

Project URGE, Inc.



2018 Annual Report

Project URGE, Inc.
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<https://www.facebook.com/urgeousphere/>



2018 was a year full of endings and new beginnings! The summer started out on a high note when we gratefully accepted a Direct Service Award from the Healthy Baby Network! Then In August, after five years of providing furniture and appliances to those who did not

have the means to purchase them and dealing with plenty of issues with transportation, storage, and manpower, we discontinued our Furnished 4 Life furniture ministry and closed our thrift store. As difficult as this was, it enabled us to drastically cut costs and focus our energies on moms and babies in our Mothers In Need of Others ministry.

As the summer came to a close, some environmental issues in the building we were in necessitated a move to another location. Again, when God closed the door on one place, He opened a very fortuitous window in another place! That place just happened to be only five minutes away! With the assistance of Ricardo Jones, Jacob Deyo, and the team from Everyone Matters, we were able to move out of our old location on Mount Hope quickly and get settled into our beautiful new space in the Youth for Christ building at 1 Favor Street in October. We now collaborate on a regular basis with Parent Life, YFC's teen moms program. And the location just happens to be central to most of the agencies we've been working with already as well!



We now collaborate on a regular basis with Parent Life, YFC's teen moms program, run by Jeannie Slaughter. Working with Jeannie has been such a pleasure! This is what Jeannie had to say about working with MINO!

"I began working for Rochester Youth for Christ in April, 2018, as the Program Coordinator for Parent Life, whose focus is to provide supportive services to adolescent parents and their children. As I began to make connections with agencies that I could collaborate with, in support of my client base, Maria Wehrle of MINO, was one of the first people that I contacted, and what a blessing. Although Maria's primary interface is with agencies, she works very hard to make sure that as many requests as possible are honored so that clients for those agencies can get what they need in a timely manner. Often times, I have gone to her, when I had a teen mom had an emergency need for diapers/wipes, a pack and play or car seat. If Maria had it in stock, she would say, "here you go, what else do you need". Maria is very passionate about what she does, and when her supplies gets low, she sends out an SOS, and because of her reputation in the community, there is an immediate response. I know from personal experience, if it had not been for MINO and the support I have gotten for the teen moms in my program, the situation for these teen moms could have been so much worse than they already are, especially during the holiday season. I am sure, that if you talked to other agencies, they would echo the same sentiment, and express how important MINO is to the community, and the population we serve."

Jeannie Slaughter
Parent Life Program Coordinator
Rochester Youth For Christ

In the two months since moving into our new space, things are really starting to blossom! The location just happens to be central to most of the agencies we've been working with already!

We are also making new connections with agencies, church ministries, and more schools in the Rochester City School District providing their teen moms with maternity and baby products and their families with feminine and personal hygiene, cleaning and paper products. Our diaper distribution is rapidly expanding! Just the other day, we received a HUGE donation of diapers from Avon United Methodist Church's Women's Group and the very same day a group of students from Williamson High School came to help us sort and pack baby clothes and diapers and research services in the Rochester area for us! They also brought diapers and wipes to help fill our donation shelves.



We are pleased to announce that MINO will soon be a major distributor of feminine and personal hygiene products in collaboration with national organizations like the P.A.D. Project, Scensibles Bags, and I Support the Girls to social service agencies, churches, and students in the Rochester City School District.

With all of the changes and challenges that this year has brought us both personally and professionally, we decided to hold off on our annual Christmas Store event this year. But we are taking notes and are brainstorming ideas for next year!

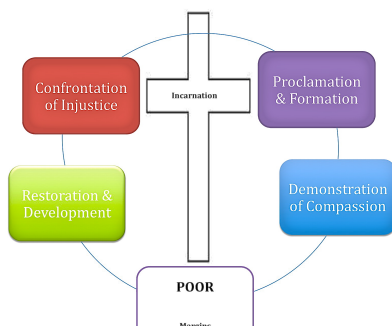
In January of 2019, MINO will be launching our own website to highlight our partnerships, fundraising efforts, and ministry events. In an attempt to promote the financial sustainability of the ministry, we are going to start offering a couple of new opportunities for donors to support our efforts and help provide needed items for the families from the agencies we serve. We will be introducing Welcome Boxes full of personal hygiene and cleaning products and Lullaby Boxes with baby items for the new mom and moms-to-be! A suggested donation of \$30 will enable a donor to sponsor a Welcome Box and a \$60 offering will cover the cost of a Lullaby Box for under-resourced families. If you would like to sponsor a box for a family in need, go to the MINO page on the Project URGE website at <https://projecturge.org/mino> and click on the appropriate boxes.



