



# looking ahead

from a landmark year



**It changed my life.”** Comments like these, from individuals who have benefited from Lee Foundation initiatives, continually drive our work. As we look back with pride on all we’ve accomplished, not only in 2022 but throughout our 15 years, we’re also excited by new opportunities to increase our impact.

- 2007** ● First major round of **grants awarded** in Behavioral Health, Education, Medical Care & Research, Human & Community Services
- 2010** ● Engineering scholarship program established (bachelor’s degrees)
- 2012** ● **STEM scholarship program** established (associate’s degrees)
- 2016** ● Grant strategy refined to focus on **Education and Mental Health**
- **Mental health scholarship program** established (graduate degrees)
- 2017** ● **Distinguished Lee Scholar Award** launched
- 2018** ● Honored by Compeer Buffalo with the **Googie Butler Advocacy Award**
- 2019** ● Joined **Think Bigger Do Good** advocacy initiative
- Named Outstanding Philanthropic Foundation by the Association of Fundraising Professionals
- Presented the **Foundation Advocacy Award** by Mental Health Advocates of WNY
- 2020** ● Honored by the University of Rochester School of Nursing with the **John N. Wilder Award**
- 2022** ● Scholarship programs expanded to support 80+ students annually

milestones



When the Lee Foundation commenced activity 15 years ago, the United States was on the precipice of a sharp economic decline. The challenges facing our community were significant, and so a responsive grant-making approach was implemented to provide immediate relief to local nonprofits. Our efforts were directed toward human and community services; medical care and research; education, and mental wellness. Grants varied in size and duration, but each was structured to meet a critical need and to prevent the disruption of vital services.

As the economy gradually recovered and nonprofits returned to stability, the Foundation refined its funding strategy to concentrate on education and mental health. Both areas were meaningful to the Lee family, and both presented real opportunities to deepen the Foundation’s impact.

Scholarships became the cornerstone of our work in education. Through our financial awards and expansive alumni network, we create clear pathways for the professional success of students pursuing careers in engineering and technical fields. Our largest program prioritizes students from middle income households who often receive insufficient financial aid and must take on loans to cover rising tuition costs.

In mental health, we engage closely with community partners to improve outcomes for individuals and families living with serious mental illnesses. Our initiatives strengthen the mental health workforce, remove barriers to accessing care, and develop innovative, high-quality programs. We also collaborate with providers, other foundations, and thought leaders to advocate for policy reform and for increased local, state, and federal funds to rectify systemic issues in mental health care.

The Foundation’s roots are firmly in Western New York and we are steadfast in our commitment to the region. This responsibility has, at times, motivated us to support initiatives outside our primary focus areas. Some efforts capitalized on regional economic opportunities; others were compelled by tragedy. In 2022, our community experienced a horrific mass shooting that took the lives of 10 innocent individuals. As we grieved with our city and our neighbors, we joined local funding partners to establish the Buffalo Together Community Response Fund. To date, more than \$6 million has been raised to address the immediate needs of East Buffalo residents and develop long-term initiatives to uplift the impacted neighborhoods.

We know there is still more work to be done. But we have gained valuable experience and are ready to move forward with our trusted partners – old and new – to advance fundamental and transformative solutions in our core mission areas.

Patrick P. Lee  
Founder

Jane M. Mogavero  
Executive Director

leadership





# Increasing numbers of Lee Scholars

Our longest running program, the Lee Scholarship, is aimed at promising students in engineering whose family income prevents them from receiving adequate financial aid. We also support students working toward associate's degrees in STEM and graduate degrees in mental health. In the three categories, we have supported more than 400 Lee Scholars to date.

The programs have grown substantially since inception, now funding more than 60 engineering and STEM students and 20 mental health students each year. Our commitment to individual scholars is also growing. Mindful of rising tuition costs, we continue to assess the amount awarded to students and recently increased our engineering scholarships from \$10,000 to \$12,500 annually per student. Our ten current partner schools include two added in 2022 – Clarkson University and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute – and our goal in the next few years is to expand our geographic footprint in the Northeast.

## Our academic partners

- Clarkson University
- Erie Community College
- Monroe Community College
- Niagara County Community College
- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
- RIT
- St. Louis University
- Syracuse University
- University at Buffalo
- University of Rochester

## Jessica Rozycki *Our first Distinguished Lee Scholar*

Jessica Rozycki has a passion for teaching others to lead and succeed. She recently gave the keynote address at Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day at St. Louis University (SLU), speaking to more than 150 high school students about the possibilities for women in STEM. “It was one of the crown jewel moments of my career,” said Jessica. “The students were super excited; they asked great questions that created important dialogue” about their career aspirations.

