

The Rural Outreach Center

**2024 Annual**

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**Report**

## ***From Our Executive Director***



Several years ago someone told me, “Frank, your problem is that you spend too much time focusing on the horizon and too little time looking back.”

I suppose there’s some truth in that. There’s also a truth that we may miss some important guidance by not looking at the past. An annual report is a great time to take a look back. Not just for the sake of nostalgia, but for guidance to look to the future.

The report you have in your hands highlights several important things: we continue to provide services and experiences that transform the lives of individuals and families and we have expanded our community development efforts in our rural service area. More revealing is the feedback we receive from our Participants.

***“You saved my child’s life and kept our family together.”***

***“On a child’s first visit, “This place is GREAT! Can I come back?”***

We continue to transform lives.

Looking back, we also see a waiting list for services that, unfortunately, is getting longer. Imagine telling a parent that it may take up to 4 months before we can engage your child.

To address this we have examined our processes from initial engagement, through initial assessments to first appointment to identify areas for more efficiency. We now have a much tighter process, but the list still keeps getting longer. We have opened satellite spaces in 3 elementary schools, but the list keeps getting longer. We have taken a financial risk and hired more staff, but the list keeps getting longer.

Truth is, we need more resources to hire and support more staff.

Sorry, I just had to look at the horizon...

## **From Our Executive Director**

Looking back again, we can see that our ROC Rural Development Hub will begin construction on an 8-unit affordable housing unit in N. Collins with another 6-unit rehabilitation project next door in the planning. We take great satisfaction in what we hope is the first of many projects to expand housing options in small, rural, communities. One of the long-term effects of these projects will be increased housing for the elderly who wish to spend their remaining years in their home communities. Similarly, affordable housing for families who simply wish to live in rural communities will change lives for generations.

Sorry, there I go again looking at the horizon. I can't help it. There is still so much to do to create thriving communities for people who are striving to improve their lives ...

I can't wait to see what next year's report will reveal.

With the help of so many individuals, businesses, foundations and others we CAN strive for the horizon and, together, we CAN help create change for our rural neighbors.

### ***Thank you for your support.***



**Frank Cerny, PhD., MDiv**

### **Board of Directors 2024**

Timothy Lafferty, Board President

Brian Maze, Treasurer

Jane Vosseller, Secretary

Katherine Daley

Vicki Feine

Amelia Hakes

John Hart

Sheret Jagord

Sean Merkel

William Owens, Jr.

Christye Peterson

Marcia Keller, Recording Secretary

## ***From Our Chief Operations Officer***



2024 was a year of growth, resilience, and hope at The Rural Outreach Center. As we continued our mission to break the cycle of rural poverty and empower individuals and families, we saw the power of the rural community come alive through every program, partnership, and success story.

This year, we expanded our reach, deepened our impact, and adapted to meet the evolving needs of those we serve. From launching new initiatives and expanding mental health services, to supporting those who are setting goals and working hard to meet those goals, the ROC remained a trusted resource for rural individuals and families seeking a path forward.

Our achievements in 2024 were only possible through the collective efforts of dedicated staff, volunteers, donors, and community partners. Together, we not only provided lifesaving services, but we built relationships that restore dignity, foster self-reliance, and create lasting change. We, together, are transforming lives.

This report offers a look back at the milestones, metrics, and Participant stories that defined 2024. We invite you to reflect with us on the impact we've made—and look ahead with us as we embrace what's next. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monique Albee Brannon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a distinct "M" at the beginning.

**Monique Albee Brannon**

## ***Staff Members 2024***

Dr. Frank Cerny, Executive Director

Monique Albee Brannon, Chief Operations Officer

Nichole Barrett

Sue Boyle

Nancy Ehlers

Maria Knickerbocker

Amelia Leggett

Emily Levin

Lisa Liedke

Amanda Quinn

Marnie Robel

Kelly Shanahan

Michele Venezia

Kelsey Welgoss

# Our Mission

The ROC's mission is to break the cycle of rural poverty by accompanying people toward self-sufficiency.

We assist, empower, and elevate.

## About The ROC

The Rural Outreach Center assists individuals by meeting acute needs and empowers individuals to become self-sufficient.

In any given month, The ROC has over 120 active Participants engaging with counseling, play therapy, and care coordination. They also engage in a variety of services and experiences that help build their confidence and their ability to move toward self-sufficiency.

# Sharing The Vision

The ROC Model - our innovative, wraparound approach to addressing rural poverty - continued to gain attention on a local and state level in 2024. In April, Children's Guild Foundation President Cathie Gura and Board Trustee Darci Cramer visited The ROC to see the continued impact their support has had on our children's clinical services. In September, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of WNY recognized us at a Community Hero at a Buffalo Bills game. In December, we welcomed New York State Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes, New York State Senator Patrick Gallivan, and New York State Senator George Borrello to The ROC to non-partisan support for individuals and families living in rural poverty across the state.



Assisting. Empowering. Elevating.

# Transforming Lives

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The ROC was here for our rural communities in 2024: From supporting a single mother as she took the necessary steps to bring her kids home from foster care to giving more than 30 kids the chance to play and explore all summer to helping a homeless man find employment and housing.

Rural poverty can be all-encompassing, impacting physical and mental health, emotional and social wellbeing, relationships, employment, education, and so much more. The ROC is here to support families and individuals in their individualized journeys toward self-sufficiency.

