



Dear Community Partners,

The Buffalo Urban League is proud of the lasting impact we continue to make in the lives of people, families, and communities across Western New York. This progress would not be possible without the collective strength of our staff, volunteers, Board Members, sponsors, partners, and community members. Together, we are proving the power of collective action.

As we navigate the ever-changing landscape of community needs and resources, we remain focused on building innovative and sustainable solutions. We are actively working to expand our reach beyond our brick-and-mortar facilities through mobile services—so that we can meet people where they are. At the same time, we continue to strengthen our workforce development programming to prepare individuals for family-sustaining wage jobs and careers. Through our Shared Services platform, we are helping smaller nonprofits and community organizations leverage our infrastructure and technical resources so they can grow and thrive. These efforts, rooted in our empowerment pillars—Youth, Education, Housing, Health, and Justice & Civic Engagement—demonstrate our role as both a convener and a partner in uplifting our community.

None of this would be possible without the generosity of supporters like you. As we look to the future, your partnership is more crucial than ever. With your continued support, we can expand our programs, open new pathways for success, and advance equity and opportunity across Buffalo.

On this special evening, we invite you to stand with us. You can support the League by becoming a member, making a contribution to our annual appeal, or sharing your time and talents. However you choose to give, your commitment helps ensure a brighter and more equitable future for our community.

Thank you for your dedication to our shared vision and for celebrating with us tonight.

With gratitude,



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Gala Chair Brian Welsch

Dear Friends and Supporters of the Buffalo Urban League

For nearly 100 years, the Buffalo Urban League has stood as a pillar of progress and empowerment in the Buffalo-Niagara region.

Tonight, we celebrate the power of collective action and the Buffalo Urban League's enduring commitment to building a better, more equitable future where every individual has the opportunity to reach their full potential. This mission wouldn't be possible without you – the supporters who generously give their time, talent and treasure to bring the Buffalo Urban League's vision to life.

National Fuel's relationship with the Buffalo Urban League has spanned decades, reflecting our values as a Company and our commitment as neighbors invested in Buffalo's future.

Over the past 15 years, National Fuel has proudly supported the Buffalo Urban League by expanding access to educational and career pathways. The National Fuel Scholars Program annually awards a graduating high school senior with a four-year college scholarship along with mentorship and internship opportunities with National Fuel. Our investment in the Green Construction Training Program amplifies our shared dedication to workforce development and economic empowerment.

We are thrilled to continue our longstanding sponsorship of the Gala to ensure the Buffalo Urban League secures essential funds to further their impactful work. Your presence tonight and belief in the Buffalo Urban League's mission make all the difference. Together, we can build a stronger, more equitable Buffalo for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Brian Welsch

Vice President, National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation Gala Chair and Board Member, Buffalo Urban League

National Fuel

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Buffalo Urban League's 2025 Gala, themed "Collective Strength: The Power of Collective Action." Tonight, we gather not only to celebrate—but to affirm—the extraordinary impact we can achieve when we move forward together, united by purpose and shared values.

At National Fuel Gas Company, we are proud to stand alongside the Buffalo Urban League in its mission to empower individuals and uplift communities. Our longstanding partnership reflects a deep belief: that meaningful progress is only possible when we align our efforts, leveraging our collective strength to drive change.

This evening, we are privileged to honor three exceptional awardees whose leadership and service embody the very spirit of collective action:

Assemblywoman Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes

Majority Leader, New York State Assembly, recipient of the William L. Evans Humanitarian Award, for her unwavering commitment to justice and public service.

Highmark BlueCross BlueShield

recipient of the Community Award, for its steadfast dedication to improving health outcomes and advancing community well-being.

Lindsey L. Taylor

recipient of the Emerging Leader Award, for his inspiring advocacy and bold leadership in the pursuit of equity and inclusion.

We also extend our thanks to our colleague Brian Welsch, Vice President at National Fuel and Chair of this year's Gala, whose leadership and vision have helped shape this powerful evening.

