



UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, INC.

ANNUAL
REPORT

2023

MISSION

The mission of Underground Railroad is to empower survivors & create a culture of safety and respect in our community.

PHILOSOPHY

Abuse is damaging to individuals and to society as a whole. Abuse is rooted in a social structure that produces significant inequities in roles, relationships, resources, and power between women, men, and children. Abuse is criminal conduct, which cannot be tolerated. Prevention through education, advocacy and appropriate intervention is the ultimate goal. All victims should be provided safety and must be treated with dignity and respect. Interventions that blame the victim and do not hold the abuser accountable for the violence are ineffective and inappropriate. We shall encourage and advance the empowerment of victims and seek social change, which addresses the existing imbalance of power within violent relationships. We believe that to make informed choices for themselves and their children, victims should have access to safety, information about abuse, available options, and community resources. To carry out their decisions, victims of abuse may require support and advocacy that respects their right to self-determination. To this end the Underground Railroad will provide leadership in our community on issues affecting survivors and be accountable to survivors.



A letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Three years later we are still seeing the effects of the COVID era as survivor need is up state and nationwide, and many of the funding supports that were put in place are ending. I continue to have pride every day at the amazing resiliency of the survivors we serve, and the dedication of our staff to provide trauma-informed resources and care during these difficult times. Despite continued trials, 2023 also brought significant celebrations. This year marked 40 years of service for board member Mari McKenzie who has been part of Underground Railroad's volunteer leadership since 1983. Mari has overseen significant growth in this organization, and continues to help shape its sustainability both fiscally and through comprehensive and innovative

programming. We were honored to recognize Mari at our 2023 Empowerment Dinner & Celebration for her contributions and achievements not only with Underground Railroad, but for women in business, and in advocating for female-centered humanitarian efforts worldwide. Her longtime leadership is at least partially why Underground Railroad received a near perfect score on a peer-reviewed Quality Assurance Standards Review this year. Every five years Underground Railroad's policies and programming are evaluated by state-appointed service providers who review facility safety, service delivery, financial management, staff and volunteer management, community and fund development, and agency governance. It is an arduous

process of compiling and submitting materials, providing tours of agency spaces, and hosting individual interviews with members of all departments. I am incredibly proud of my staff for their hard work both through this process, and in the years before that helped earn this score. As we move into the next year Underground Railroad is on solid footing to continue life saving programs for survivors of abuse in Saginaw County, and the education and awareness that will one day bring an end to domestic and sexual violence in our region.

Sincerely,
Christi Birchmeier

Christi Birchmeier
Executive Director

Quality Assurance Standards Review

In the first quarter of the fiscal year, Underground Railroad participated in the Quality Assurance Standards Review by the State of Michigan Division of Victim Services. The governor appointed Michigan Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention and Treatment Board is mandated to develop standards for the implementation and administration of services. Organizations that receive funding are monitored through a peer driven process that relies on individuals with extensive experience working in domestic and sexual violence service organizations. The Quality Assurance Standards describe what is expected and required of organizations that receive funding from the Board, and are a blueprint that guides towards excellence in programming. Underground Railroad received a near perfect score on the review, and commendations are shared throughout this report.



Board of Directors

CHRISTI BIRCHMEIER—PRESIDENT
Underground Railroad, Inc.

DAWN BOUCHER
Mannor Group

DAVID BROWN
Isabella Bank

TERRI CARMICHAEL —CHAIR
Wells Fargo Advisors

DARLENE KRUMPHOLZ—SECRETARY
Wildfire Credit Union

MARI MCKENZIE—TREASURER
Retired, Yeo & Yeo

ERIC NEUMEYER
My Member Insurance Agency

JAMIE NISIDIS
Braun Kendrick

KATHY MORENO
Morley Companies

JAY PEPLINSKI—VICE CHAIR
Glastender, Inc.

