

SEEDS of CHANGE

LUTHERAN METROPOLITAN MINISTRY

Lmm

2026 VOLUME XXXIV • ISSUE 2

The Power of Second Chances



April is Reentry Month in the City of Cleveland. Each year, Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry (LMM) joins the Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry in recognizing the month showcasing a growing number of effective and creative initiatives that support returning citizens. Since its founding, LMM has been a firm believer in reforming the criminal legal system and in the principle that individuals returning from incarceration deserve meaningful second chances.

Over nearly six decades of service, LMM has worked to remove the stigma and social obstacles that challenge returning citizens as they reintegrate into their communities. Directed by staff partner, Charles R. See, LMM operated programs for more than four decades to help transform Cleveland into a national leader in reentry innovation.

continued on page 6 >

“Second chances don’t occur by accident; they require intentional, proven interventions that tackle the real challenges individuals encounter when reentering society,”

said Maria Foschia,
LMM President & CEO.



Capital Campaign will Create Avenues to Industries

LMM is excited to announce that we are growing our workforce development facilities. Avenues to Industries is a \$3.5 million renovation of LMM's warehouse, across the street from the Richard Sering Center at E. 45th and Superior Ave.

The space will house the Workforce Training Center and Building Maintenance & Repair program, offering training for positions in building maintenance, light construction, home repair and remodeling. These jobs offer a path to family-sustaining wages and careers in high demand industries.

The renovation will create training and education spaces for the new Building Maintenance & Repair program, and a storefront café and catering kitchen for expanded training and revenue generating social enterprises.

We are grateful to generous community members who have committed \$1.3 million toward this campaign. Our goal is to reach \$2.2 million in philanthropic investments by mid-year.



Won't you join us with a gift today?

AVENUES to INDUSTRIES

Supporting Avenues to Industries is an investment in people who seek an opportunity to build a career, experience job security, and earn living wages.



You can help us transform the Workforce Training Center. To learn more, contact LMM Director of Individual Giving, Brian Sturgeon at bsturgeon@lutheranmetro.org, 216.696.0370, or scan the QR code to give. Thank you!

Housing & Shelter

Each April we call attention to the truth that stable housing is foundational to successful reentry. At LMM, this intersection is visible every day at our Men's Shelter at 2100 Lakeside, where many residents are working to rebuild their lives after incarceration. About two thirds of our guests have some form of criminal record and nationally, between 70-90% of all people experiencing homelessness have justice system involvement.

For individuals returning to the community, barriers to housing are significant. Collateral sanctions like limited employment opportunities and landlord screening practices often exclude people with records before they have a chance to stabilize. Without immediate access to housing, the risk of experiencing homelessness increases dramatically; formerly incarcerated people are up to 10 times more likely to experience homelessness than their peers. This disparity in turn contributes to recidivism due to the lack of available housing opportunities.

LMM is actively working to break this cycle. One example is through our ongoing Pay for Success partnership with the Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry. This new initiative is designed to support men experiencing homelessness who have been recently released from jail or prison. Our model prioritizes



rapid connection to housing skills classes, housing navigation, and ultimately placement with our network of landlords willing to rent to those with criminal backgrounds.

Beyond shelter, LMM practices what we preach through our own housing initiatives, including Coventry House (shared housing for single adults), Breaking New Ground (scattered site family housing in St. Clair Superior), and our new Solar Homes. LMM does not screen out applicants based on criminal histories. This intentional approach ensures that people are not excluded from housing opportunities due to past involvement with the justice system.

As we recognize Reentry Month and Affordable Housing Month, LMM remains committed to advancing equitable access to housing. By removing barriers and investing in housing-centered reentry strategies, we are helping individuals move forward with dignity, stability, and a genuine second chance.

Building on the Foundation: Framing Our Future

Founder's Day 2026 is a Great Success

Founder's Day, the annual tradition honoring the life and legacy of LMM founder Rev. Richard Sering, continues to grow each year as a full house was on hand at the Richard Sering Center to celebrate LMM Founder's Day 2026!

This year's theme, "Building on the Foundation: Framing Our Future," focused on LMM's 57-year history, current initiatives, and what lies ahead for our organization.

This year was different than year's past as for the first time ever, LMM staff, board, and supporters gathered to hear a special panel of community leaders from outside of our organization who have been incredible partners in advancing LMM's mission.

