



# Seeds of Change

lutheran metropolitan ministry

2024 Volume XXXII Issue 1

## REENTRY WEEK 2024

Sunday, April 21 – Saturday, April 27

Returning Home

Creating Wellness

Rebuilding Community

LMM invites you to join in the activities and initiatives during the annual Reentry Week, organized by the Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry. LMM is a proud community partner, along with others in the reentry space. This year's theme is *Returning Home, Creating Wellness, and Rebuilding Community*.

The County is dedicated to raising awareness in our community about the many barriers faced by justice-involved individuals and their families. Each year, the County's Reentry Week events and programs take a holistic look into the impact of incarceration on family units and communities. There is a large focus on events that highlight juvenile justice, adult restoration, and the many resources available for a successful reintegration.



Scan the QR code to learn how LMM is involved in a culinary competition during Reentry Week, and to find out more details. [www.lutheranmetro.org](http://www.lutheranmetro.org)



Yusef Dahl

## 2024 Charles R. See Forum on Reentry

Featuring Keynote Speaker Yusef Dahl, Bradbury Dyer '64  
*Director of Entrepreneurship and Innovation at Lafayette College  
& Co-Founder of Real Estate Lab*

CITY CLUB OF CLEVELAND – FRIDAY, APRIL 26  
11:30 AM – Doors Open / 12 PM – Forum Begins

Please join LMM for our annual Charles R. See Forum on Reentry, held at The City Club of Cleveland. The annual forum, which is endowed thanks to several generous donors, honors See's 44 years at LMM and brings attention to current issues in the field of criminal justice.

Each year, a keynote speaker is featured at the forum to spread awareness around criminal legal system reform and to share about their work and/or lived experience with reentry. We're proud to announce this year's keynote speaker, Yusef Dahl. From poverty to crime. From prison to Princeton. From entrepreneur to educator. You won't want to miss our featured speaker.

Visit [www.lutheranmetro.org](http://www.lutheranmetro.org) for the latest forum information.



## emerging LEADERS

Two LMM staff members are the recipients of grants totaling \$30,000 for special projects and leadership development training. The We Raise Foundation provides resources and grants to Christian-based nonprofits, including LMM. We Raise was one of the original funders of the Chopping for Change program in 2015. Now, they are investing in the work of LMM in a new and innovative way by elevating the education and programmatic passion of two staff members who are taking their professional passions to the next level. The Emerging Leader Grant has been awarded to Elizabeth Stiles, Academic Programs Manager for the Workforce Development program, and Gloria Craig, Community Engagement Coordinator in the Office of Advocacy at LMM.

Each woman was awarded a grant for \$15,000, to fund both the project itself, and leadership development training.



ELIZABETH STILES



GLORIA CRAIG

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

### Digging Deeper: Participant Observation Study of Expanding Chopping for Change (C4C) to Male Students in Grafton Correctional Facility

LMM has specific experience developing and implementing workforce services and career pathways for reentry populations. Staff are truly invested in the evolution of programming and broadening the reach of life-changing services.

In the last year, the Chopping for Change program expanded to include incarcerated men. Ms. Stiles' Digging Deeper project is facilitating a participant observation study that will work to identify, strategize, and address the key challenges male workforce development program participants experience during their reentry journey from incarceration to community reintegration. Specific areas of assessment include the types of behavioral supports or trauma-informed care needed to nurture a successful community reintegration, the ability to access safe, affordable housing, and the types of employment opportunities available to men in the program.

"Ultimately it is my goal to produce an article and seek publication," says Stiles. "The article will center on how we adjusted our approach to serve men, especially in our Therapeutic program, where we had been using a women-specific curriculum." Stiles is working on the concrete findings regarding the therapeutic programming. So far in her research, she has found that reentry barriers are the same as ones faced by women – securing jobs, housing, and navigating family reunification.

## DOCUMENTARY PROJECT

*A Walk in My Shoes* is a short documentary film directed by Gloria Craig. With Ms. Craig's grant funding for the production of the film, she focused on the topic of homelessness. While many believe homelessness to be specific to individuals who are addicts or who live on the street, this short film opens the door for a boarder conversation.

Ms. Craig hopes to inspire viewers to pose questions that challenge the views on what homelessness is traditionally thought to be. What does it really look like to experience homelessness? What does it mean to have a "home"?

This film shares stories of individuals who have, or are currently experiencing homelessness, through vulnerable, personal interviews. It gives perspective to the reality of what can lead people to this experience of housing instability, and how it can look different for everyone.