EMMA ROGERS
Future Insurance Agency

JEN WYSONG
Independent Bank

STRATEGIC

PILLARS

1

PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY, ACCESSIBLE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- 24/7 Crisis Helpline
- Emergency Shelter
- Advocacy & Counseling
- Court Support
- Housing Assistance
- Youth Services
- Safe Visitation & Exchange

2

CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS THAT SUPPORT A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO ASSIST SURVIVORS & PREVENT VIOLENCE

- K-12 Healthy Relationship Curriculum
- Community Education & Training
- Mid-Michigan Human Trafficking Task Force
- Girls on the Run

3

DEVELOP A SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE BASE TO SUPPORT CURRENT & FUTURE OPERATIONS

- Donor Relations
- Fundraising Events
- Volunteering
- Underground Railroad Resale





DIRECT SERVICE COMMENDATIONS

Underground Railroad was recognized for its thoughtful approach to providing services in a culturally honoring and inclusive manner. The review team found that URR intentionally creates warm, welcoming and inclusive spaces at all locations. Underground Railroad was commended for its continued attention to its physical space, including a creative approach to enhancing confidentiality and the overall trauma-informed atmosphere. The review team commended URR's practice of working with survivors to remove barriers through mobile advocacy, and its ability to recognize and incorporate the needs of children impacted by domestic violence in programming. The review team also commended URR for pet friendly policies and pet accommodations, clean, open, and stimulating spaces for survivors' pets.

12,304
nights of shelter

2,997
crisis calls

529
PPOs filed

3,400
court hearings
attended

4,870
hours of group &
individual counseling

113
families received
housing assistance

93
families used
Safeplace Visitation

1,998
hours of free
childcare

3,830

K-12 students
learned
about healthy
relationships

270

girls were
inspired
through Girls
on the Run

232

community
education &
public relations
event

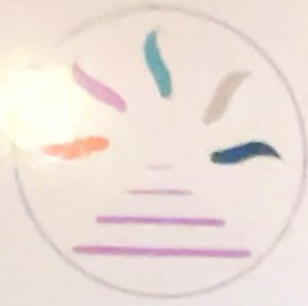
4,122

downloads of
the Touchy
Subjects
podcast



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMENDATIONS

The review team recognized the integral role and efforts of Underground Railroad's passionate, committed team in the success of the organization's community engagement activities. URR was commended for the many collaborative relationships it has fostered, and for incorporating the use of community reviews, indicating strong community support. The review team observed strong evidence of URR's outreach to unserved, underserved, marginalized, and culturally specific communities. The review team commended the creative and diverse public awareness engagement activities, including presentations and podcasts, developed to engage a range of community stakeholders. URR's community engagement program was recommended as a model impact program for its coordination and strides toward overall social impact.



Change Maker

at Saginaw County, MI

I am an Advocate For Change!

#supportsurvivors #makeadifference

#doyourpart #SaginawLeaders



You & 1977 people

41 comments

DONOR DEVELOPMENT COMMENDATIONS

Underground Railroad was recognized for its recent focus on survivor-driven fund development. The review team commended Underground Railroad for its recent shift from a focus on fundraising events to a focus on enhanced engagement to promote its mission and long-term sustainability. Underground Railroad was commended for its expansive and meaningful use of volunteers, including the engagement of one-time volunteer groups, interns and others that support all areas of the organization.

