



KATE MELTON

Leah Shearer of Rochester accepts the emerging leader award at the ROC City Rising networking event Wednesday at the George Eastman House for her work with the I'm Too Young For This Cancer Foundation.

Networking event focuses on helping the community

EMILY SHEARING
 STAFF WRITER

Volunteerism was the theme at the third annual ROC City Rising event Wednesday night at the George Eastman House.

More than 300 young professionals and business leaders gathered to rub elbows and exchange ideas at the event, organized by Eastman Young Professionals and the ROC City Coalition. As they arrived, the social-media-savvy guests were encouraged to tweet throughout the evening.

Kate Turner, president of Eastman Young Professionals, said the goal was to connect different gen-



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Jennifer Galvez Caton, right, and Abby Adair, both of Pittsford, chat at the ROC City Rising event.

erations of leaders. "There aren't a ton of chances to meet established leaders who can help (young professionals) get ahead," she said.

Sylvia Gonzalez, loan coordinator at St. John Fisher College, said the event was a good way for her and her peers to meet

new people. "It was nice to see so many young professionals out and networking," she said. Eric Shoen, director of gift planning at Rochester General Hospital, agreed. "I wanted to network with other young professionals, and it's a great venue to engage young donors."

To reflect the volunteerism theme, keynote speaker Jennifer Leonard, executive director of the Rochester Area Community Foundation, encouraged young professionals to get involved in the community.

"Rochester has a long tradition of volunteerism and civic engagement," Leonard said. "Volunteering is a great way to learn about the needs in the community and get away from our daily cares."



LEONARD

Other speakers included Mayor Robert Duffy and County Executive Maggie Brooks, who both referred to the

Event

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emerging talent in the room.

"This community is in the middle of a transformation, and what we need is to capture the energy and the innovation of the young professionals in this community," Duffy said.

This year's event also marked the first time that awards were presented to

people making a difference in the community.

Leah Shearer, regional chair of the Upstate New York chapter of the I'm Too Young For This Cancer Foundation won the emerging leader award. She began the I'm Too Young program in Rochester three years ago after her own battle with cancer.

"There really wasn't something that spoke to me and my age group in general," said Shearer, who also is program coordinator for Teens Living with Cancer and works as a teacher's assistant and freelance writer. "It can get overwhelming," she said of her busy schedule. "But there's something about what happens when you see people benefiting from things you wished you had had when you were going through it that makes it almost impossible to stop."


Peter Carpino, president of the United Way of Greater Rochester and adviser to the United Way Worldwide young professionals' business resource group, won the established community leader award. Not only has Carpino served the community, but he also has a commitment to supporting young professionals.

"It's the responsibility of our established leaders to help coach, mentor and create opportunities so our young professionals can assume those increasingly influential roles," Carpino said. His advice to rising leaders was to "follow your passion. Listen first, then act, and be intentional about the ways in which you want to advance the organization you serve."

Shearer also encouraged others to volunteer. "Getting involved in your community just really makes you feel both connected and inspired to get up each day," she said. "We really need cultivation from young people and their ideas." □

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