A decade after receiving her B.S. in aerospace engineering from SLU, Jessica has ascended to a senior management position in aerospace wind tunnel testing. She obtained a master's degree in engineering from Purdue University in 2019 and is now the Midwest Aero Test Operations Senior Manager at Boeing in St. Louis.

While a Distinguished Lee Scholar, Jessica discovered that she is a natural leader. “Working with the scholarship program as a volunteer after I graduated helped my leadership characteristics come out,” she said. “It was my involvement with the Lee Scholarship that helped me realize that I find it rewarding to give others the tools to connect and succeed.” Her management style reflects her deep and lasting connection to the Lee Scholar program and its founder: “I try to lead the way that Patrick Lee leads, by being genuine and with my heart.”



It was my involvement with the Lee Scholarship that helped me realize that I find it rewarding to give others the tools to connect and succeed. I try to lead the way that Patrick Lee leads, by being genuine and with my heart.”

*Jessica Rozycki*



Your generosity has forever changed my life. The tremendous amount of advice and experience offered by the Foundation and the other Lee Scholars have helped me succeed professionally and personally. I welcome the opportunity to carry your legacy forward and be a representative of your impact.”

*Calvin Nau*  
RIT



**80+**  
**students**  
supported by scholarship programs each year



# Shared values: giving back



*A genuine dedication to serving others is an essential criterion for selection as a Lee Scholar. As a way to demonstrate their gratitude to the Foundation, current and former recipients universally express a commitment to community service.*

## **Elise Westhoff** *St. Louis University*

For Lee Scholar alumna Elise Westhoff, the journey to becoming an engineer began at a 100-year-old church in her hometown in Iowa. Elise always found it a “source of awe and wonder,” but was troubled by its crumbling plaster and broken windowpanes. “I wanted to be able to fix it,” she said. This inspired her to pursue a B.S. in civil engineering, to “work on buildings that really matter.”

Elise graduated from St. Louis University (SLU) in 2020 and earned a master’s degree in architectural engineering from Penn State. Now an associate project consultant, she works on increasing the longevity of buildings and making structures more energy efficient. She credits the Lee Scholarship as “massively helpful” because it allowed her to “graduate without student debt and choose a path that makes sense” for her career. Elise envisions much more for her own future and that of the building industry: “I am really excited about the potential for new technologies that can be used for historic preservation and humanitarian purposes.”

Meeting her fiancé, fellow Lee Scholar and SLU graduate Chris Parma, gives the scholarship special meaning, since the two bonded during Lee Scholar volunteering events. Elise maintains that “Patrick Lee set a precedent that Chris and I plan to follow by giving our time, talent, and treasure” to the next generation of young people interested in STEM.



## **Alex Wansha** *2022 Distinguished Lee Scholar*

Testing the boundaries of optical engineering is a passion of Alex Wansha, the Foundation’s 2022 Distinguished Lee Scholar. Alex likens the pursuit of precision in his job at Corning to breakthroughs in space exploration and the medical field. “There is something amazing about designing lenses with extremely tight tolerances to meet the cutting edge of resolution – a frontier I feel myself pushing.” It is this drive toward precision that has guided Alex through his undergraduate degree at the University of Rochester and inspires his involvement with students interested in STEM fields.

While earning his B.S. degree in optical engineering, Alex was deeply engaged in volunteer activities that allowed him to share his excitement for science with his fellow students and the local community. “Volunteering allowed me to directly reach members of the community,” where he found purpose in “encouraging individuals to seek out less conventional paths in STEM.” As a Distinguished Lee Scholar, Alex’s goal now is to “give whatever I can to other Lee Scholars.” Alex explained that “this award profoundly changed my life,” and that he wants to mentor engineering students to foster the same sense of support he received as a Lee Scholar.

**12**  
**years**  
of Lee Scholarships



“Your generosity opens opportunities to students like me. As only the second person in my family to attend college, I am truly honored to receive the Lee Scholarship. Now I can focus on academics and worry less about finances. I strive every day to be the best I can be and help as many people as I can along the way. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for your kindness and support.”