\$103,665

was donated to annual fundraisers

774

volunteers assisted with project needs

12,826

volunteer hours were donated

\$128,444

worth of merchandise was donated to Underground Railroad Resale

\$35,614

worth of resale store vouchers were redeemed by clients

180

adults and children were adopted through holiday giving programs



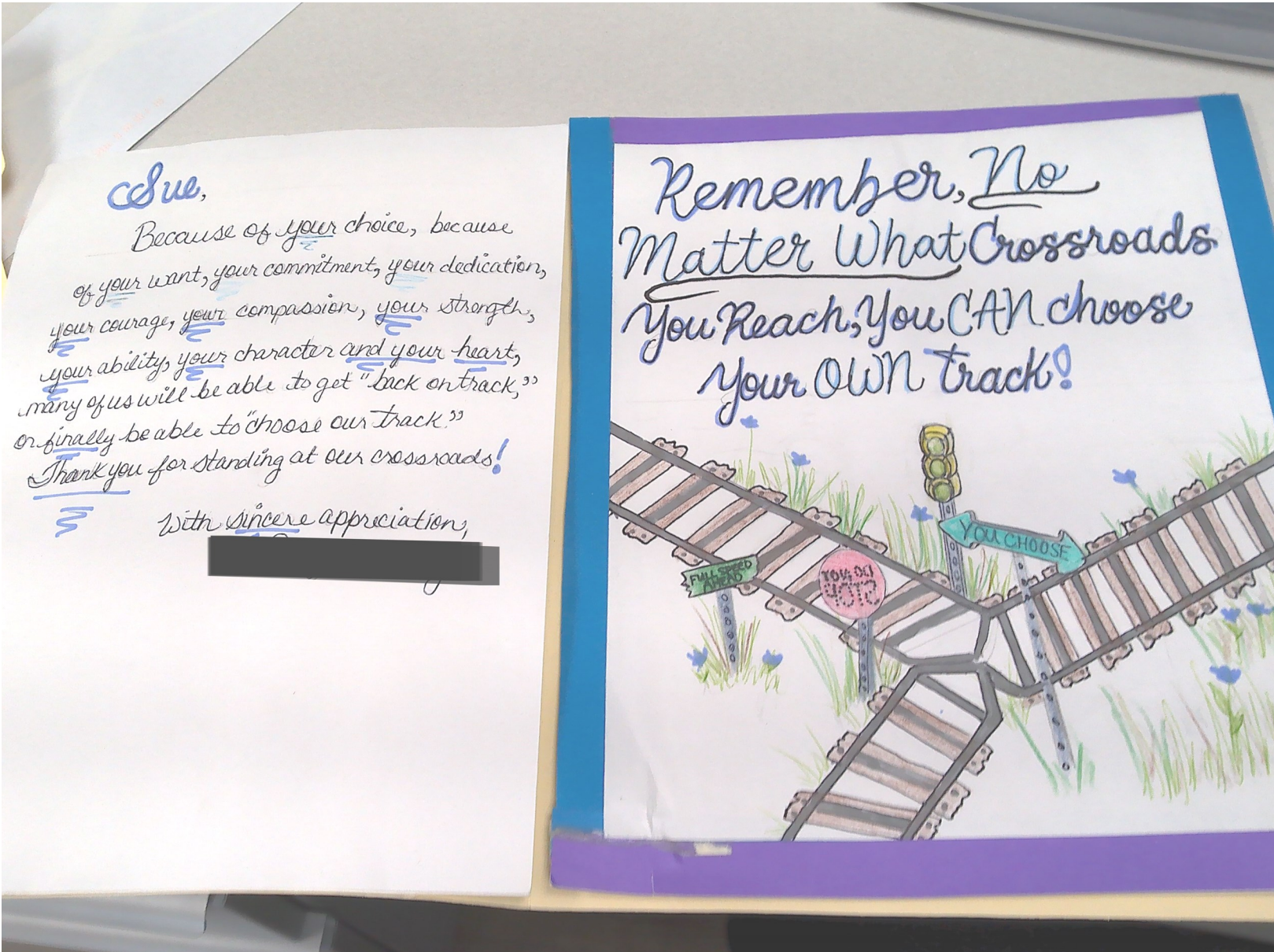
Kelsey met with URR staff to file for a Personal Protection Order against her partner who had sexually assaulted her just a few days prior. She had received an exam from a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner and had met with police who arrested her partner for the assault. She was fearful that her assailant would be released from jail, and wanted extra protection. Staff helped Kelsey

file her PPO, and kept in close contact with her through the arraignment with additional details. Kelsey's PPO was granted and staff were able to get her assailant served while still in jail. At her request, Kelsey was referred for supportive services with URR advocates, and is currently receiving therapy to help process the trauma she experienced.



