

April 2026

THE GRIGG LEWIS FOUNDATION CHRONICLE

We're thrilled to bring you exciting updates and upcoming initiatives from the Foundation. In this edition, you'll find highlights of new programs, along with the meaningful impact being made by our local nonprofit partners across Eastern Niagara County.

We hope you enjoy this update and all the great work happening across our community!

FOUNDATION WELCOMES NEW EMPLOYEE

The Grigg Lewis Foundation, Inc. is excited to welcome a new part-time Administrative and Communication Assistant to the team. Training began on Monday, April 13th. This new role will support communications, social media, and the sharing of important information with nonprofit organizations throughout Eastern Niagara County.

The Grigg Lewis Foundation staff is thrilled to welcome our new addition and looks forward to introducing Grace Cook to the community as she begins supporting and connecting with the Eastern Niagara County community.

10TH ANNUAL BACKPACK DRIVE

The Lockport Family Focus Group (LFFG) is excited to host the 10th Annual Backpack Drive for the Eastern Niagara County community this year.

After first launching the drive in 2014, LFFG passed stewardship to Youth Mentoring Services in 2022. This year, the Backpack Drive returns to LFFG, as the program celebrates its 10th year of supporting local students. The LFFG thanks Sue Capell from YMS for the seamless transition.

Applications will be distributed in late spring/early summer, with applications due on June 30, 2026. All students must be registered in order to receive school supplies. Backpacks will be provided in August 2026, just ahead of the 2026–2027 school year. Distribution will take place at the Lockport Family Empowerment Center.





SPOKES BOOTCAMP EVENT

The Lockport Spokes program is excited to host a Spokes Bootcamp on May 20th from 3:00–5:00 PM at Altro Park. All Lockport students in grades 7th–12th are invited to celebrate the close of the 2025–2026 school year. Lockport homeschooled students are welcome to join as well.

This free event will feature a mix of fun activities, including a mini agility course, basketball, kickball, volleyball, and more. Attendees will also have the chance to meet the 2025–2026 Lockport Spokes Partners and learn about upcoming opportunities. Pizza, ice cream, and refreshments will be available for all teens who attend. To learn more about Spokes, go to www.lockportspokes.org.

UPCOMING DEADLINES

Q2 Grant Application:
May 3rd, 2026

Q3 Letter of Inquiry:
July 12th, 2026

Q3 Grant Application:
July 26th, 2026

To learn more, go to www.grigglewis.org

WORKERSHIP AVAILABILITY

Nonprofits across Eastern Niagara County are now accepting applications for paid summer internships through the 2026 Christa Caldwell Workership Program.

Students can explore opportunities in sports, arts, education, history, marketing, childcare, and more. Each Workership position requires a commitment of 250–350 hours between May and August, with all roles paid at minimum wage. Hiring, scheduling, and payroll are handled directly by the participating nonprofit organizations.

Eligible students who live in Eastern Niagara County or attend a college in Niagara County are encouraged to apply directly to the agency offering the position. Positions are still available for applications. To view the full list of available positions, go to www.grigglewis.org/2026-workership-student-intern-opportunities/.

FUNDERS TOUR

On February 25th, the Grigg Lewis Foundation staff organized a tour of community centers in Eastern Niagara County, joined by representatives from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation and the Niagara Foundation. The visit offered an opportunity to learn firsthand about important work taking place in rural Eastern Niagara County.

The tour included stops at the Newfane Community Center, The Treehouse at Hartland Bible Church, The HUB in Middleport and Terry's Corners Volunteer Fire Company, Inc., where participants heard directly from leaders about programs they provide and future projects they would like to develop for their communities. We discussed trail development, community recreation and before-and-after-school programs. The funders praised the strong community support, volunteerism, and collaboration shown by these organizations.

AGENCY UPDATES

Our community continues to evolve, and several local agencies have shared important updates regarding leadership changes and program transitions. Here's a brief overview of what's new:

- **Town of Lockport:** Tom Sy announced his retirement as Coordinator of Economic Development/Administrative Director of the IDA in December 2025. He continued to provide limited assistance in early 2026 as he transitioned out of his role.
- **Motion Project Foundation:** Motion Project Foundation's Founder and Executive Director, Natalie Barnhard-Castrogiovanni, sadly passed away in January 2026. Natalie was a trailblazer in bringing specialized services for spinal cord injuries to WNY and will be very missed by the WNY community.
- **Save The Michaels:** Save The Michaels has begun closing its locations following the loss of funding from the New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports. Local nonprofits, including Lockport CARES and Creative Restorations, have stepped in to help address service gaps in Lockport during this transition.
- **Roy-Hart School District:** On March 25, 4th-grade teacher Shelly Budziszewski and 6th-grade teacher Susan McLaughlin were honored as New York's Agriculture Teachers of the Year and recipients of the USDA 2026 National Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award. These recognitions highlight their passion, and care for students in the district's agriculture program.

NY FUNDERS ALLIANCE

The New York State Funders Conference will be held in Rochester on Wednesday, September 23 through Thursday, September 24, 2026.

The conference is open to staff and trustees from grantmaking organizations that work and fund in New York State, including community foundations, private foundations, United Ways, corporate giving programs, family foundations, and other philanthropic organizations. Both NY Funders Alliance members and non-members are welcome to attend.

NY Funders Alliance is an association of grantmakers and philanthropic advisors across New York State that convenes funders, provides tools and resources, and offers programming featuring national, state, and regional thought leaders.

To learn more about the conference, go to www.nyfunders.org/2026-nys-funders-conference.

FLIGHT OF FIVE DOCUMENTARY

Created over a five-year period, America's Stairway premiered in October 2025 in celebration of the 200th anniversary of the opening of the Erie Canal. Through extensive historical research, careful planning, fundraising, and strong grassroots community engagement, the project brings to life a pivotal chapter in American history and the enduring impact of the Erie Canal.

Now available nationwide, the one-hour documentary is distributed to public television stations across the country through American Public Television, with Buffalo Toronto Public Media serving as the presenting station. Viewers can also stream America's Stairway on pbs.org and the free PBS App, making this local historic story accessible to audiences everywhere.

Watch the documentary here: www.pbs.org/show/americas-stairway/