You can follow us on social media to learn more about upcoming opportunities to view this film in the near future, and to find out the results of the Digging Deeper project.



Reentry isn't a concept Malika Kidd ever thought would be part of her life journey, but incarceration for a drug offense, over a decade ago, changed everything. Years later, Malika is the Director of Workforce Development at LMM. She runs the Chopping for Change culinary reentry program, is a sought-after subject matter expert who travels the country speaking on the topic, and is an advocate for herself and others on their reentry journey. Whether she's receiving her college degree, or attending church on Sunday, she often refers to herself as walking in her purpose. At LMM, we are so glad we are part of her purpose. As we forge into Reentry Week, we're happy to introduce you to Malika.

## Walking in Her Purpose

*As someone with lived experience who now does exceptional work in reentry, how did your involvement in the criminal legal system inform the trajectory of your career?*

As someone with lived experience who now excels in the reentry field, my journey through the criminal legal system deeply informs my career trajectory. Having experienced the challenges of reintegration firsthand, I am intimately aware of the barriers individuals face upon release, from

employment to housing, due to their criminal records. My personal struggles have fueled my passion and commitment to improving reentry outcomes for others. I bring a unique perspective to my work, understanding the systemic issues at play and advocating for meaningful change in policies and practices that impact individuals with justice involvement.

*What are some of the ways you're involved in reentry on a national level?*

My involvement in reentry extends beyond my local community to the national level. As a member of the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice (NABCJ), I

participate in conferences, forums, and advocacy efforts aimed at advancing equity and justice in the criminal legal system. I have been honored to speak at various events, sharing my experiences and insights to inform discussions on reentry policy, best practices, and community engagement. I have either attended, presented, or spoken on panels at National Conference on Higher Education in Prisons, Bureau of Justice Assistance Building Skills for Improved Employment and Reentry Services Symposium, and the Association of Justice-Involved Females and Organizations to name a few.

I sit on the Board of Cuyahoga County Board of Health, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. I am part of the Northeast Ohio Workforce Coalition and Greater Cleveland Reentry Leadership Coalition. Serving on boards and committees dedicated to addressing issues of reentry, criminal justice reform, and social justice helps in leveraging my expertise and perspective to influence positive change on a broader scale.



*You've been with LMM since the inception of the Chopping for Change program. How have you seen reentry change in Cuyahoga County since then?*

Since the inception of the Chopping for Change program at LMM, I've witnessed significant progress in reentry efforts in Cuyahoga County. There has been a growing recognition of the importance of providing comprehensive support and

opportunities for individuals returning to the community after incarceration. Programs like Chopping for Change have demonstrated the efficacy of innovative approaches to reentry, focusing on skill-building, education, and empowerment. Additionally, there has been increased collaboration among stakeholders, including nonprofits, government agencies, and community members, to address the multifaceted challenges of reintegration.

For incarcerated adults to be able to go out to high-end restaurants to make a living wage shows huge strides in the change in reentry. While there is still much work to be done, I'm encouraged by the steps forward we've taken in promoting successful reentry and reducing recidivism.

In addition, I was recently selected to be on a jury panel despite my lived experience and the work we do at LMM. Going from sitting in a defendant's seat to a juror seat was transformative in and of itself, and shows changes in Cuyahoga County.

*What can people do to support reentry in their own communities?*

Supporting reentry in communities requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the complex needs of individuals returning from incarceration. One crucial way

people can contribute is by advocating for policies and practices that promote successful reintegration, such as fair hiring practices, access to affordable housing, and educational opportunities. Community members can also support reentry organizations and initiatives through volunteering, mentoring, and providing resources to help individuals navigate the challenges of reentry. Building supportive networks and fostering inclusive communities are essential in creating pathways to opportunity and reducing barriers for individuals with justice involvement.





# Housing Solutions

## Announcing the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program

To kick off the new year, the Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services (OHS) announced a new initiative to address youth and young adult homelessness, and LMM is proud to be a part of the solution.

OHS has partnered with A Place 4 Me Collaborative, the REACH Youth Planning Board, and other community partners to craft the *The REACHing for New Heights* plan, with invaluable input from youth and young adults with lived experience. The plan outlines two interventions that will be led by LMM in collaboration with these community partners.

The first program, Transitional Housing-Rapid Rehousing, will expand safe and stable housing options for people under the age of 24. Meanwhile, the Navigation program will offer outreach and support to young people seeking to access resources and regain stability. Both programs are funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.