After a presentation to a local church group, our Volunteer Coordinator was approached by a parishioner who had been in the audience. She said, "Twenty years ago I used your services after my husband nearly killed our son and myself. I was one of the lucky few who had a safe place to stay with family. But the emotional and mental stress of what was happening

almost did me in. I was able to come in for counseling, and my advocate comforted me and gave me strength. The staff at the PPO office helped me through the entire court process and attended hearings with me. Every part of this was so unfamiliar to me, and I could not have done it alone. I count my blessings every day that you were there."



Advocates at Underground Railroad sometimes use art therapy to help survivors during healing. Art therapy techniques can be used to express emotion, and develop coping and self-soothing skills. The art piece above was given to our Youth Advocate by a survivor while she was receiving services. It reads, "Because of your choice,

because of your want, your commitment, your dedication, your courage, your compassion, your strength, your ability, your character and your heart, many of us will be able to get 'back on track,' or finally be able to 'choose our track.' Thank you for standing at our crossroads! With sincere appreciation..."



Following a presentation from Underground Railroad at his college, Ronnie was able to identify that his co-worker, Teena, was in an abusive relationship. Her boyfriend would allow her to leave the house only for work, and would closely monitor her phone. If Teena arrived home late from work, he would punish her young daughter. He changed the young girl's schedule so she would sleep all day while Teena worked, and be awake at night

when Teena needed rest. He told Teena if she took the car to escape he'd hurt the girl and report the car stolen to police. With Ronnie's support and knowledge of URR's services, Teena was able to call the crisis helpline. She moved into an available shelter room with her daughter. Childcare staff are helping to return her daughter to a normal sleep pattern, and Teena is working with her Advocate to create a safety plan.



This year Paula celebrated 8 years of volunteer service to Underground Railroad. Paula volunteers at Underground Railroad Resale three times a week. Her retail degree and previous experience working at Marshall Fields in Chicago makes her the perfect person to handle fabrics and fashion. In addition to tagging and

hanging clothing, Paula styles mannequins and puts together store displays. Last Spring Paula called on her Master's degree in Marketing to merchandise a jewelry showcase at the front of the store. Paula loves her time volunteering and hopes to inspire older generations and retirees to volunteer as well.



In Girls on the Run I learned it's ok to just be yourself and not someone else. Everyone is different in their own special way. I learned about negative self-talk, how to recognize it, and how to be confident in myself. I also learned how to be a good friend. Putting yourself in another person's shoes helps YOU help THEM!

I learned to do healthy things and make healthy choices. When things get overwhelming it's important to stop, breathe, think, respond and review. I also learned that a 5K is A LOT longer than I thought it was! But I kept trying even when I felt like giving up, and I rose to the challenge!

CORPORATE PARTNERS

Corporate giving is an important form of philanthropy at Underground Railroad. Through major gifts, employee giving, and event sponsorship, corporate giving provides crucial unrestricted funding for programs and operations, allowing free, comprehensive services for Saginaw County survivors.



IMPACT



Over
\$48,000
in event
sponsorships



Over
\$5,000
in workplace giving



Over
1,500
volunteer hours





Underground Railroad 's Empowerment Circle is named for the philosophy that drives our mission and work. The Empowerment Circle is a special group of major donors whose annual support helps empower survivors and inspire change in Saginaw County. Members receive special recognition throughout the year. The list below reflects gifts made between October 1, 2022 and September 30, 2023.



**Inspiration Level
\$2,000+**

Mary Sue Barry
David & Jody Becker
Terri & Blake Carmichael
Mary Christine Church
Louis & Karen Constan
Leslie & Terry Duperon
Amy & Mike Grossi
Jami & Matthew Kelly
Mari McKenzie
Annette Rao
Jeannette Ruhl
Karen Silvestri
David & Michelle Youngstrom

**Partner Level
\$1,000-\$1,999**

Julie & Peter Bender
Tammy & David Bernier
Carol Champagne
Thomas & Mary Damuth
Todd & Lumpeny Hall
Linda & Howard Hollingshead
Mary Kay Metzger
Jeanne Murphy Causley
Dave & Gretchen Nall
Gene & Lori Pickelman
Sally Quaderer
Cynthia Redmond
Arleen Schrank