# 1,965

Counseling Sessions  
for Children

# 1,023

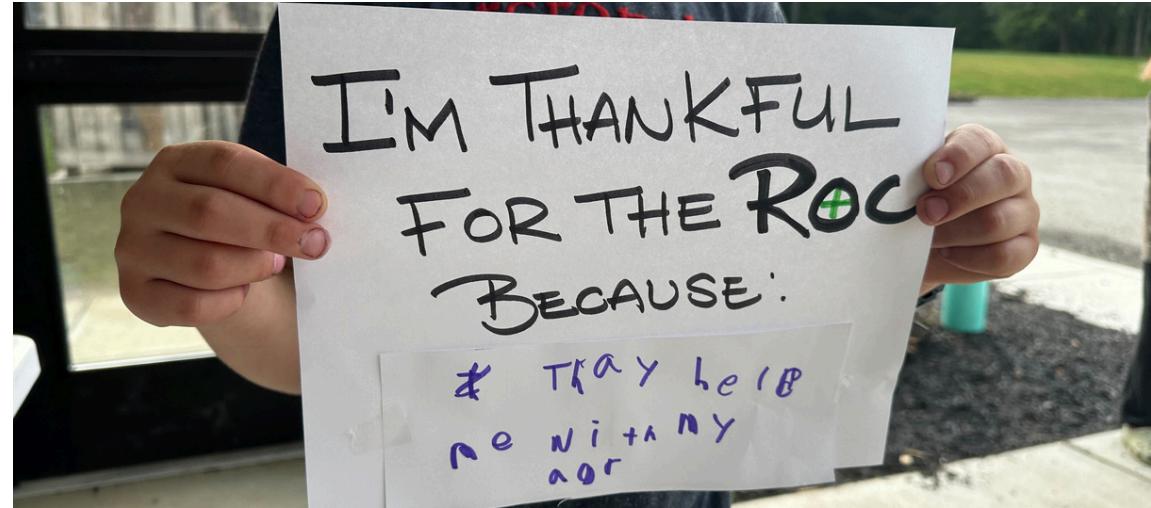
Counseling Sessions  
for Adults

# 26%

Increase in Counseling  
Sessions from 2023

# 217

Unique Individuals  
Received Counseling



# 20%

Increase in General,  
Housing, and Food  
insecurity related requests  
compared to 2023

# 96%

Achievement in Adult  
Participants whose Goal  
was to Improve or  
Maintain their Savings.

# 393

Care Coordination  
Sessions Provided

# 72%

Increase Between 2023 to  
2024 in Achievement for  
Adults whose Goal was to  
Increase their Total  
Income.



**270**

Children Received  
Winter Coats & Boots  
through Winter Prep  
Outreach

**3**

Good for the  
Neighborhood  
Community Health Fairs  
Hosted

**312**

Children Received New  
School Supplies &  
Backpacks

**160**

Turkeys Distributed to  
Families in Need for  
Thanksgiving, Thanks to  
Support from West Herr

**542**

Attendances at the Dream  
Big! Summer Experience

**323**

Children's Mentoring &  
Tutoring Sessions  
Provided

**30%**

Increase in Student  
Academic Stress & Mental  
Health Requests  
Compared to 2023

**70%**

increase in Children's Self-  
Confidence when  
Engaged with The ROC's  
Programming &  
Experiences



## The ROC Community Development Hub

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2024 saw the completion of The ROC Community Development Hub building. Our vision for The ROC Hub is that it becomes a rural community connector and grows as a trusted space where leaders, organizations, and municipalities can come together as collaborators to solve systemic challenges in our rural communities.

### Strategic Partnerships

Built stronger collaborations with regional rural systems, schools, and social service agencies to expand networks.

Partnered with local businesses and foundations to work to secure resources for communities as we tackle systemic challenges.

### Community Events & Visibility

The Hub's structure is designed to serve as a site for presentations, training, and community dialogues, raising awareness of rural poverty and solutions.

Transportation barriers remain a challenge for many families & individuals trying to access services, highlighting the need for creative solutions and collaboration.

The complexity of rural poverty requires a response that is collaborative, comprehensive connected and coordinated. The Hub provides the space for that to happen among all stakeholders.

# Making an Impact: Volunteers in 2024



Volunteers made a difference at The ROC in 2024. From individual volunteers who provided mentoring and tutoring support or helped out at events to school and youth groups giving back to businesses who spent a day with us getting projects checked off our to-do list, each and every volunteer helped The ROC carry out our mission. Thank you!

# Financials

## Assets

Cash and Cash Equivalents	2,646,766
Accounts Receivable	439.909
Property & Equipment, Net	4,287,109
Prepaid Expenses	16,371
Endowment	168,286
<b>Total Assets*</b>	<b>7,558,441</b>

## Net Assets

Without Donor Restrictions	4,255,608
With Donor Restrictions	2,918,246
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>7,173,854</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>7,558,441</b>

## Liabilities

Accounts Payable	10,397
Accrued Expenses	33,993
Deferred Revenue	340,197
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>384,587</b>

# Statement Of Activities

## Support & Revenue

Grants	739,277
Contributions	441,115
Services	367,909
Special Events, Net	45,959
Misc. Income	17,605
Investment Income	64,712
<b>Total Public Support &amp; Revenue</b>	<b>1,676,577</b>

## Expenses

Program Services	1,012,697
Management & General	469,508
Fundraising	102,919
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>1,585,124</b>

## Other Revenues & Expenses

Loss on Disposal of Assets	-6,228
Unrealized Gains of Investments	9,414
<b>Total Other Revenues &amp; Expenses</b>	<b>3,186</b>

## Change in Net Assets

Change in Net Assets	94,639
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“The ROC helps  
you with  
everything you  
need.”

- A ROC child Participant



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THE RURAL OUTREACH CENTER, INC.



ASSISTING • EMPOWERING • ELEVATING



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