

# BUILDING HOPE





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## GREETINGS FROM THE ROC!

This may sound like an oxymoron to some, but we are incredibly busy to the point of being overwhelmed at times, while at the same time filled with great satisfaction.

In this report, you will see how our efforts to meet the needs of our population during the pandemic were expanded in 2021. We refused to let the pandemic erode the gains so many of our Participants, especially the children, had accomplished. In 2019 we developed some innovative, comprehensive programming for both adults and children. Based on the positives from this experience, we changed, and expanded, our services in 2020 - a process that continued in 2021.

This past year (2021) saw remarkable changes in our Participants.

Many of our adults found that their association with the ROC gave them a resilience they would not have had otherwise. This resilience, with continued ROC support, resulted in many Participants making improvements in their housing stability, mental health and outlook for the future.

Daily, we celebrate the successes of our Participants.



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Let that sink in... overwhelming need but resulting in a celebration of so many successes.

Likewise, our children benefitted from pilot experiences in 2020. A “Dream Big” summer experience and a “Think Big” school-year experience showed us the power of surrounding traumatized children and young adults with academic support, mental health counseling, confidence-building experiences and rewards that encourage these growth opportunities. In 2021, these opportunities resulted in powerful transformations for our child Participants. Our Kids ROC experience now moves our younger participants from places of trauma with few opportunities to a place of greater security, filled with hope for the future.

Speaking of the future ...The Scott Bieler Rural Outreach Center building, a place that will be filled with hope and provide room for healing is expected to be complete in the beginning of 2023. On June 10th, 2021, we broke ground with many of you who gave so much of yourselves to make this happen, in attendance. A glorious day it was! Another day seared in my memory is when founders from Pathways Christian Fellowship gathered to give thanks to God and blessed the site as the heavy equipment started the work of building our new home.

A celebration in the face of overwhelming need. An paradox? Maybe, but this is the ROC.

God’s people at work.

Moving forward we likely will continue to see overwhelming needs. But, with the continued support of so many of you, our dedicated supporters, this amazing community, and an amazing, passionate, competent, professional, dedicated staff, we are confident that we will be able to continue to celebrate.

Read on and join in the celebration!

FAITHFULLY,

Frank Cerny, PhD, MDiv  
Executive Director



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# ABOUT THE ROC

## MISSION

ROC's mission is to break the cycle of rural poverty by accompanying people towards self-sufficiency. We assist, empower, and elevate.

## VISION

The Rural Outreach Center improves the lives of the rural poor in southwestern New York by breaking the cycle of generational poverty.



## BOARD MEMBERS: JANUARY 2021 - DECEMBER 2021

### OFFICERS

Executive Director: Frank Cerny

Chair: Tim Lafferty – JBM Computer Consultants, Inc.

Vice-Chair: Aaron Hejmowski – Belmont Housing WNY

Treasurer: Brian Maze – Chiampou Travis Besaw & Kershner LLP

Secretary: Jane Vosseller, Ace Flag

### MEMBERS

Paul W. Babbitt, Campaign Chair – Reaching Out Campaign, 2018-2019

Heidi Born, Board Member- KeyBank

Katherine Daley, Board Member – M&T Bank

Peter Dechert, Board Member- Buffalo Construction Consultants

Cliff DeFlyer, Vidler's 5&10, Inc.

Vicki Feine, Board Member – Board Chair 2016-2020

John Hart, Board Member – The Hart Financial Group

Sheret Jagord, Board Member - Independent Health

Scott Lezynski, Board Member – Moog. Inc.