*Suaad Alomari*  
*Erie Community College*



# Growing our network

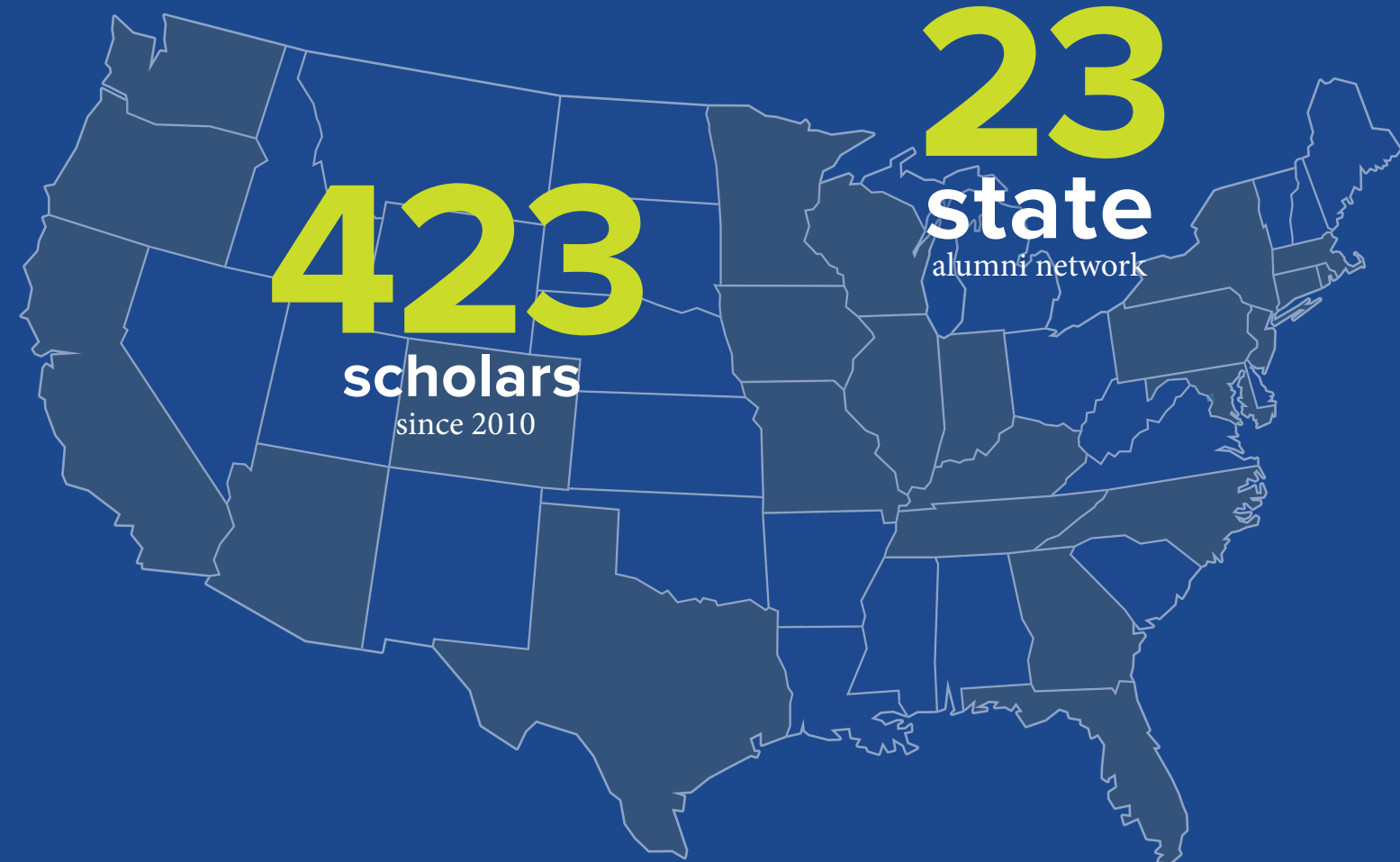


## Where Lee Scholars are now

- Apple\*
  - AIG\*
  - Axiom Space
  - Boeing\*
  - Corning\*
  - Intel Corp.\*
  - L3Harris\*
  - Medtronic
  - National Fuel Gas Company
  - Northrup Grumman\*
  - Sierra Space
  - SpaceX
  - Trek Bikes
  - U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command
- In addition, several have started their own companies, and others are university professors.  
\*Fortune 500

*One of our hopes as students graduate and progress in their careers is that they will benefit from an ever-increasing network of current and former Lee Scholars. While this certainly happens informally, our first regional convening in Rochester provided a more structured opportunity for connection.*

*We brought together 26 students from across New York State, along with two past Distinguished Lee Scholars, to network, share expertise and hear valuable advice from Foundation board members. Patrick Lee encouraged them to follow their intellectual passions throughout their academic and professional lives, urging them to “find a job you can’t wait to get to in the morning and don’t want to leave at night.”*



[See more moments from this event >](#)

# Close to home: supporting mental health



Courtesy of University of Rochester School of Nursing

While the positive impact of education drives one aspect of the Foundation's dual mission, our commitment to support and advocate for persons living with mental illness drives the other. Having cared for a loved one with mental illness, the Lee family understands the challenges of navigating a complicated system to access care. We also recognize that public and private philanthropic funding dedicated to mental health services for adults, especially those living with the most serious conditions, is significantly lacking.