In closing, we would like to thank everyone who reached out with donations, prayers, and words of encouragement to see us through this challenging, yet rewarding year! Your gifts of love enable us to continue to do what God has called us to do!

Maria Wehrle
Mothers In Need of Others – Team Leader
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<https://www.facebook.com/MINO.Rochester/>

Kingdom Work by Noel Castellanos (ccda.org)



Free to Fly
Closing Report to Project URGE, Inc.



In September 2018 we found it necessary to close Free to Fly. We officially began in 2014 with a very generous donation from the Knights of Columbus in Webster of \$8,000 and a \$2,000 gift from St. Christopher's Church in North Chili. Our mission was to provide opportunities for personal growth and education for low-income people in order to eliminate barriers to individual self-sufficiency. Our belief was that the disparity in economic advantages for the working poor was due in large part to lack of access to resources. Therefore, our goal was to empower Participants to seek out the vast number of resources available to them. Participants were accepted into the program if they had work experience and/or were looking for work, had high school degrees, and indicated they were committed to self-improvement. The foundations of our program were:

1. Have participants establish their own goals.
 2. Hold bi-monthly group meetings. Using curriculum we purchased, "Choosing to Thrive", we offered training, workshops, and seminars in topics such as: habits, choices & change, healthy behaviors, becoming resilient, living your values, conflict resolution, improving the job search, money management.
 3. Assign personal coaches to each participant. Coaches met with participants outside of group meetings as friends to talk about goals, progress and barriers.
 4. Connect participants to other local resources appropriate for their goals.
- Participants invested in themselves by paying participant fees (\$5 monthly) and volunteered in the community.
5. The program offered free food and household goods to help Participants better use their disposable income for long-term goals.

A few key accomplishments were:

* 15 participants in the program: 3 graduated having accomplished their goals, 1 moved, 4 continue to meet as a support group, 7 left the program

* 14 coaches trained and assigned to participants

*We aligned ourselves with community resources and agencies that offered us professional advice and/or tangible goods. A few of these were:

- Project URGE was our "parent" organization, a 501-C organization dedicated to linking other non-profits together to better serve those in poverty including enlisting suburban churches to serve in the Rochester City neighborhoods.
- Advantage Federal Credit Union provided financial literacy training, a \$1,000 grant for the part of the curriculum we purchased, and ongoing professional assistance
- Foodlink, Focus Plus, YWCA, OASES, ABC, Catholic Family Center, Roberts Wesleyan College, St. John Fisher College, Consumer Credit Counseling Services, S&D Automotive Service, Farmers Insurance, Reliant Community FCU, Monroe

County Dept. of Family Services- Self- sufficiency unit, City of Rochester NE
Service Center, Rochester Works, United Way, Willow

The majority of all our funding went toward rent. We initially rented meeting space and warehouse space on Tremont Street for \$350 per month. In 2017, we moved to The Pillar on Mt Hope Avenue for \$50 per month but had no separate meeting space and no warehouse space there. We had no paid employees but were blessed to have many volunteers who served 4,315 hours since 2014. Given the dedication and enthusiasm of our volunteers, the number of “heart” hours spent in prayer and personal sacrifice are immeasurable but I am sure are eternally counted. With participant fees, we purchased Dave Ramsey’s Path to Financial Peace curriculum and were able to gift back to them \$100 each for their emergency funds at our closing. We closed our account by holding a closing dinner for all participants and coaches, donating \$500 to the Knights of Columbus,

We learned quite a bit from this endeavor. One of our biggest lessons has been that when people want to improve their economic situation, it's not easy in NYS for them to be motivated enough to change. Change is hard for most people anyway. In our model, we were asking people to change attitudes, behaviors, and even some cultural practices. We have seen people with very little, wanting more but coming to the realization that change is too risky for them. In NYS, there are too many safety nets and not enough motivation. People receiving assistance are not incentivized to move out of poverty. On the contrary, as they make more money, their assistance is taken away and they end up with fewer resources than if they had stayed on assistance. Our small, volunteer organization could not provide what would be necessary to counter that system. It requires a lot more infrastructure than a volunteer organization can offer.