The panel was expertly moderated by LMM Board Chair Grayson Sieg and included:

- Olivia Willis – Sr. Director for Clean and Safe, Downtown Cleveland
- Ricardo León – President & CEO, Cuyahoga Land Bank
- Martin Uhle – President & CEO, Community West Foundation
- Yvonne Conwell – Vice President, Cuyahoga County Council

The panel members discussed in detail challenges they all face, solutions that have met those challenges, initiatives that they have partnered with our organization on already, and community needs moving forward to best serve the residents of Northeast Ohio. It was an enlightening and informative discussion for all in attendance.

The ceremony also honored our two newest members of the Founder's Circle, Rev. Richard Israel and John Ringenbach, for their significant sacrifices of their time, talents, and treasure to support the mission, vision, civic engagement initiatives, and programs of LMM. Susan Sering, beloved wife of LMM founder Rev. Richard Sering, had the honor of pinning Rev. Israel, while Mr. Ringenbach received his Founder's Circle pin from former LMM staff member and fellow Founder's Circle honoree Charles R. See.

The day also included wonderful fellowship during a very tasty brunch prepared by LMM's Central Kitchen. We look forward to seeing you all again next February to celebrate Founder's Day 2027!

Scan the QR Code to watch
Founder's Day 2026.



- 1 Susan Sering embraces Rev. Richard Israel after receiving his Founder's Circle pin
- 2 Charles R. See pins new Founder's Circle honoree John Ringenbach
- 3 Founder's Day Panel
(L to R): LMM CPO Michael Sering, Martin Uhle, Ricardo León, Olivia Willis, Yvonne Conwell & Moderator, Grayson Sieg



Marathon

As the University Hospital Cleveland Marathon approaches on May 16–17, LMM is proud to once again serve as an official charity partner for this inspiring community event. With just about a month to go, the excitement is mounting not only for race weekend, but for the meaningful impact it brings to charity partners like LMM.

Building on his success from last year, Benjamin Turney, LMM's Program Director of Youth Resiliency Services (YRS), is tying up his running shoes and taking on the marathon again in 2026 to raise funds in support of YRS. Benjamin's goal is to raise another \$10,000 this year to help provide critical resources, stability, and support for youth we serve.

Benjamin is just one of several LMM supporters running to raise funds for the organization and every mile run represents a commitment to helping young people by meeting their basic needs and teaching core life skills to become self-sufficient within the community.



You can be part of this effort by making a gift in support of the Team LMM runners. Simply scan the QR code to visit the marathon donation page and make a contribution.

Running in the marathon last year was extremely memorable and rewarding. I trained really hard, anticipating that I would "hit the wall." On the day of the marathon, there was so much positive energy and support, I felt energized throughout the whole race. The way our partners and community rallied around our fundraising effort was the icing on the cake! It is not easy, but it is so much fun; I'm excited to do it again this year!



The youth and staff are loving the "YRS Fitness Club" (exercise room), paid for by all of last year's donations!

Prince of Peace Helping Transform Houses into Homes

As you may have seen in our last edition of *Seeds*, LMM celebrated the opening of our first solar housing units with a ribbon cutting ceremony on November 18th. While it was a momentous occasion honoring LMM's commitment to providing affordable housing solutions, there was still plenty of work to be done to prepare these units for welcoming their first residents.



Each of the four units needed to be furnished and stocked with other essential household items. In typical LMM fashion, one of our faith partners answered the call and committed to transforming these houses into **homes**. During the month of January, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Westlake organized a fundraiser to support the solar housing project.

LMM board member and (recently retired) Senior Pastor at Prince of Peace, Rev. Charlie Woodward said the project came together after he attended the ribbon cutting ceremony for the solar homes and he shared the exciting news of the project with the congregation. Members of the congregation were interested in learning more about how they could support the project and inquired about helping to furnish the units. Pastor Woodward then connected with LMM's Associate Director of Housing and Shelter, Claire Billingsley, who put together a list of items like furnishings, kitchen items, bed sheets, and towels.