For 15 years our commitment has been unwavering. We have strategically deployed millions of dollars to foster new programs, improve access, develop the capacity of the workforce, and leverage state and federal investments to build a more comprehensive care system.

Although our STEM scholarship programs cover a wide geography, our mental health grants concentrate on Western New York. Our roots are in Western New York, and this is where our investment can have the greatest impact.

## INTERCEPT *a first for our region*

With a grant of \$770,000, the Lee Foundation partnered with University of Rochester Medical Center to establish a first-of-its-kind mental health clinic in Upstate New York. INTERventions for Changes in Emotions, Perception and Thinking (INTERCEPT) is an early intervention clinical program for people at high risk for the imminent development of psychotic disorders.

The specialized approach, developed at Yale University, targets 15- to 28-year-olds who exhibit the earliest signs of what may become serious mental illness. Working with both patients and their families, the care team helps to prevent the progression to more severe conditions. INTERCEPT can drastically enhance the course of treatment and quality of life for its patients.

A Mental Health Advisory Council, composed of health experts from Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse, provides guidance, shares expertise, and is helping to establish a broad referral network for the program.

“ Like any illness, early identification and intervention lead to better outcomes. Unfortunately, the tendency in mental health is to wait until there's a crisis.”

*Dr. Steven M. Silverstein,  
Clinic Director and Professor of  
Psychiatry, Neuroscience and  
Ophthalmology, University of  
Rochester Medical Center*

[Learn more about INTERCEPT >](#)

## Recovery Options *an innovative model of care*

The Kirsten A. Vincent Respite and Recovery Center, recipient of a \$300,000 Foundation grant, is the first intensive respite and comprehensive recovery model in New York State. Located on the Buffalo Medical Campus, it is an innovative collaboration of Recovery Options Made Easy (ROME), Spectrum Health and Human Services, and WNY Independent Living.

The Center is unique in several important ways. It offers multiple levels of care under one roof: walk-in renewal center, short-term crisis respite, intensive crisis respite, and mental health urgent care. It fills a critical gap between hospital and community-based services. It allows patients to move seamlessly among levels of care in a safe, supportive environment, thus achieving more successful transitions to community services. And it is operated by peers who have lived experience with mental illness.

“ Without the commitment of partners like the Lee Foundation, individuals in crisis would have limited options to receive vital crisis support within their community.”

*Shannon Higbee, CEO  
Recovery Options Made Easy*

[Learn more about ROME >](#)





# Increasing our mental health workforce



Courtesy of University of Rochester School of Nursing

Although the expansion of services in our region is encouraging, we are mindful that programs are only as strong as the team of professionals providing the care. In fact, the Health Resources and Service Agency (HRSA) estimates that more than six million New Yorkers live in areas with a shortage of mental health professionals. Even before the pandemic led to a growing demand for services, Western New York struggled to recruit and retain mental health professionals.

One of the ways we are addressing this need is the continued growth of our mental health scholarship program. In 2022, the Foundation funded 20 scholars studying psychiatry and psychology, as well as students pursuing a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner degree. Each scholar has expressed a commitment to working in Western New York after graduation.



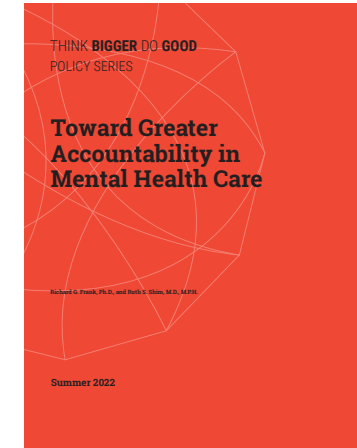
Lee Foundation support has provided me a space for growth and self-reflection. It has helped me develop a professional identity authentic to who I am as a clinician, colleague, and person. It has provided me with the knowledge and structure to move toward confident, autonomous practice uniquely tailored to people experiencing severe mental illness here at home.”