Under the guidance of Thomas Beauford Jr., and through the tireless efforts of the League's staff, Board, and volunteers, the Buffalo Urban League continues to be a catalyst for transformation.

As we gather tonight, let's take a moment to appreciate what we've accomplished—and look ahead to what we can achieve together.

National Fuel®

Sincerely,

David P. Bauer President & CEO

National Fuel Gas Company

David & Baver

Our Mission: 5 Principles

To help African Americans and others in underserved communities achieve their highest true social parity, economic self-reliance, power, and civil rights.

The League promotes economic empowerment through education and job training, housing and community development, workforce development, entrepreneurship, health, and quality of life.

The renaissance of the Buffalo-Niagara Region is continuing to flourish and beginning to reach people in parts of our communities who face the greatest challenges. The Buffalo Urban League continues to move forward, connecting this growth to some of the most challenged communities in the Buffalo-Niagara region.

As we reflect on our past, we use this experience to build a better future for people in the Buffalo-Niagara region; a better future where every individual has opportunities to realize their full potential and enjoy a quality of life in this community.



Collective Strength Gala Program

Buffalo Convention Center Saturday, September 27, 2025

6:00 - 7:00 PM Reception & Cocktail Hour

Entertainment by Jukeboxx & Hope Wilk

7:00 - 9:00 PM Opening Program

Entertainment by Joel Nicholas Quartet Presentation of the Colors: Hutch Tech ROTC Vocalist Kimera Lattimore & Pianist Joel Nicholas

Remarks: Bishop Henning

Dinner

Entertainment by Joel Nicholas Quartet

Live Auction

Awards

Emerging Leader Award: Lindsey L. Taylor Community Leader Award: Highmark Blue Cross Blue Sheild

William L. Evans Humanitarian Award: Majority Leader

9:00 - 11:00 PM Dancing

Entertainment by DJ ReadyRob

Special Thank You to All Our Vendors

ADRI-V Alpha-Lit Black Space Creative Buffalo Convention Center DJ Ready Robb DKM Signs

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Giorgios, The Main Event Givesmart Hale Hope Wilk Hotrod Joel Nicholas Quartete John Disciulla

Tops Zenger

Jukeboxxx

Michelle Braswell

Tony Martin Awards

Mustard Seed



Emerging Leader Award Lindsey L. Taylor

Native of Buffalo, NY; graduated from Sweet Home High School and he attended Buffalo State College for Undergraduate Studies in Business Marketing. Many may recognize him as a renowned businessman in the pillars of education, athletics, community place-

making and the arts. Taylor's success and vision enabled him to launch several prominent businesses has led to an accredited resume of brands with international reach.

Taylor has received numerous awards, resolution and proclamations due to his work Taylor has perfected the balance between corporate vision and cultural relevance, seamlessly integrating brands into vibrant communities through innovative placmaking strategies. By cultivating authentic connections between people, spaces, and products, she transforms corporate partnerships into cultural experiences that resonate deeply with diverse audiences.

For nearly 20 years, Lindsey L. Taylor has built a respected track record of working across diverse sectors—including Nonprofit, Government, Arts & Culture, Entertainment, Corporate, and Sports—earning undeniable recognition forbrand alignment and partner execution. His ability to foster trust within communities, while aligning brandy partnerships with impactful events, has consistentled to the success and growth of all stakeholders involved.

Taylor's impact has not gone unnoticed. Over the years, he has earned numerous accolades, distinguished Wall of Fame Inductions and awards, celebrated for his innovative contributions that bridge business objectives with cultural relevance. His legacy stands as a testament to his unwavering commitment to driving success across industries while staying deeply connected to the communities he serves.



Community Learder Award Jessica Cox President, Highmark Western and Northeastern New York

Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield is the region's leading health plan, with over 1,300 dedicated local team members. With roots dating back to 1936, the organization has dedicated itself to helping millions lead healthier lives, offering a comprehensive range of insured, self-insured, and government programs tailored to businesses, families, and individuals.