Pastor Charlie took this list back to Prince of Peace's Engagement Team and they got to work. They took the list of much needed household items and created 70 tags, each with a specific item listed on them, and the tags were displayed in the church for everyone to see. The members and friends of Prince of Peace were encouraged to take a tag, write a check or put money into a marked envelope with the tag and turn it back into the church.

The goal was to raise \$3,500 from the fundraiser and on top of that, a request was made for matching funds up to \$3,500 from Prince of Peace's Endowment Fund. Members of the congregation quickly blew past that goal and, combined with

the endowment match, Prince of Peace donated \$8,633 which helped purchase all the household items requested.

On February 22nd, LMM President and CEO Maria Foschia was invited out to Prince of Peace for a presentation of the donation check and to celebrate Pastor Charlie's final service before his retirement. The day was an amazing celebration of both the completion of the project and Pastor Woodward's thirty-six years of dedicated service.

Reflecting on the fundraising project, Pastor Woodward said, *"In the grand scheme of things, \$8,600 is not a large amount of money when compared to the overall LMM budget. But what IS important is to get the congregation members engaged in being a part of the ministry. It's more than an annual gift or check in the mail, it is about being the body of Christ in the world – God's Work with Our Hands."*

LMM's Board of Directors and staff would like to congratulate Pastor Woodward on his retirement and sincerely thank Prince of Peace for their generous donation supporting our neighbors in need as they move into their new homes.

In his final note on the project, Pastor Charlie invoked the words of Martin Luther, saying *"God doesn't need your good works, but your neighbor does. Our new neighbors on Luther Street are exactly what he was talking about!"* We could not agree with him more!

If you are feeling inspired by that message and your organization or congregation is interested in learning more about how you can host a fundraiser or volunteer to support LMM, please contact Brian Sturgeon, Director of Individual Giving, at bsturgeon@lutheranmetro.org.



LMM to Host Sixth Annual Charles R. See Forum on April 29th, 2026

Each year, Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry partners with the City Club of Cleveland to present the Charles R. See Forum. Named in honor of Mr. Charles R. See, a respected advocate for criminal justice reform, the event addresses critical topics affecting returning citizens. Past forums have examined efforts to reduce barriers to housing, support trauma recovery, and increase awareness of employment opportunities. Attendees can network with fellow advocates and leave with actionable strategies to support returning citizens in their communities.



This year, the Charles R. See Forum will explore ways to elevate civic engagement and involvement of justice-impacted people in shaping communities.

The forum serves as a highlight of the second Cuyahoga County Reentry Awareness Month, during which more than a dozen events will take place throughout April. These collective efforts recognize and support justice-impacted individuals.

The 2026 midterm election underscores the significance of every election. In this key democratic moment, we invite you to learn how justice-impacted individuals in Cleveland and beyond are shaping community life.

This year's Charles R. See Forum brings together a powerhouse panel to explore the importance of year-round civic engagement and community involvement for justice-impacted individuals before, during, and after Election Day.

The forum will highlight the ongoing efforts of community and faith-based organizations to champion the voices of justice-impacted individuals in shaping our communities. Participants will learn practical ways to support initiatives, ensuring that the experiences and perspectives of those affected by the criminal legal system are represented in key decision-making spaces, contributing to public policies that embrace the value of second chances.

- Dr. Jawanza K. Colvin, Pastor, The Historic Olivet Institutional Baptist Church
- DeAnna Hoskins, President, JustLeadershipUSA (JLUSA)
- The Honorable Jeffrey D. Johnson, Judge, Cleveland Municipal Court
- Moderator: Erika Anthony, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Cleveland VOTES

Reserve your ticket today and be part of the conversation that drives real change in our community!



*For More Info and to Register
Scan the QR Code*

GUARDIANSHIP Success Story

Ms. S has a long history of serious mental illness. When she was appointed a guardian she was living in an apartment that was very dirty and she had no food and no utilities. With the help of the local mental health agency and the Probate Court, Ms. S was awarded a guardian who was able to get her into a nursing facility for evaluation and physical therapy. Once Ms. S was well enough, the guardian was able to place her in a group home where she also received community mental health case management.