Sean Merkel, Board Member – Tops Friendly Markets

William Owens, Jr, Board Member -The MD Affiliate Program

Christye Peterson, Board Member and Campaign Chair, Reaching Out Campaign 2019-present

Marcia Keller, Recording Secretary – Hunt Real Estate

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# REBUILDING HOPE

Heather\* came to the ROC defeated. After the tragic loss of her partner, she fell into a deep depression and struggled to be present for her two children. A concerned teacher contacted CPS, and the children were taken into foster care with the goal of Heather receiving treatment for her depression and then the children then were allowed to come home soon after. Instead, COVID-19 closed the courts, and Heather and her children were separated for fifteen long months. Meanwhile, her apartment building was condemned and Heather found herself homeless and alone.

Care Coordinator Kelly started meeting with Heather to find her housing. Before long, Heather signed a lease on an apartment big enough for her and her children. Heather started to see a glimmer of hope - she now had a place that her children could call home.

Sadly, one of Heather's children was abused while in foster care. Although the child was quickly moved to a safe place, the trauma of that abuse is lasting. Heather fought even harder for her children to be returned to her, and we are happy to share that she now has custody of both children.

Heather took proactive steps to help her children understand what happened. All three are now in therapy here at the ROC, receiving support that will help them heal, rebuild the attachment lost over those fifteen months, and create a new, better, life for themselves.

Heather knows there is a long journey ahead, but for the first time in a long time, she feels hopeful that her family will heal.



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\*Names and some details changed to protect Participant privacy

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# BUILDING COMMUNITY

## “I JUST WANT TO MAKE FRIENDS.”

This is one of the first things that Liz\* said when she met with her math tutor for the first time. Liz had been coming to the ROC since the summer of 2020 and had spent the entire 2020-2021 school year navigating remote learning. She was withdrawn and felt isolated from her peers; they didn't understand the things that she had been through. She wasn't sure that she wanted to return to in-person learning, but she also didn't want to feel like she was alone anymore. Liz ultimately decided that she would complete the upcoming school year at home, and she knew that she was going to need some support – both academic and social. Liz's counselor reached out to Nichole, our Kids ROC director for assistance.

Liz wanted to start by focusing on her studies, so she enrolled in the ROC Squad and was paired with a math tutor that met with her once a week. After a couple of weeks, Liz asked if she could meet with her tutor for 2 hours each week instead of 1. She not only enjoyed the relationship that they were building, but she found herself enjoying math too!

With a little encouragement, Liz also began attending bi-weekly teen nights with a couple of other pre-teen girls. These nights were a chance for her to socialize with girls her own age in a safe and supportive environment. Friendships were formed almost immediately, and during her tutoring sessions she often talked excitedly about the friends she was making at the ROC. As her confidence began to grow, she started attending Kids ROC experiences more frequently. She is often seen laughing and chatting excitedly or working alongside her peers to create a beautiful masterpiece. In these moments Liz's eyes shine brighter and she smiles bigger. She feels less isolated and alone because over the course of just a couple of months, Liz, and her little brother, have been surrounded by the love and compassion found within the ROC community.



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# HOPE & HEALING

Callie\* was an anxious, scared 14 year old when she first came to the ROC for counseling. Her anxiety made her new high school feel scary and overwhelming. Her parents were exhausted with the now-daily battles it took to get her to school. What should have been a fun experience had turned into a nightmare for the whole family.

Callie started meeting weekly with Shauna, a social worker at the ROC. Initially, she resisted efforts to talk about her anxiety. It felt easier to just ignore everything that made her anxious, rather than learning to cope.

Shauna didn't give up on Callie, though. And Callie learned not to give up on herself. Together, she and Shauna came up with a plan. They set goals for Callie, giving her something to reach for. Shauna started teaching Callie mindfulness to help her regulate her emotions. As Callie built those skills, she started feeling more comfortable going to school.

While starting to go to school daily, Callie asked for help building social skills to help her make new friends. She and Shauna practiced ways to meet people and Callie started making friends.



In addition to counseling, Callie participated in Kids ROC experiences. Recognizing her own growth, she encouraged her mom to connect with our care coordinator Kelly to find a new job. The family as a whole progressed far beyond what they initially thought possible.