*Kitzia Moreno-Garza, Psychology Doctoral Intern, University at Buffalo*

**20**  
mental health  
scholarships awarded in 2022

## THINK **BIGGER** DO **GOOD** *Advocating for better care*

Since 2019, the Lee Foundation has partnered with Thomas Scattergood Behavioral Health Foundation, Peg’s Foundation, and the Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation to support Think Bigger Do Good, a non-partisan initiative that commissions solution-oriented papers to educate the public on current mental health



topics. Recent papers have focused on growing peer supports, opportunities to improve crisis response, and creating greater accountability in mental health care.

In each paper, subject matter experts provide actionable recommendations to

address the mounting behavioral health needs in the United States. Through collaboration and collective impact, the funders are committed to transforming the delivery of mental health services to improve the lives of people living with mental illness.

### *Widespread and growing influence*

- 27 papers published
- 19 papers co-published in Psychiatric Services (Journal of the American Psychiatric Association)
- 147 journal citations, including:
  - Health Affairs
  - International Journal of Drug Policy
  - International Journal of Health Policy & Management
  - JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association)
  - National Academies of Science
- Featured in media outlets, including:
  - EurekAlert!
  - Mad in America
  - Medical Xpress
  - Newswise
  - Science Daily
  - The Medical News
- Five educational webinars (2021-2022)
  - 1,123 participants representing 40+ states
  - 771 additional views online

### *Additional funding for extraordinary needs*

The Covid-19 pandemic has had far-reaching impact on mental health, especially for college students. In conversations with our academic partners and Lee Scholars, we learned that utilization of college counseling centers had risen significantly, with students reporting increased instances of depression, anxiety and psychological distress.

To bolster existing mental health resources at our partner schools, we awarded a total of \$196,044 in grants to Niagara County Community College, RIT, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and St. Louis University. This special funding supported increased staffing at mental health clinics, provided mental health first aid training for faculty and staff, and created initiatives to support students facing mental health challenges.

**15**  
years  
of impact



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I want the Foundation's impact to be two-fold. In education, I want us to give every single student an opportunity to reach their full potential. In mental health, I want us to make a difference in getting necessary funding to people who need it, people who have serious mental illness."

Patrick P. Lee

# 2022 Scholarships and Grants

## Education

### 48 Engineering Scholarships – \$545,075

- Clarkson University
- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
- RIT
- St. Louis University
- Syracuse University
- University of Rochester

### 16 STEM Scholarships – \$96,000

- Erie Community College
- Monroe Community College
- Niagara County Community College

### 20 Mental Health Scholarships – \$397,000

- University at Buffalo Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences: WNY Medical School Scholarship Program – Psychiatry
- University Psychiatric Practice (UB affiliate): Psychology Doctoral Internship Program
- University of Rochester: Family Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Program

## Mental Health

### Workforce Initiatives – \$192,838

- Horizon Health: Engaging Primary Care Patients in Mental Health Treatment via Staffing, Training and Care Coordination
- RIT: Expanding Integrated Treatment Services in Primary Care Through Clinical Psychology
- Upstate Foundation: Upstate Mental Health REACH Initiative
- Value Network: Mental Health Professional Development Training Grant

### Programs, Services & Family Supports – \$1,065,644

- Crisis Services: Crisis Response Diversion Coordinator
- ECMC Foundation: Creating Innovative Outpatient Behavioral Health Programs to Fill Gaps in Care
- ECMC Foundation: Trauma Center and Emergency Department Capital Campaign
- Gerard Place: Building Renovation
- Horizon Health: Family Peer Support Services for Persons with Serious Mental Illnesses
- Niagara County Community College: Mental Health Community Support Initiative
- Recovery Options Made Easy (ROME): The Kirsten Vincent Respite and Recovery Center
- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute: Mainstreaming Mental Health Wellbeing: A Whole Campus Approach
- RIT: Building a Mentally Healthy University Through Mental Health First Aid
- St. Louis University: Mental Health First Aid Training
- University of Rochester Medical Center: INTERCEPT Clinical High Risk Program
- Upstate Foundation: Support for Families of Suicidal Individuals

### Community Outreach – \$80,750

- Erie County Anti-Stigma Coalition: 5th Anniversary
- Mental Health Advocates of WNY: 60th Anniversary
- NAMI NYS: Know Your Rights Training

## Special Initiatives

- Buffalo Together Community Response Fund
- Discretionary Grants





5166 Main Street, Suite 303  
Williamsville, NY 14221

p. 716.844.3100  
info@lee.foundation

**www.Lee.Foundation**



 **Patrick P. Lee**  
FOUNDATION