As a community-based, not-for-profit health plan, Highmark invests over \$7 million annually in more than 200 local organizations and initiatives that strengthen the health and well-being of the region. Highmark's workforce embraces its commitment, contributing over 3,000 volunteer hours each year.

Its strong partnership with the Buffalo Urban League is a testament to this commitment, with both organizations aligned to advance health equity, promote mental wellness, and empower the community.

Together, Highmark and the Buffalo Urban League prioritize access, equity, and well-being for underserved populations throughout Buffalo. Following the 5/14 tragedy in Buffalo, Highmark and the Buffalo Urban League joined forces to deliver critical mental health support through neighborhood-based outreach and resources.

Highmark's support for the Buffalo Urban League goes beyond programming, including a \$250,000 Blue Fund grant dedicated to improving maternal health outcomes for minority women, as well as recognition as a Signature Award recipient through the Highmark Bright Blue Futures Awards.



William L. Evans Humanitarian Award Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes NYS Assembly Majority Leader

Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes has faithfully served New York State's 141st Assembly district since 2003. In January 2019, she was elevated to become the Majority

Leader of the New York State Assembly by Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, becoming the first woman and the first African American to hold the position in the state's history.

An advocate with clear and principled service, she has always put people and policy before politics. She was appointed as Chair of the Assembly's Committee on Governmental Operations in 2015. This committee maintains oversight on ethics reform and FOIL requests, state police, homeland security, disaster and emergency preparedness, MWBE, crime victims, human rights, and military and naval affairs. In June 2017, she was voted by her colleagues to be Chair of the New York State Legislative Women's Caucus which is a bi-partisan and bi-cameral group.

Peoples-Stokes continues to fearlessly fight for diversity in our state. She has been an integral part of ensuring that Minority and Women Owned Businesses have a fair chance in obtaining state contracts. Her Diversity in Medicine initiative has promoted entry into the medical field with academic and financial supports for promising students of color. Through a pilot program in Buffalo, a similar Diversity in Education initiative is currently working with teachers' aides to help bridge the gap between their existing credentials and those required to teach in NYS.

As a graduate of both Buffalo Public Schools and Buffalo State College, she earned a Bachelor's Degree of Science in Elementary Education and a Master's Degree in Student Personnel Administration. She was presented with an Honorary Doctorate Degree by Medaille College in May 2017. Assemblymember Peoples-Stokes attributes her achievements and abilities to her strong faith and family. She is a member of True Bethel Baptist Church and St. Luke's AME Zion Church and currently resides in Buffalo, New York with her husband.

Majority Leader Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes represents the New York State Assembly's 141st District, which includes sections of North Buffalo, Allentown, Larkinville, downtown central business district, and the entire East side of Buffalo.

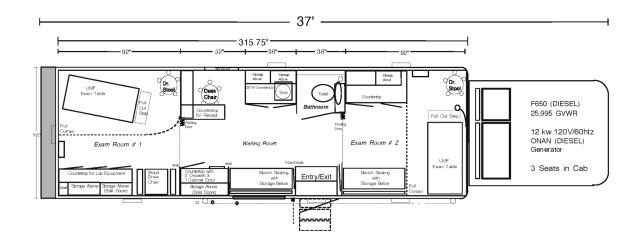
Health Equity/Mobile Outreach Unit



In 2024, the Buffalo Urban League built a coalition of the following Health Providers: Health Foundation Western and Central New York; Highmark Blue Fund and Bright Blue Futures; and Univera to find, fund and purchase a Mobile Outreach unit.

Spring of 2025 realized this initiative. The Buffalo Urban League purchased a 37' Mobile Health Unit that was originally used as a mobile exam unit.

