

# Advocacy in Action



lutheran metropolitan ministry | January 2024

## Continuing A Legacy

### A Reflection from Community Engagement Coordinator, Gloria Craig

**Legacy, “the long-lasting impact of particular events, actions, etc. that took place in the past, or of a person’s life.”**

In a speech at Variety’s *Power of Women* event in 2022, Oprah Winfrey shared a moment when she was speaking with the late Maya Angelou after returning home from the opening of her girls’ school. She recalled saying to Ms. Angelou that she believed the girls’ school would be her legacy. Immediately, Ms. Angelou replied “you have no idea what your legacy will be,” adding, “your legacy is every person you touch in life.”



When we think about the legacy of people we’ve learned about in history, such as Martin Luther King Jr., or Ida B. Wells, we often focus on the main events for which they are known. For example, with Martin Luther King Jr., we may think about the Civil Rights Movement or the Selma to Montgomery March. With Ms. Ida B Wells, we likely think about her courage to write about the lynching’s of black people at a time where no one dared to speak up against these murders. These major events are usually at the forefront when we talk about these two individuals and their legacies. However, those events are just one aspect of their long-lasting impact

As LMM moves through its 55th anniversary, I ponder on how the organization’s legacy might be defined, from the point of view of the individuals impacted, rather than the overall organization. Depending on who you are talking some may think of our founder Rev. Richard Sering and others will think of 2100 Men’s Shelter. Still others may think of Chopping for Change or Guardianship. Legacy can be different things for different people. Rev. Richard Sering came to Cleveland as a result of an injustice he not only acknowledged, but also was willing to stand up and be a co-conspirator against. His legacy to some may be just that; and to others it may be that he was a good father, a husband, a friend. As I’m writing this, I can see that Ms. Angelou was very correct. We don’t really know what our legacy will be. We don’t know who we will touch or how we will touch them. We don’t know what we will do or create that may become a legacy much bigger than us.

This organization was started on the premise of fighting racial injustice. It has evolved into a resource for people who are returning home from incarceration; in need of guardianship services; aging out of foster care; and individuals and families who need emergency shelter— whether it’s for the night or until they are able to find stable and affordable housing.

The lesson I walk away with is this; our legacy starts with each interaction we have. It starts with each idea or passion we follow through with. It starts when we decide to not only be good to ourselves, but to our neighbors. Our legacy continues when our intention is true and when it good, when it helps and does not hinder, when it uplifts and does not bring harm. Our legacy starts with us, but can become some much greater than us especially when we move with intention.

## From the Desk: Lynn Schlessman, Friend-to-Friend Director



### *Looking Back on a Snowy November Evening*

“You just can’t have friends here – whatever you say about yourself someone will use against you.”

The moment I heard those words I thought, “I am in for a tough meeting tonight.”

November 27, the fourth Monday of the month and I was leading a Friend-To-Friend meeting at Northeast Reintegration Center (NERC). I had just handed out a worksheet I created entitled, “Reflections and Reflecting: How We Learn About Ourselves”. I asked the women to each fill out the first part of the worksheet, then we began going through the questions one by one. Before many had spoken, the woman on my left declared: “You just can’t have friends here.

For eleven years I have been leading these 4th Monday monthly meetings at NERC. My goal has been to have speakers that have themselves been residents of NERC – women that have had a successful re-entry – women that are now thriving. When these women speak, the ten to twelve residents at a typical meeting, listen in ways they will not listen to me, a 76-year-old man. For nights I do not have a speaker, I have prepared worksheets intended to open the women to talk with one another about things that matter. But on that snowy November evening it looked like the discussion would go nowhere.

“We are friends,” the woman on my left countered, pointing to her friend across the table.

“Whenever we are together, there is laughter!” her friend responded.

And with those comments, everything in that room changed. One after another the women opened up about their past, their present, their hopes for the future. Near the end of the meeting one woman remarked, “This is really a special group, everyone has been sharing.”

Since that night I have thought about the woman that had the courage to change the conversation from complaining to rejoicing. It does take courage to change the narrative, courage that each of us can have in our day to day conversations. Nothing is changed for the better by complaining and criticizing. I am grateful for the women that taught me that lesson once more.

## LMM Announces Building Maintenance & Repair Program



*Rendering by Payto Architects*

Workforce training programs are essential and effective in reducing recidivism and providing individuals with criminal legal system involvement with successful second chances. LMM’s Chopping for Change is a workforce program that has proven to be life-changing for individuals exiting prison.

LMM is excited to announce that we are expanding our workforce development efforts with the Building Maintenance & Repair program, a vocational training program with a focus on light construction, building maintenance, home repair and remodeling as a high potential opportunity to change the trajectory of unemployed and underemployed citizens’ quality of life and upward mobility. If you would like to learn about ways to support this program, please contact our VP, Development & Communications, Marcella Brown at [mbrown@lutheranmetro.org](mailto:mbrown@lutheranmetro.org).

