services that encourage individual and family sustainability. They offer programs and services including emergency assistance, after-school youth development programs, senior centers, substance abuse prevention, early childhood services, intellectual and developmental disabilities services, workforce development and affordable housing.

United Way of Greater Rochester and the Fingers Lakes supported the work to finalize this affiliation through a Synergy grant from its Community Impact Fund. Technical assistance was provided by the New York Council of Nonprofits.

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