This 3 exam room Mobile Outreach Unit will be used by the Buffalo Urban League to provide counseling services to the East Side in the Fall of 2025 - Providing culturally competent education and resources; establishing support networks; advocating for access to quality healthcare; hosting Community Health Workshops and Training; promoting maternal mental health awareness; combating racism and bias in healthcare as well as build partnerships with local Healthcare Providers.



Young Professionals



The Buffalo Urban League Young Professionals (BULYPNY) are an essential part of the League's mission, showcasing the power of dedicated full-time volunteers who drive impact locally and nationally. Over the past two years, BULYPNY has led dynamic programming, advancing civic engagement, financial literacy, cultural celebration, and community empowerment.

In 2024, members represented Buffalo at the 6th Regional Conference (bEastCon) in Wilmington, DE, with over 150 young professionals nationwide. Locally, BULYPNY hosted the Financial Reality Fair to support youth financial literacy and partnered with affiliates through the Bolstering Communities through Literacy initiative.

In July, ten members attended the 2024 National Urban League Conference in New Orleans, while the Queen City Soirée raised \$20,000 in sponsorships and scholarships. August saw the 7th Annual Black Restaurant Week, featuring 30 local restaurants.

During September/October, BULYPNY partnered with 15 organizations to boost voter turnout, followed by hosting the National Day of Empowerment in November.

In 2025, the group continued momentum by co-hosting a Black History Celebration with the Buffalo Urban Resiliency Center at the Burchfield Penney Art Center and engaging in state-level advocacy at the New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislative Caucus YP Brunch. In March, BULYPNY partnered with Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, Independent Health, and Appetite for the Taste of Health event, drawing over 300 attendees.

Empowerment Campus

The Buffalo Urban League's Empowerment Campus, launched through a Capital Campaign in 2023, will serve as a hub for growth, education, and opportunity.

Located on Jefferson Avenue in Buffalo's East Side, the campus will unite B.U.L. programs under one roof, creating a vibrant space where individuals and families can access resources to thrive.



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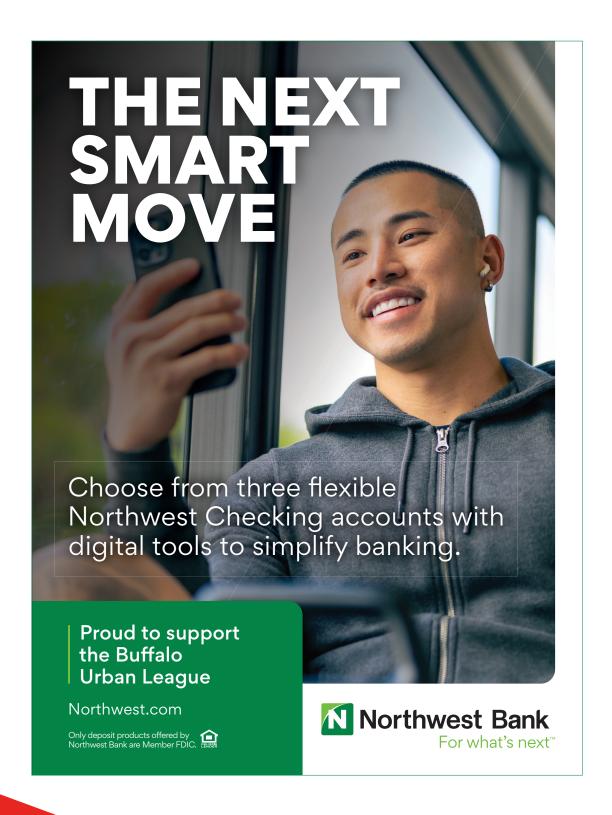
2025 Gala

Collective Strength

The Power of Collective Action

A night of elegance and community celebration

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See PMI press releases of July 16, 2024 (Aurora, CO) and August 27, 2024 (Owensboro, KY) for full details and forward looking and cautionary statements.

Learn more at USPMI.com "PMI" refers to the Philip Morris International family companies globally. "PMI U.S.," "we," "our," and "us" to one or more of PMI's U.S. businesses.