A year later, you wouldn't recognize Callie as the same person. She's an outgoing, energetic teenager who has friends and loves her place on the cheerleading squad. Addressing her anxiety did more than just help her social life, though. Callie is excelling in school. She feels confident in herself and knows how and when to advocate for herself. Her mom says she's thriving - and one look at Callie's beaming smile tells you all you need to know about how Callie feels.

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# U ROC: Nurture & Growth

It was during a weekly therapy session that Greg\*, one of our adult Participants, mentioned that he wanted to work on developing his reading and writing skills.

He recently got promoted at work and in his new position he would be responsible for communicating via email with a much wider audience. This worried Greg because he had struggled with reading and writing his entire life and while he learned to adapt, he did not want his challenges to become a barrier. He was not accustomed to asking for help and had become resolved to do things on his own. Many people in his past had told him that he would never be good enough or that he wasn't capable, but he was determined to be successful in this role.

Greg began working with a UROC - our adult experience - tutor once a week. He was apprehensive at first, worried that his tutor was going to look down upon him like so many others had in the past. However, what Greg found was the supportive and nurturing relationship that he needed in order to achieve his goals. They started out small, working on reinforcing and building foundational literacy skills. Within a few weeks Greg began to read aloud with confidence. They worked on effective communication by composing emails and writing letters to friends.

Each week Greg's confidence grew, and he came to each session eager to share his latest achievement and celebrate his progress. Over time he began to feel confident asking for help and you could visibly see years of negative self-perception disappear. The skills that he worked to develop have not only helped him feel successful in his job and achieve his goal but have also positively contributed to his self-confidence.

Greg continues to set new goals for himself and is committed to working with his tutor as a part of UROC. He has realized that reaching his goals is possible with a little help and dedication.



## VOLUNTEERS

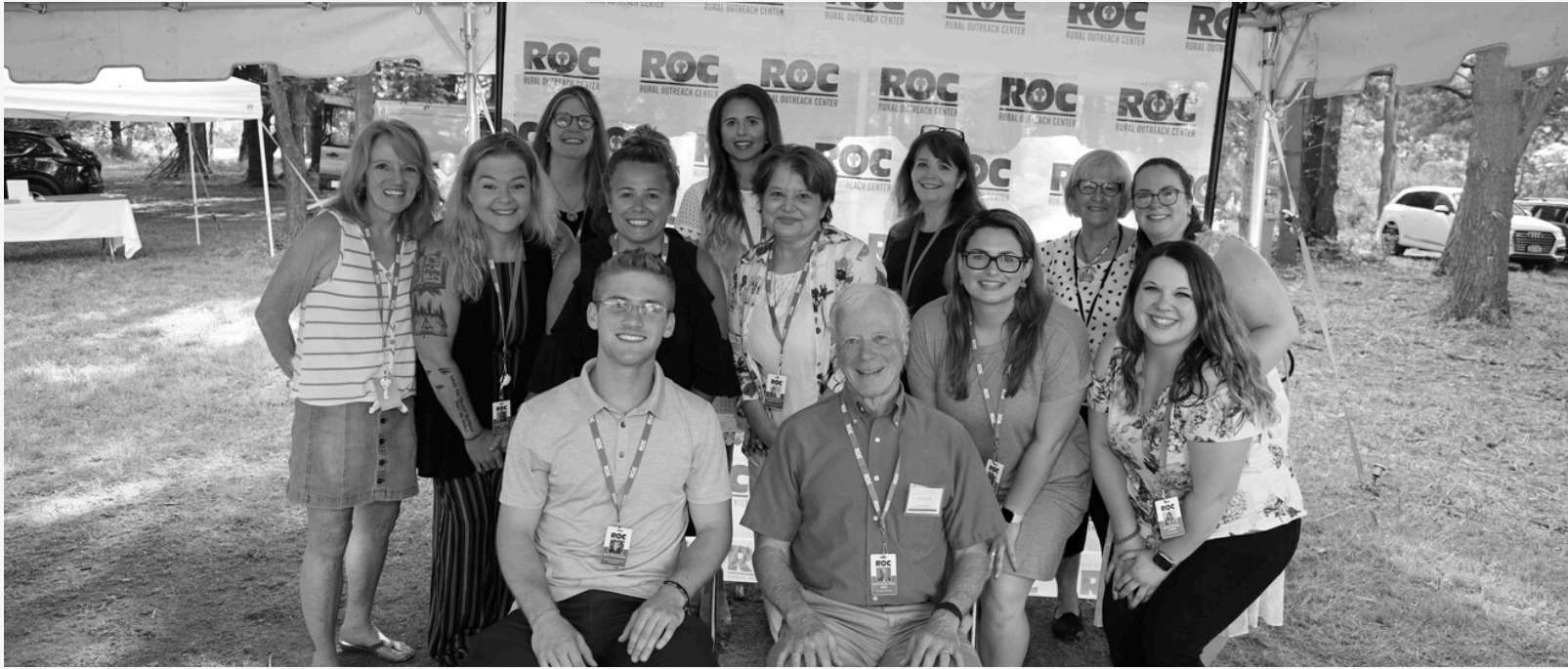
The ROC would not be where we are today without the countless volunteers who make many of our programs and services possible. From school groups who help with yard clean-up, to