**Advocate Level
\$500—\$999**

Margaret & Gene Beitz
Emily Birchmeier
Barbara & Brent Boggess
Leanne Brown
Mary Christine Church
Stephanie & Chris Domina
Rachel Flynn
Pat & Marie Hengesbach
Sharon Hopper
Michele Hutchinson
Eve James
Lisa Jenkins
Stephanie John
Martha & John Kaczynski
Shari Kennett
Tarek Khoriaty
Kay & Steve List
Barbara Mahar-Lincoln
Betty Lou Marx
Janet and Jack Nash
Joanna Nelson
Eric & Carli Neumeyer
Dimitrios & Jamie Nisidis
Jay & Denise Peplinski
Jonathan & Samantha Pickelman
Susan and Robert Piesko
Toby Robertson
Jill Rodriguez
Christina Schian-Aldrich
Sue Sulfridge
Kristina & David Szarenski
Pat & Katharine Tessin
Marcia & Darryl Thomas
Kathleen Thompson
Carrie & Mark Thompson
Frederick & Sue Tobin
Edwin & Jill Wetmore
Kristen & Adam Wuerfel
Jennifer Wysong

**Ally Level
\$250-\$499**

David & Anna Anderson
Carol & Robert Aronowitz
Diana Bay
John & Sharon Benson
Heidi Bolger & David Wallace
Helen Egleston
Michael & Patricia Forster
Tara Frank
Jimmy Greene
George & Jane Gugino
Tracy Hagar
Daniel Handley
Kim & Adam Harbaugh
Deborah Harrington
Kathleen Haucke
Barbara Klimaszewski
Maryann Korb
Karen Lang Krause
Kevin Mannor
Ernesto Mariona
Krisanne Mcconnell
Paul Mcgrath
John Melcher
Joshua Moore
Kathy Moreno
Kathryn & Michael Nuechterlein
Pat & Elvira O'Brien
Michael Oddo
Marcia Anne Pahr
Sandra Piesko
Kailen Piper
Louise Rau
Ben Reder
James & Beth Reindel

**Ally Level cont.
\$250-\$499**

Vickie Schmitzer
Caroline Scott
Susan Scott
Joseph Sienko &
Joan Hirschenberger
Paula & Scott Silverthorn
Mary & Joe Spadafore
Mike Stodolak
Jeannie Talbot
Christin Tenbusch
Michael & Marcia Wolohan
Ernest & Debra Wright
William & Karen Zehnder



Legacy Giving

Your Lasting Impact

Through a planned gift you can create your own philanthropic vision and make a meaningful impact in our community for generations to come. Planned giving is your intention to contribute a gift to an organization during or beyond your lifetime as part of financial or estate planning. These gifts may include bequests, charitable trusts, appreciated assets, life insurance, retirement plans, or real estate. These contributions help Underground Railroad sustain survivor safety, healing, and hope for a better future.



Learn more about our planned giving program



Mari McKenzie

I've been affiliated with Underground Railroad as a board member and volunteer since 1983. When I get asked about why I'm "passionate" about domestic violence, I envision a woman with her child and her dog, hunched in the corner, waiting for the next rage. That is not acceptable. It makes me angry. In addition to not being safe or respected, victims of domestic violence have no choice. My passion is my belief that women should have the opportunities to make choices. I had to fight for many of my opportunities as a woman – to play sports in high school, to major in accounting in college – and while it's gotten better, we're still not there yet. I'm as excited for a mom who stays home, as a mom who

works, or one who does a little of both- as long as the path she takes is her choice. Underground Railroad programs help give that freedom of choice back to the survivor after it's been taken away by someone else. Emergency shelter provides a place where she can be safe, first and foremost. But even if a survivor is not staying in emergency shelter, she can access support like counseling or court services to take that first step to regaining her independence. Underground Railroad's prevention education helps teach students that they're allowed to have an equal voice in their relationship, and that messaging starts even younger in the Girls on The Run Program. It's wonderful to watch them learn to use their voice, and see their confidence grow. Valuing the voices and choices of girls and women is the key to ending the violence that happens against them. And I will continue to contribute – whether its time or talent or money – until it goes away.