As your partner in the community, Fidelis Care is proud to support the Buffalo Urban League's

2025 Gala "Collective Strength"

We applaud your dedication to addressing the challenges faced by urban communities and advancing equitable healthcare access.

Together, we've taken meaningful steps to strengthen our shared mission. One such effort is the development of the Fidelis Care Center for Community Advancement, an initiative rooted in collaboration and designed to build capacity among community-based organizations. The center reflects our ongoing partnership and shared dedication to promoting the well-being of our neighbors.

Congratulations to this year's honorees and best wishes for a successful event from your friends at Fidelis Care.

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Getting involved is important.

At M&T Bank, we know how important it is to support those organizations that make life better in our communities. That's why we offer our time and resources, and encourage others to do the same. Learn more at mtb.com/community.

M&T Bank is proud to support Buffalo Urban League.

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one open door can open doors across a community.

Our most important work happens outside the four walls of our bank. KeyBank gets involved by supporting people who make a difference and working with community-focused organizations through investments, philanthropy, and volunteering. Together we can keep our communities full of hope, compassion, and opportunity. KeyBank thanks Buffalo Urban League for making a difference.



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Congratulations to this year's honorees, New York Assembly Majority Leader Hon. Crystal Peoples-Stokes, Lindsey L. Taylor & Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield

Your friends from





Proud to support the
Buffalo Urban League
and honored to receive this year's
Community Service Award!



ighmark Western and Northeastern New York Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

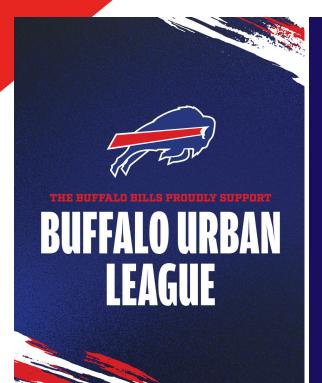


TOGETHER WE CAN HELP OUR NEIGHBORS LIVE, LEARN, WORK, AND PLAY.

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nationalgrid HERE WITH YOU. HERE FOR YOU.

We're putting our energy behind the community.

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Right here. For you.

We know what it takes to care for Western New Yorkers because that's who we are. You can count on us to be here with more complete coverage for every stage in the healthcare journey, and to make care more accessible and affordable for everyone in our community. After all, our home is here - and more importantly, our hearts and our focus are too.







The University at Buffalo is partnering with People United for Sustainable Housing (PUSH) Buffalo to address Buffalo's aging homes—creating more resilient communities in the face of extreme weather and outdated infrastructure. Together, we're shaping a future that prioritizes anti-displacement development, local job creation and stronger connections.

UB congratulates the Buffalo Urban League and its gala honorees for their commitment to improving lives in Buffalo and beyond.





Thank you for all you do, always, for others!
You're the best!

As ever,

Jack Walsh





Thank you to the **Buffalo Urban League**

for decades of service supporting youth education, workforce development, and community growth, and congratulations to this year's honorees.



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KEN & MAURA AFRICANO, **ERIE COUNTY CHIROPRACTIC** AND RS MEDICAL

Congratulate the Buffalo Urban League on their successful Gala & the 2025 Awardees:

Majority Leader Hon. Crystal Peoples-Stokes HIGHMARK Blue Cross Blue Shield Lindsey L. Taylor

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Congratulations to all of this year's honorees!

NYS Assembly Majority Leader HON. CRYSTAL D. PEOPLES-STOKES

Visionary & Community Builder LINDSEY L. TAYLOR

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Your BestSelf begins here.

Proud to support Buffalo Urban League and awardees!





Congratulations

from all of us to the **Buffalo Urban League!**



Here's to all the wonderful Community Awardees Thank you!

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Multi-Service Center / Food Pantry

86 Pine St. Buffalo, NY 14207

Buffalo C.O.M.H.P.S (Floors 4 & 5)

1021 Broadway St. Buffalo, NY 14212

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