churches who help with Good for the Neighborhood events, to individual volunteers who help keep the ROC running smoothly, to college students acting as mentors and tutors, our volunteers make a huge difference. We are so grateful for their efforts to support the ROC and those we serve - and know that they are a central part of what we do. Thank you to each and every one of them.



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# ROC STAFF



Frank Cerny, Executive Director

Nichole Barrett, Program Director

Monique Brannon, Development  
Director

Amelia Leggett, Data &  
Development Coordinator

Michele Venezia, Finance Officer

Kelly Shanahan, Care Coordinator  
& Outreach Coordinator

Maria Knickerbocker, Director of  
Counseling

Camille Arth, Director of Care  
Coordination & Code Blue  
Director

Shauna Kelsey, Social Worker

Christina Boccio, Social Worker

Melissa Cronyn, Social Worker

Sue Boyle, Drug Free Communities

Ryan Konotopskyj, AmeriCorp

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# SOCIAL WORK

The ROC's team of licensed social workers provides mental health services to adults and children, helping them address a variety of issues ranging from trauma-related stressors, anxiety, depression, behavioral concerns, and more. In 2021, social workers attended training for trauma therapy, play therapy, and other evidence-based interventions.

1,506

Child Mental  
Health Sessions

150

Participants  
Receiving Mental  
Health Services

733

Adult Mental  
Health Sessions



# CARE COORDINATION

Care Coordinators at the ROC offer support for individuals looking to break the cycle of rural poverty by removing barriers through assistance with obtaining benefits, job searching, education and training, and financial literacy.

501

Gas & Grocery  
Cards  
Distributed

875

In-person and phone  
sessions assisting  
Participants with Acute  
Needs

328

Instances of  
Transportation  
Provided

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# CODE BLUE

The Code Blue Shelter provides nighttime shelter and daytime warming to homeless individuals of southern Erie County. The shelter is part of Erie County's Code Blue inclement weather shelter program that runs from November to April. Individuals at the Code Blue shelter receive additional support to find permanent housing, employment, and more. In 2020-2021:

34

Individuals  
provided with  
shelter

1,172

Total instances of  
daytime and nighttime  
shelter

11

People found  
permanent  
housing



Above: Buffalo Bills Foundation Community Christmas

# CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

2021 was a year of exciting new experiences for the children we serve at the ROC, as a continuation of experiences we began in 2020. From the Dream Big! Summer Experience to mentoring & tutoring, ROC kids were able to learn and build their confidence. In 2021:

24

Children Attended  
the Dream Big!  
Summer Experience

76

Individual and  
Group Tutoring  
Sessions Provided

236

Children Received  
Winter Coats, Boots,  
and Snow Pants

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# The Scott Bieler Rural Outreach Center



Above: Founders & board members meet to celebrate the groundbreaking.

