



OPEN  
HAND  
ministries

[WWW.OPENHANDPGH.ORG](http://WWW.OPENHANDPGH.ORG)

*impact report*

2020





How **Open Hand Ministries** Contributes to

**Making Pittsburgh a**

*just City*

**for all:**



**We empower Black Pittsburgh families  
to build multi-generational wealth**

through financial management skills  
and navigating the path to homeownership;  
and



**We facilitate affordable home ownership**

through real estate acquisition and rehabilitation  
to superior energy and quality standards.

# Letter from Our Executive Director

join the



## Welcome to the inaugural Open Hand Ministries (OHM) 2020 Impact Report.

I came to the role of Executive Director of this great institution in September of 2020. I expected that taking the helm of an organization during an unprecedented year like 2020 would be challenging. What I didn't expect was to be welcomed by such an engaged, passionate community and a motivated staff who desire to leave a lasting impression on the neighborhoods that

we serve. It is safe to say that 2020 was a year of upheaval across all sectors of American life. Societally, we were faced with the deadly Covid-19 pandemic as well as the cultural crisis caused by the continued reality of Police violence against the African-American community as demonstrated in the cases of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. Last year also saw a very contentious presidential election.

And yet, all was not gloom and doom. In the sections to come, we will highlight Open Hand Ministries major accomplishments during 2020 and introduce you to the vision that will guide us as an organization going forward. You will have the opportunity to meet our staff and learn of the practices that shape our work. You will also be introduced to the community that we serve and the opportunities and challenges therein. **We envision a future for our region that, in spite of current realities, is inclusive of traditionally marginalized communities, embraces community design with justice in mind, and seeks to empower Pittsburgh's black community to pursue economic freedom.**

## Meet the OHM Staff



**Tim Rauffer**  
Director,  
Construction Services



**Tamika Barrett**  
Director, Family  
Development Program

# mission

*“Unless the Lord builds the house,  
the builders labor in vain.”*

PSALM 127:1

Clearly, we do not work alone! OHM exists at the intersection of concerned individuals, Pittsburgh’s robust philanthropic community, local churches and local businesses and the volunteers who give generously to fund our work. We are deeply grateful for these partnerships and relish our position as an outlet for these constituencies as they seek to put their resources to work for the marginalized.

As we look toward the future, the challenges facing African Americans in Pittsburgh are numerous; we also recognize that people in this community have untapped knowledge, skills and potential. **Our job at OHM is to help our community reach its goals.** Some of our program participants desire to move away from debt into financial freedom. Some want to launch new businesses, and others desire to become first time home buyers; all desire to achieve financial freedom and security. **We believe in our community’s self-determination; it’s the guide we follow in helping to bring forward its true gifts.** And while our assets based approach to community development is challenging, it is incredibly rewarding. We see ourselves as more than a social service agency; OHM and our partners are actively engaged neighbors, friends and a faith community. We invest in those with whom we live, work, play and pray. We thank you for being our neighbor in this city we love, and we invite you to consider a more personal OHM experience. Read on! **And join us as we seek to make Pittsburgh more than a “livable city” for just some of us. Help us transform Pittsburgh into a just home for all of us!**

Yours in Service,

*Wayne F. Younger*

Wayne F. Younger



**Cheryl A. Lowitzer**  
Administrative  
Coordinator



**Shaneeka Dyer**  
Family Development  
Program Assistant



**Maleel Wilson**  
Construction Staff

# What We Accomplished in 2020

# love one

2020 was a year that saw the entire world faced with unprecedented challenges. And yet, we also experienced the many ways in which we humans tap into the divine more deeply under trying circumstances. Our prayer as the world and OHM Moves Ahead is that we continue to keep in mind the commandment to “Love One Another” in meaningful ways.