*LMM's Michael Sering, VP of Housing & Shelter, speaks at the public YHDP announcement celebration in January.*

## Housing is the solution to homelessness, but what happens when there's a lack of both cash and available housing stock for individuals experiencing housing instability?

LMM runs the largest shelter in the state of Ohio, the Men's Shelter at 2100 Lakeside. We work with residents of the shelter on their journey to employment and housing, but some face barrier after barrier to self-sufficiency. We're now on a journey at LMM to find solutions to homelessness, by identifying the issues individuals face and deploying initiatives to solve those problems. To date, we see that these methods are working.

### ***DIRECT CASH TRANSFER (DCT)***

LMM recognizes the overarching cause of homelessness is poverty, and therefore, financial challenges are often the largest barrier to exiting shelter. Shelter residents can successfully reunite with friends or family or find housing if they simply have funds for lodging and meals.

In 2021, LMM piloted a DCT program where individuals with confirmed destinations (usually to friends or family) were given \$600 cash and agreed they would not return to shelter for at least 60 days. Funds were available for 18 months, and between LMM, Norma Herr Women's Center, and the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless (NEOCH), 350 individuals were served. An astounding 92% of people (322) did not return to shelter for the agreed upon 60 days. 65% of people (230) never returned to shelter, and found permanent housing placements. The low cost of this intervention makes it one of the most cost-effective housing solutions available for ending homelessness.

### ***TRANSITION IN PLACE (TIP)***

TIP is a permanent housing model based on a program created by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The goal of LMM TIP is for people to be placed in a privately-owned apartment that is master leased by LMM, and the shelter client can stay in the exact unit when they take over the lease for themselves, completing the program. It allows for property owner security regarding rental obligation, and opportunity for high barrier individuals to obtain housing who property owners otherwise might not rent to. To date, 19 people have gone through the program, and only two have returned to shelter.



Furnishing design by Claire Billingsley @odetoanabode

## Breaking New Ground Affordable Housing Update!

The innovative rental model is a five-year project now in its final year. We're making some serious strides in housing more families exiting homelessness. Thanks to donors like you, our families are looking forward to a better, more stable future.

LMM continues to purchase and renovate 20 housing units (single and duplex homes) in the St. Clair-Superior neighborhood. The families are eligible for the new housing program, with LMM as the landlord, and will have affordable rents and connections to supportive services. A Family Stability Fund will assist families who may experience unexpected hardships, so that they avoid eviction and continue to thrive.



- 20** Total Units to be acquired by end of year: **20 units**
- 8** Families are in their own homes!  
Fully renovated, furnished & occupied: 2 duplexes & 4 single-family, **totaling 8 housing units**
- 4** Near completion: 2 duplexes, **totaling 4 units**
- 3** Renovations Started: 1 duplex & 1 single family, **totaling 3 units**

# Pairing Reentry & Housing

## DID YOU KNOW?

The most comprehensive research study on the impact of criminal background on tenancy comes from the Wilder Foundation in Minnesota, who produced the Wilder Report. They basically found no difference in successful tenancy of those with or without reentry backgrounds.

People who are homeless face many barriers to housing, such as some property owners screening them out for poor credit, source of income discrimination, a previous eviction, or from a criminal background check, including denial due to a past misdemeanor. LMM knows that even with such challenges, people should have access to quality, affordable housing. To ensure such critical access, LMM does not screen people out, and we refer to this as fair chance housing, low barrier housing, or open housing. This is surely a "next practice" in Justice Housing.

"While LMM believes in these concepts because it's the right thing to do, it's helpful to know research backs up this important work."

— Michael Sering,  
LMM Vice President,  
Housing & Shelter



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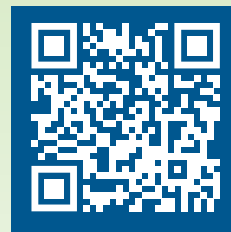
To add, delete or change your address, contact 216.696.1882 or mail@lutheranmetro.org.

Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry’s advocacy work informs systems change at the local, state and federal level. In 2024, one of the core values that is driving our advocacy work is *returning citizens deserve second chances*.

Keeping this core value in mind, two of LMM’s advocacy priorities for 2024 are:

- Advance policies that support the best possible outcomes for those involved in the criminal legal system
- Reduce collateral sanctions and create smooth paths to reentry and reintegration into society

To support LMM and our advocacy efforts, follow the QR code below



To learn more about LMM’s Advocacy Mission, Vision, and 2024 Priorities, follow the QR code below