As we close out 2021 we find we are looking forward to a busy year ahead and look back with gratitude. Although we have made great progress, we have far to go to complete the Scott Bieler Rural Outreach Center.

Lemur Construction is busy procuring as many of the materials as possible. Materials and their costs are proving to be the biggest challenge. Thank you to the Lemur team for working hard to ensure that the project is not delayed waiting for materials and that they are purchased for the best cost.

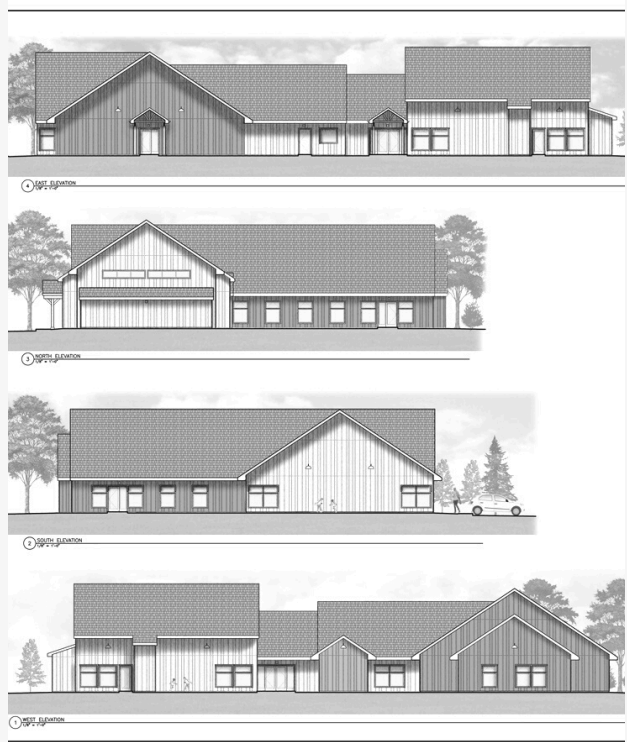


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# The Scott Bieler Rural Outreach Center

As many challenges as there are, the blessings are more abundant. We are so thankful to everyone who has given of themselves to make this dream come to life. In addition to each of you, there are many others that continue to step up. We are so grateful!

As we close in on our campaign goal, we continue to ask that local foundations help put us over the top by building the fund that will cover increased costs for materials. We are encouraged by the response that we have received and at the close of 2021 have several requests in for funding consideration.





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# Budget Breakdown

## Assets

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$2,725,825
Accounts Receivable	886,609
Property and Equipment, Net	793,009
Prepaid Expenses	17,070
<b>Total Assets*</b>	<b>\$4,422,513</b>

## Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$283,677
Accrued Expenses	\$16,300
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$299,977</b>

## Net Assets

Without Donor Restrictions	\$1,576,615
With Donor Restrictions	2,545,921
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$4,122,536</b>

**Total Liabilities and Net Assets** **\$4,422,513**

## Statement of Activities

### Public Support & Revenue

Grants	\$707,708
Contributions	2,380,673
Services	119,136
In-Kind	328,799
Special Events	60,756
Investment Income	20,698
<b>Total Public Support &amp; Revenue</b>	<b>\$3,617,770</b>

### Expenses

Program Services	\$897,028
Management & General	242,059
Fundraising	169,089
Capital Project	33,129
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,341,305</b>

**Change in Net Assets** **\$2,276,465**



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\*Includes funds that will be used for capital project

# THANK YOU!



ASSIST • EMPOWER • ELEVATE



RURAL OUTREACH CENTER

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[www.theroc.co](http://www.theroc.co)