I still believe our model was right; it was Biblical. I’m proud of what we did accomplish. We are so grateful that Project URGE gave us the opportunity to love our neighbor as ourselves and reach out to people who wanted a helping hand. Thank You Project URGE!

Very truly yours,

Marcia O’Brien Founder, Team Leader of Free to Fly



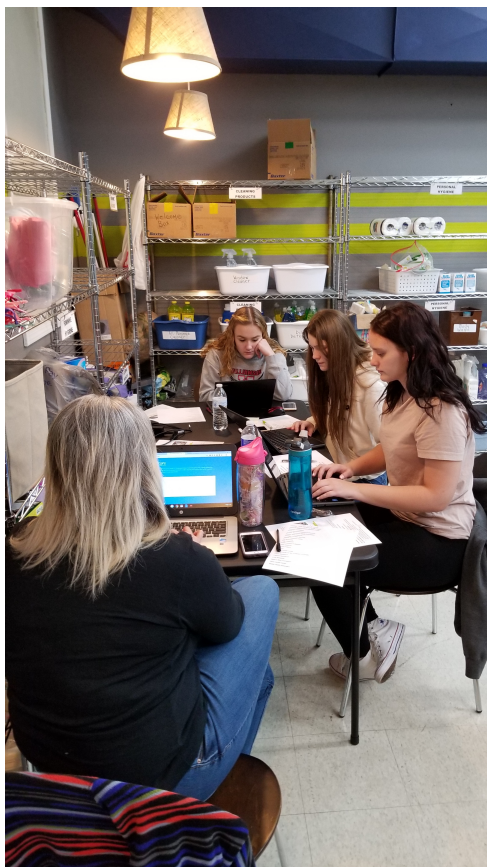
Volunteer Coordination:

Once again the highlight of lining up volunteer opportunities came through working with our friends from Williamson High School, who came to serve non-profits in Rochester for two days in 2018. In the thirteen years of volunteering we have had only a few minor glitches. It has provided non-profits with some valuable volunteer hours and the students with some truly compelling experiences that will lead them to know the value of giving back to the community.

Williamson High School served about ten different organizations this year through organizations like Foodlink, Cameron Ministries, Project URGE, Community Lutheran Ministry, The Pillar, REACH, Gerhardt Neighborhood Outreach Center and more! Not only were the students a blessing, but the teachers and administrators who volunteered were also an incredible help with painting, sorting, preparing meals and even working to create an incredible resource list for Project URGE, that will also be shared with many other organizations.

Since the Christmas Store was not in operation this year, we were not able to plug in as many volunteers as is customary around Christmas.

Not as many people contacted us this year in regard to serving; however, we did have many people from the Pillar and the homeless community help us move to our new location.