Two years later, Ms. S was having problems at her group home that were brought to the guardian's attention by the mental health case manager. The group home's parent agency wanted Ms. S placed in a nursing home because they said she needed a higher level of care. The guardian advocated for a hospital stay at an appropriate inpatient behavioral health unit where it was discovered that Ms. S had not been taking her medications for a long time. This explained all of the problems the group home was having with Ms. S's behavior. Once the hospital was able to get her medication regulated again and under control she was discharged back to the group home and is doing well. The guardian worked with the community mental health case manager and the nurse discharge planner at the hospital to make sure there was a discharge plan in place that would give Ms. S the tools and resources to be successful again in the community.

THE POWER OF SECOND CHANCES

continued



LMM pioneered programs that provided returning citizens with meaningful employment opportunities in social services. One of the most notable initiatives was the nationally recognized Care Team program, affectionately known as the “Red Coats.” The program trained returning citizens to assist older adults living in public housing communities. Its success led to replication in cities across the country. The program’s signature red jackets were even worn by honorary members such as former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, former Ohio Governor Bob Taft, and several Cleveland mayors.

Throughout the years, LMM has expanded its work to provide a wide range of services for returning citizens, including employment support, connections to substance use treatment, and reentry mentoring. The organization has also launched innovative initiatives such as the Young African American Reclamation Project, the Women’s Reentry Resource Network, and the Friend-to-Friend prison visitation program.

LMM has also been a leader in civic engagement efforts aimed at removing obstacles to reentry. The Ban the Box campaign helped eliminate the criminal history check box from job applications, giving returning citizens a fairer opportunity to compete for employment. LMM also played a role in helping shape the federal Second Chance Act, which provides funding to state and local governments and nonprofit organizations supporting individuals returning from prison and jail.

Today, that work continues through programs that create real opportunities for individuals facing obstacles as they reenter the community, and civic engagement activities that elevate the voices of persons with lived experience to inform public policy.

Housing stability is also a key focus of LMM’s work. Although not solely for individuals rebuilding their lives after incarceration, LMM’s Affordable Housing portfolio of more than 30 units provides permanent affordable housing, addressing one of the most significant obstacles faced by those integrating back into

the community. LMM is a low barrier land lord and serves as is a model for fair chance housing. LMM is actively involved with the Greater Cleveland Reentry Leadership Coalition and is working alongside county partners to advance the Fair Chance Housing ordinance.

Workforce development remains another cornerstone of LMM's mission. The organization's culinary training program—originally launched decades ago as “Fresh Lunch, Fresh Start” and later named “Chopping for Change”—helps participants earn industry-recognized credentials and pursue careers in hospitality. Since 2016, and through partnerships with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, the United States Department of Labor, the Hospitality Institute of Ohio, and the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, incarcerated individuals receive career preparation and reentry support before returning to their communities. More than 400 graduates of the program are now working at respected establishments throughout Northeast Ohio, including The Marble Room, LockKeepers, Cleveland Clinic, and University Hospitals, among others.

LMM has also begun a pilot Building Maintenance and Repair (BMR) program to provide vocational training in construction, home repair, and remodeling. Plans are currently underway to convert the warehouse across from the Richard Sering Center into a new state-of-the-art LMM Workforce Training Center, that will grow BMR into a complete program.

“These programs have a profound and transformative impact on the lives of returning citizens, offering them a second chance and the opportunity to achieve a stable, self-sufficient life,” said Foschia.

Throughout April, LMM is proud to partner with Cuyahoga County on a series of special events designed to raise awareness about the challenges faced by individuals returning from incarceration. These events include a reentry simulation, career fair, legal clinics, health and wellness fair, and the Charles R. See Forum on Reentry hosted at The City Club of Cleveland.

Supporting second chances has always been central to LMM's mission. The organization's commitment to employing individuals with lived experience began in the 1970s and has since become a recognized best practice in Cuyahoga County. Today, that commitment translates into more than \$2 million in annual wages and benefits paid to LMM employees with lived experience.

“In 2012, I met Mr. Charles See—that’s when my life changed for the better,”

says Joseph Ciarallo,
LMM Career Services
Specialist.



“He gave me a second chance and hired me in July of that year, and he made me feel valuable again. It gave me confidence that I never knew I had. Almost 14 years later, here I am giving back what was freely given to me.”





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Coming Up at LMM...

APRIL

29 Charles R. See Forum

MAY

16-17 Cleveland Marathon

JUNE

17 Public Immersive Experience

AUGUST

4 Night Out at Progressive Field

