



The Wawa Foundation Announces the Four Finalists for 2026 “The Wawa Foundation Hero Award” Calls for Public Vote to Determine Top Grant Recipient

Four Philadelphia Non-Profits Will Be Celebrated During Salute to Service Ceremony on July 2nd

Wawa, PA. (June 12, 2026) – After receiving a record-breaking 500 submissions, The Wawa Foundation Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit founded to support Wawa’s charitable giving and philanthropic activities, is thrilled to announce the 2026 finalists for “**The Wawa Foundation Hero Award**.” The Wawa Foundation Hero Award is an honor given to a non-profit organization serving the greater Philadelphia area that assists others and builds stronger communities through preserving our independence, protecting our safety, and mentoring and inspiring our youth.

The four finalists are:

1. Inspiring Minds of Greater Philadelphia
2. Philadelphia City Rowing
3. Safe-Hub Philadelphia
4. Urban Youth Racing School Inc.

Vote from June 12 to June 26 to Help Choose a Winner

The winner will be chosen by public vote on [The Wawa Foundation’s website](#) from June 12 to June 26. The organization receiving the most votes will be presented to The Wawa Foundation Hero Award Panel for final approval.

The Wawa Foundation Hero Award and Wawa Welcome America

Launched during Philadelphia’s *Wawa Welcome America* festivities, The Wawa Foundation Hero Award will be presented at the Salute to Service Ceremony on Thursday, July 2nd on Independence Mall. The recipient of The Wawa Foundation Hero Award will receive a \$50,000 grant, and the three runners up will each receive \$10,000 grants.

“We are thrilled with the four finalists for The Wawa Foundation Hero Award and delighted to shine a light on the important work they’re doing in the community,” said Liz Simeone, President, The Wawa Foundation. “We look forward to celebrating their stories at the Salute to Service ceremony on July 2nd when we reveal the winner with a \$50,000 grant to help these organizations continue helping others in the community.”

About the Finalists

Inspiring Minds of Greater Philadelphia:

Inspiring Minds Philadelphia is an Everyday Hero for providing long-term support that guides students from middle school through college and beyond. Founded in 2018 by former WNBA player Andrea Garner, the organization addresses barriers like violence, limited opportunity, and lack of mentorship. It stands out by offering continuous support, including mentorship, workforce development, college and career readiness, social-emotional health, and financial literacy. Award funding would strengthen college success programs, ensuring students are fully prepared to enter and thrive in higher education.

Philadelphia City Rowing:

Philadelphia City Rowing (PCR) provides over 400 public school students each year with free after-school programming that combines competitive rowing, academic support, mentorship, and wellness education. Serving youth from across Philadelphia, PCR creates a safe, supportive space where students build confidence, community, and a vision for their future. With 100% of seniors graduating on time and strong rates of college or career placement, PCR helps young people unlock opportunities they may have never imagined. At its core, PCR is about showing up every day for students and empowering them to become leaders in their communities.

Safe-Hub Philadelphia:

In Kensington, heroism is the daily commitment to show up and build trusting relationships with young people, neighbors, and families. At Safe-Hub Philadelphia, young people find safety, belonging, and opportunity through soccer-based programming that integrates social-emotional learning and serves more than 300 youth each week. Beyond the field, Safe-Hub connects over 3,000 community members annually to critical resources like food access and health services through the stigma-free circumstances of coming to soccer practice. Our coaches and youth mentors, many from our neighborhood, embody everyday heroism by showing up consistently and investing in the next generation. Safe-Hub ensures young people in Kensington feel seen, supported, and equipped to uplift their community.

Urban Youth Racing School:

Urban Youth Racing School (UYRS) is an everyday hero because it helps young people see a future worth racing toward—and gives them the tools to build it. Founded in Philadelphia, UYRS connects underserved youth to opportunity through motorsports, STEM education, mentorship, and workforce training. Programs like Build A Dream and CNC 101 teach discipline, teamwork, and real-world technical skills that lead to careers. By providing structure, belonging, and hands-on learning, UYRS replaces risk with purpose and possibility. The result is stronger individuals and safer, more hopeful communities.

About The Wawa Foundation Hero Award Submission Process

Non-profit organizations applied by submitting a video and/or a short story to The Wawa Foundation website that provided background on their organization's work with, and impact on, the community. The Wawa Foundation Grant Committee selected four compelling stories of organizations serving the Philadelphia community with the best fit to the award focus area and criteria. The four finalists will be put to a public vote, and the organization receiving the most votes will be presented to The Wawa Foundation Hero Award Panel for final approval and determination. The winning organization will receive a **\$50,000 grant** from The Wawa Foundation, and the three runners-up will each receive **\$10,000 grants**.

For more information on The Wawa Foundation Hero Award and eligibility requirements, terms and conditions, please visit www.TheWawaFoundation.org. To be eligible to receive this award, non-profit organizations must meet the grant selection criteria of The Wawa Foundation for support of organizations providing assistance to causes representing everyday heroes.

About The Wawa Foundation

The Wawa Foundation is an extension of Wawa's commitment to fulfilling lives every day. The Wawa Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation founded to support Wawa, Inc.'s charitable giving and philanthropic activities – and ultimately to help build happier, stronger communities. The Wawa Foundation focuses its support on non-profit organizations committed to health, hunger and everyday heroes through local, regional and national grants. Since the inception of The Wawa Foundation in 2014, The Wawa Foundation and Wawa have contributed more than \$215 million to non-profit community organizations.

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