Diversity Café

Submitted by Garry Manuel

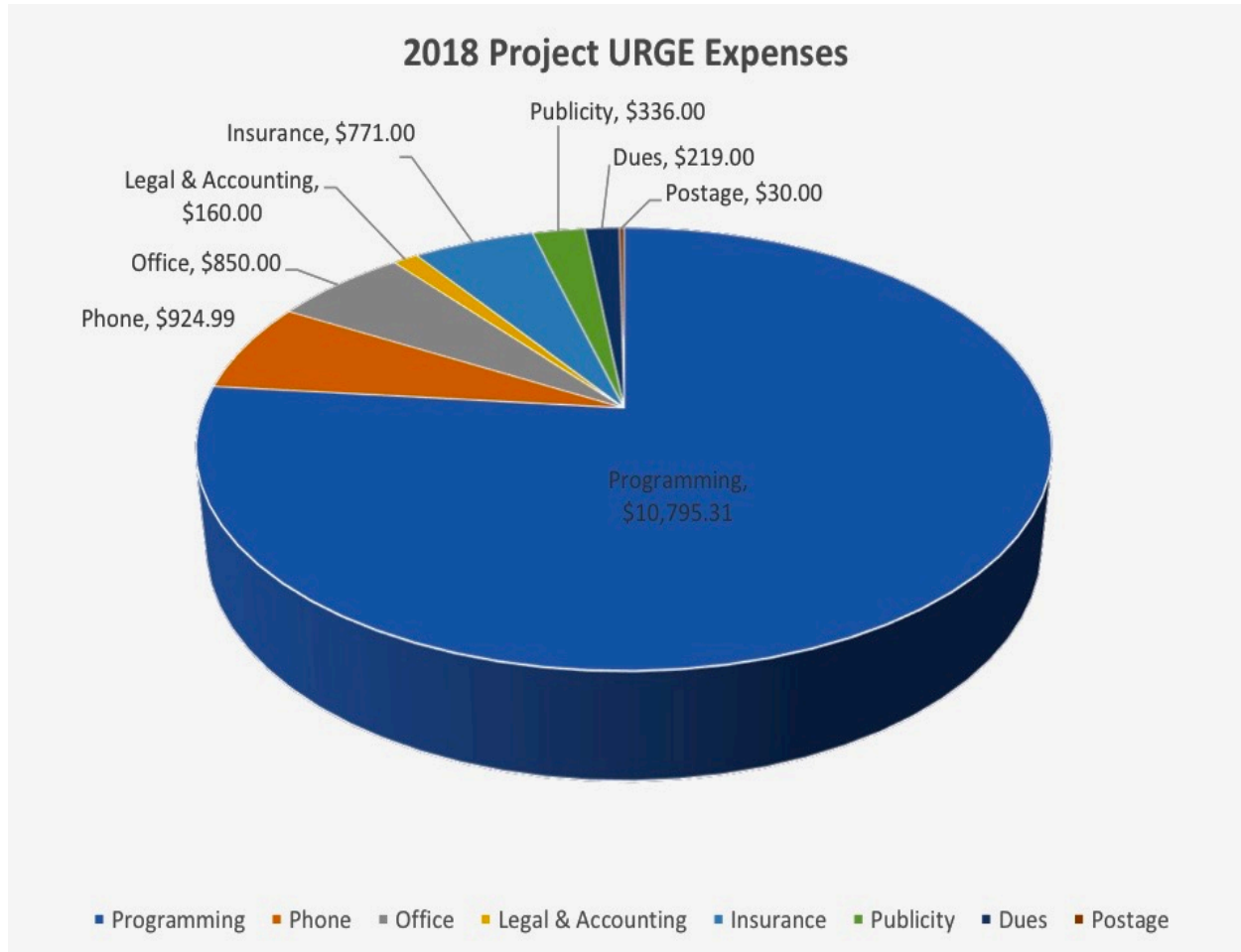


Project URGE has had several installments of Diversity Café over the past several years. 2018 proved to be the most engaging. In spring we began reading Michelle Alexander's book, *The New Jim Crow*. The group had decided that they wanted to delve into current issues that also led to a better understanding of how our historic past has delivered us to this point. The topic of racism and the affect on our society as well as the church are an important focus. The group meets the third Saturday of each month and scheduled social time, having dinner at Livie's Jamaican Restaurant (pictured above) and Shimmy's.

The group would often run overtime due to people being so engaged in dialogue or just desiring to socialize at the conclusion. The turn out for each session was consistently around 9 to 10 participants. When we closed out our sessions for 2018, everyone in the group indicated that they wanted to continue with the group for 2019.

Our goal of becoming more informed through the many points shared in the book, also led to sharing personal stories and helped us to organically develop relationships. Through the discussion questions our hopes and goals were being realized, which included: 1) becoming more informed about our racial history, 2) building confidence in sharing what we had learned, 3) developing friendships, and 4) praying for one another and our community. Garry Manuel led the final ¾ of the year and in 2019 the baton is being passed to Christina McGill. We also anticipate beginning a second group.

Project URGE, Inc. Finances



We are so grateful to our donors that support us, not only with their finances, but also in writing encouraging notes and praying for our ministry throughout the year. Thank you so much!

Churches & Ministries:

Church of the Assumption
Community of the Savior
Fairport United Methodist Church
Kingdom Bound Ministries
Upper NY Annual Conference of the UMC

Individuals:

Tim & Susan Beck, Charlie and Barb Castilano, Glenn and Rebecca Fadner, Joan Feinbloom, Karen Hartnett, David Honness, Wayne Magaw, Garry & Mary Manuel, Lynne Manuel, John McNeill, Cindy Mead, James & Suzanne Savard, Katherine Suddaby, Jeff Telle and Ron & Catherine Tocci