

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 23, 2025

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation Awards \$250,000 Grant to Cromaine Library for Heritage Garden Play Space

Hartland, MI — The Cromaine District Library is proud to announce a transformational \$250,000 grant from Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation to support the creation of the Heritage Garden—a dynamic, outdoor play and movement space that will anchor the south lawn of the Library alongside the planned Cromaine Commons exterior spaces renovation. This generous investment by Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation allows Cromaine to take a bold next step in its mission to reimagine outdoor community space—centering youth wellness, imaginative play, and multigenerational connection.

A Garden That Moves

Inspired by the cultural legacy of the nearby Historic Hartland Music Hall and Cromaine's role as a community hub, the Heritage Garden will invite children and families to move, explore, create, and connect. This space is intentionally designed to "reintroduce free play," aligning closely with the Foundation's Youth Sports & Recreation priority.

Where traditional playgrounds offer structure, the Heritage Garden provides an invitation: to climb a train, make music on outdoor instruments, wander winding sensory paths, or rest in herb-scented shade. It's a space where movement is joyful, spontaneous, and inclusive.

Key Features Will Include:

- A climbable train structure for imaginative movement play
- Outdoor musical instruments to spark rhythm and creativity
- Weaving sensory paths for balance, coordination, and exploration
- Ground-level play elements that encourage whole-body activity
- A sculptural bike rack to encourage eco-friendly access

Built on Community Vision

The Heritage Garden emerged from extensive community engagement, including nearly 1,200 survey responses, local focus groups, and a strategic planning retreat—all of which pointed to a shared desire: more green space, more family connection, more freedom to play. In the words of Cromaine Library Director Sarah Neidert, "The community told us what they needed—and now, thanks to Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, we can bring that vision to life."

A Foundation for Play, Movement & Community

Located adjacent to the Cromaine Library and the Hartland Early Childhood Center—and within walking distance to many local schools—the Heritage Garden will serve thousands of youth and families every year. It complements the already fully funded \$1.25 million Cromaine Commons project, which includes an open-air pavilion, beautiful landscaping, and gathering spaces designed to elevate year-round community programming. Together, Heritage Garden and Cromaine Commons will transform the Library's lawn into a vibrant, welcoming public square where play, culture, learning, and wellness intersect.

Partnering with the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

This project reflects a shared commitment to make joyful play a central part of community health. As a vital community hub, Cromaine Library continues to show how shared spaces can bring people together to learn, move, and connect across generations. We're proud to partner with the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation to create meaningful, lasting change right here in Hartland. Cromaine Library, its Board of Trustees, staff, and the broader Hartland community extend their deepest gratitude to the Foundation for helping turn local dreams into lasting reality.

To Support or Learn More

For those interested in contributing to the Heritage Garden or Cromaine's outdoor transformation, please contact:

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About the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation is a grantmaking organization dedicated primarily to sustained investment in the quality of life of the people of Southeast Michigan and Western New York. The two areas reflect Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. 's devotion to his hometown of Detroit and greater Buffalo, home of his beloved Buffalo Bills NFL team. Prior to his passing in 2014, Mr. Wilson provided that a significant share of his estate be used to continue a life-long generosity of spirit by funding the Foundation that bears his name. Based in Detroit, the Foundation began with a grantmaking capacity of \$1.2 billion over a 20-year period, which expires January 8, 2035. This structure is consistent with Mr. Wilson's desire for the Foundation's impact to be immediate, substantial, measurable, and overseen by those who knew him best. For more information visit www.rcwjrf.org.