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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**ERIE COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES
YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS FOR 2026-2027 SCHOOL YEAR**

Sandusky, Ohio, September 17, 2026 — Erie County Community Foundation today announced the members of its Youth Advisory Council (YAC) for the 2026-2027 school year.

This year's YAC representatives are:

Edison High School: Peyton Werner, Junior; Weston Gfell, Senior

EHOVE: Abbie Bores, Junior; Jefferson Incorvia, Senior

Huron High School: Joseph Cencer, Junior; Hayden Holmes, Senior

Margaretta High School: Lillian Kimball, Junior; Kenna Kovalaske, Senior

Perkins High School: Reese Hykes, Junior; Rocco Speer, Senior

St. Mary Central Catholic High School: Braelyn Abrams, Junior; Emmalyn Redinger, Senior

Sandusky High School: Ishan Chopra, Junior

Vermilion High School: Samuel Riddle, Junior; Adam Hendershot, Senior

Erie County Community Foundation originally established its Youth Advisory Council in 2000. Comprised of high school students from seven Erie County high schools and EHOVE, students serve on the council for two years, in their junior and senior years.

The purpose of YAC is to develop community leadership among high school students. This program introduces students to local nonprofit organizations and allows them to make grants as they are introduced to the world of philanthropy.

YAC students visit non-profit organizations throughout Erie County each month during the school year to learn about organizations and how they serve our community's needs. YAC's mission is to encourage youth leadership and active community involvement in philanthropy, by observing local nonprofit organizations and responding to community needs through grant-making. Since its beginning in 2000, Youth Advisory Council has awarded a total of \$176,902 in grants to 94 Erie County nonprofit projects.

"There is nothing quite like watching our local students step into the shoes of community leaders and philanthropists," said Heidi Schlesselman, Erie County Community Foundation's Program Officer and YAC Advisor. "Through our Youth Advisory Council, fifteen incredible high school representatives from across Erie County aren't just learning about our nonprofit sector—they are

actively evaluating community needs and directing vital resources where they matter most. Empowering these young voices with real grant-making power is one of the most exciting parts of what we do; it builds a lifelong commitment to giving back and ensures a brighter, more connected future for Sandusky and all of Erie County.”

The YAC program is designed and intended to replicate as much as possible the experience these youth may someday have as a board member of a charitable organization. Students meet eight times throughout the school year and make site visits to area non-profit organizations to learn more about community needs and the services provided in Erie County. Every Spring, they accept and review grant proposals, and make recommendations to the Community Foundation’s board for funding of about 8-12 projects. The students have developed their own mission statement, grant guidelines, grant application form and grants review process.

The YAC is made possible by the partnership among The Mylander Foundation, Randolph J. and Estelle M. Dorn Foundation, Sandusky Rotary Club Charitable Fund, Inc., and Erie County Community Foundation, as well as participation from all seven high schools in Erie County and EHOVE.



Front Row: Reese Hykes – Perkins Junior, Braelyn Abrams – St. Mary Junior, Sam Riddle – Vermilion Junior, Joey Cencer – Huron Junior, Ishan Chopra – Sandusky Junior, Abbie Bores – EHOVE Junior

Back Row: Rocco Speer – Perkins Senior, Heidi Schlesselman – Erie County Community Foundation Program Officer/YAC Advisor, Lilly Kimball – Margaretta Junior, Kenna Kovalaske – Margaretta Senior, Emmalyn Redinger – St. Mary Senior, Hayden Holmes – Huron Senior, Jefferson Incorvia – EHOVE Senior, Weston Gfell- Edison Senior, Peyton Werner – Edison Junior

Not Pictured: Adam Hendershot – Vermilion Senior

About Erie County Community Foundation

Erie County Community Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to building a thriving and vibrant Erie County, Ohio. The organization, which celebrated its 30th Anniversary in 2025, addresses community needs, provides leadership, and cultivates resources for a lasting impact. The organization's primary purpose is to provide a means for people to make permanent gifts of assets to enhance the quality of life in Erie County and Sandusky, Ohio—today, tomorrow, and forever.

Erie County Community Foundation is governed by an independent Board of Directors and Officers, comprised of Erie County business, civic, and non-profit leaders. The Board of Directors employs the Foundation's President & CEO, establishes policies and priorities, and directs final grantmaking decisions. The Board's strength lies in the diverse range of knowledge and expertise of its members, and in their shared commitment to improving the quality of life in Erie County, Ohio.

Since Erie County Community Foundation's founding in 1995, the Foundation has grown from assets totaling \$1.8 million to more than \$52.9 million in 2025. During this time, the Foundation has distributed over \$27 million to area non-profits and students for local projects, programs, scholarships, services, and initiatives to improve the quality of life in Erie County, Ohio.

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