# POLICY CORNER: The State of Guardianship



According to [Miami University's Scripps Gerontology Center](#), by 2025, it is estimated that one in four Ohioans will be 60 or older, and by 2040, one in three will be 50+ years old. Safety net services for older adults already [experience a lack of funding](#), and as the number of seniors in Ohio increases as the baby boomer generation ages, the number of vulnerable adults needing guardians, and the need for sustainable funding, will only increase.

The importance of this need has been highlighted at a local level in Ohio. A [recent resolution](#) was advanced by Cuyahoga County Council, who approved a two-year, \$1.35 million contract to support LMM's [Guardianship Services](#) program, which offers staff and volunteer guardians to advocate for the emotional, social, financial and physical well-being of vulnerable adults.

Guardianship advocates Kendra Daniel, Vice President of Quality & Compliance and Director of Guardianship Services at LMM, and Natasha Pietrocola, the Cuyahoga County's Division of Senior and Adult Services administrator, spoke at the recent County Council meeting to highlight the need for more guardians in the community.

Below are resources if you'd like to learn more or support:

- [Aging and Nursing Homes report by Center for Community Solutions](#)
- [Volunteer as a Guardian](#)
- [Support LMM's Emergency Ward Fund](#)

## Featured Advocacy Partner: We Raise Foundation



We Raise Foundation (Itasca, Ill.) partners with nonprofit organizations and emerging leaders working at the intersection of poverty, violence, and inequality. Through the generosity of our donors, we support unique missions and programs that serve as the hands of Christ in meeting urgent needs in our communities.

We offer two grant programs – GrantsPlus Grants and Emerging Leader Grants – and have a preference for funding solutions in the areas of education, workforce development, and criminal justice.

We believe academic achievement is a foundation for lifelong success. One of the most valuable resources in overcoming poverty is receiving an **education**.

We believe when we focus on people and **workforce development**, we bring stability to our communities. By providing training and investing in our workforce, we can end income and job inequality.

We believe by promoting equality for those impacted by the **criminal justice** system, we initiate a cycle of hopefulness. Prisoners and ex-offenders offered support and skills training while incarcerated and upon reentry are more likely to become integrated, contributing members of society.

Our grants are more than just the financial award, though. We actively connect our grantees to a variety of capacity building activities and resources that will strengthen their programs, leadership, and effectiveness for sustainable impact.

We Raise was proud to be an early supporter of LMM's Chopping for Change program with a \$40,000 grant in 2015 and we're excited to be in partnership with LMM now through two Emerging Leader Grants. [Learn more.](#)



**lutheran  
metropolitan  
ministry**  
listening. serving. empowering.

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### Our Mission:

To promote shalom (peace, well-being) and justice (right relationships) through a Christian ministry of service and advocacy with those who are oppressed, forgotten and hurting.

### Link with LMM



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E-newsletter sign-up at  
[www.lutheranmetro.org](http://www.lutheranmetro.org)



Latest news at  
[www.lutheranmetro.org](http://www.lutheranmetro.org)

## By the Numbers: Guardianship Services

*Key numbers highlighting aging in Ohio and LMM's Guardianship Services program.*

**1 in 4**

By 2025, 1 in 4 Ohioans will be 60 years or older

**1 in 3**

By 2040, 1 in 3 Ohioans will be 50 years or older

**626**

The number of indigent, vulnerable adults served by LMM's Guardianship Services program in 2023

**1989**

The year LMM's Guardianship Services program was established

**4,267**

The number of individuals LMM's Guardianship Services program has served in Cuyahoga and Lorain counties since its inception

## 2024 LMM Advocacy Priorities

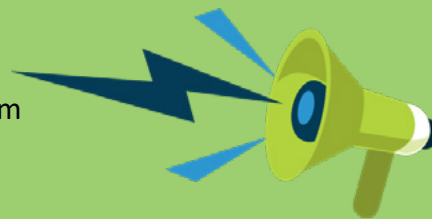
Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry's advocacy work informs systems change at the local, state and federal level by leveraging the expertise of staff and the experiences of program participants to advocate on behalf of those who are hurting to be empowered, valued, and healed.

Through this engagement, LMM can continue to provide transformational services while reducing the need for safety net services.

Each year, LMM sets its mission and vision to guide its advocacy work for the upcoming year. In 2024, LMM will focus on three advocacy priorities:

- End Homelessness
- Reform the Criminal Legal System
- Advance Racial Equity

**Learn more here.**



## What We're Reading



- [Whiteout: How Racial Capitalism Changed the Color of Opioids in America](#)
- [Prisms of the People: Power & Organizing in Twenty-First Century America](#)
- [Vertigo Variations: 2024 Narrative Predictions](#)
- [The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain](#)
- [Bell Hooks: All About Love](#)