Gift in a Will or Trust

Remembering Underground Railroad with a bequest is an excellent legacy for you and your family

Retirement Plans

Tax-deferred retirement assets are attractive assets for charitable giving. Items include IRAs, 401k, 403b plans, pensions, etc.

Charitable Gift Annuity

Make a gift to Underground Railroad and, in exchange, receive a guaranteed lifetime income

Charitable Remainder Trust

Receive stable and secure income for a period of years based on value of trust. When the trust terminates, the remainder passes to Underground Railroad

Charitable Lead Trust

The reverse of the charitable remainder trust. The income from the trust is first paid to Underground Railroad (leading the way). After a specified number of years, the trust allows you to pass on the assets to your heirs

Life Insurance

Name Underground Railroad as the beneficiary of your policy or donate an active, paid up policy

GET INVOLVED

DONATE FINANCIALLY

Your donations provide immediate physical needs and long term solutions for those in need. Your gifts give survivors of abuse the first step to heal and transform their lives. Give today at undergroundrailroadinc.org/contributions

LEAVE A LEGACY

Your estate gift can change the lives of generations to come. Learn more at undergroundrailroadinc.org/planned-giving

DONATE STOCK

When you donate stock you'll make a meaningful impact in your community, and avoid paying costly capital gain tax as well. Learn more at undergroundrailroadinc.org/stock-donations

DONATE GOODS

Your donations of food, clothing, cleaning supplies, personal care products, and household items help keep our shelter and housing programs running. Surplus donations stock our resale store and help fund our programs. See our wish list at undergroundrailroadinc.org/contributions



Your business can make an impact while engaging employees! Volunteer as a group, offer workplace giving opportunities, or organize a collection drive at your company location.

Many of our volunteers are called to give back through their church or civic minded organizations. Volunteer opportunities include maintenance projects, event volunteers, resale store sorting and more!

You don't need a group to make a difference! We have one-time and long term opportunities to join our volunteer family!

ORGANIZE YOUR EMPLOYEES TO SERVE

GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR CHURCH OR COMMUNITY GROUP

COME AS YOU ARE



Donate today



Volunteer today



EXPENSES

PROGRAMS/SERVICES

\$3,696,242

Shelter & Services	\$1,170,818	31.68%
Court Support	\$482,907	13.06%
Transitional Housing	\$1,255,557	33.97%
Sexual Assault	\$73,768	2.00%
Resale Shop	\$262,888	7.11%
Fundraising	\$114,855	3.11%
Education/Outreach	\$109,057	2.95%
Management/General	\$226,392	6.12%



OPERATING EXPENSES

\$3,696,242

Personnel	\$2,264,284	61.26%
Occupancy	\$252,984	6.84%
Office Expenses	\$255,545	6.91%
Specific Assistance	\$580,854	15.71%
Miscellaneous	\$39,845	1.08%
Interest	\$14,701	0.40%
Travel & Conferences	\$79,234	2.14%
Advertising & Recruitment	\$24,065	0.65%
Depreciation	\$177,910	4.81%
Membership Dues	\$6,817	0.18%



REVENUE



COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

\$465,842

Businesses	\$55,570	11.93%
Churches	\$10,382	2.23%
Clubs / Groups	\$11,160	2.40%
Foundations	\$174,902	37.55%
Individuals	\$143,969	30.91%
In Kind	\$49,394	9.74%
United Way	\$24,465	5.25%



INCOME

\$3,730,344

Contributions	\$465,842	12.49%
Rent & Fees	\$34,225	0.92%
Grants	\$2,946,412	78.98%
Interest	\$25,086	0.67%
Special Events	\$95,606	2.56%
Store Sales	\$128,444	3.44%
Miscellaneous	\$34,729	0.93%





UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, INC.

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24/7 Helpline: (989) 755-0411



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