Open Hand Ministries (OHM) accomplished a great deal in spite of the Covid-19 pandemic. **We're proud of the way our community, our staff and our Board of Directors pulled together.**

## **WE WELCOMED A NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

With grateful hearts, OHM wished its founder, Michael Stanton, the very best in his decision to prayerfully move on from his role to explore new opportunities after 12 years of faithful servant leadership. OHM's relationship with Michael remains strong, which is yet another way he blesses our ministry. Our new Executive Director, Wayne Younger, comes to us with over 25 years of non-profit and ministry experience. His proficiency in organizational development, fundraising and relationship building is already serving us well.

**BELOW:** Socially distanced goodbye parade for Michael Stanton  
**INSET:** Goodby message to Michael from OHM staff



# another

“I am who I am because of who we are”

— LEYMAH GBOWEE, ON THE CONCEPT OF UBUNTU

## **VOLUNTEERS ARE OUR LIFE’S BLOOD: HANDS-ON AND HEARTS-ON**

Open Hand Ministries emphasizes building relationships. Through hands-on and hearts-on participation, these volunteers participate by working together in our Family Development Program and/or with Construction Services.

In 2020, we had a small but dedicated group of volunteers who helped with home renovation and participation in our family development program.



We held fewer home renovation workdays in 2020 due to the pandemic. We did some work prior to the pandemic hitting and then after we better understood it, **we were able to have workdays with proper social distancing** and ensure adequate ventilation.



In a typical year, approximately 1200 OHM volunteers provide an estimated 8,370 hours of labor. Estimating at a low rate of \$20/hour, **volunteers save OHM approximately \$167,400 per year.**



### **Our family development community moved to a virtual program.**

Participation was steady in 2020 yet lower than in previous years without the support of child care and an evening meal..



The need for Family Development Program volunteer support was great in 2020. **Our volunteers did help with grocery delivery, community outreach and support.** One volunteer put it well when he said, “doing the work as a community working toward a common goal” is the most meaningful part of the experience.

## **A RECORD SETTING FOUR FAMILIES BECAME FIRST-TIME HOME OWNERS**

Despite the global pandemic and its devastating economic effect on the Pittsburgh region, which disproportionately affected our black and brown communities, we were able to help FOUR families become first time homeowners.

### **In the most recent closing, a mother and her family moved in two days before Christmas. They joyously spent the holidays in their very own home for the very first time!**

Not only was this especially heartwarming for OHM, but the knowledge that each homeowner will enjoy the long-term benefits of building wealth and equity is also particularly rewarding.



# What We *community* Accomplished in 2020

CONTINUED

## WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITY:

Due to the pandemic, the weekly in-person meetings at the core of OHM's Family Development program had to go "virtual" almost overnight. OHM staff and team members rose to the occasion, putting their own fears aside to help families cope with the fear of the unknown to meet immediate needs within the community. **OHM assisted with grocery shopping for at-risk community members, purchased cleaning supplies, provided rent assistance resources, compassionate listening, weekly check-ins, filing for unemployment and more.**

In addition, our programming was tailored to address the credit score concerns presented by the economic uncertainties of 2020. As a result, despite the pandemic, the average FICO credit score of OHM community members increased from 700 to 734 with two families achieving scores of over 800 points! The average Mortgage Score gain was 43 points.

## Our Community Members tell their stories best, of course:



### Akia W.

I first heard of OHM's program in 2013 after making inquiries in my Hill District community as rents in my neighborhood started rising. However, the results of credit counseling with Action Housing made me decide to put my home ownership goal on hold. In 2019, I revisited my home ownership goal; a conversation with a local minister put me directly in touch with OHM's founder, Michael Stanton.

After an in-depth discussion of my goals, finances, home life and vision for my two sons, I realized the road to a successful home buying experience and having confidence as a homeowner, required improving my financial management regimen. I immediately decided to apply to OHM's program, was accepted and completely immersed myself in learning more about financial management than ever before in my life.

**The biggest benefit that I've experienced from OHM, has to be in knowing that there is a community of people rooting for me to succeed, and actually being here and available for me to reach out to for help.** The next biggest benefits are the purchase of my home, and having the confidence in knowing that I can, and am, successfully managing my finances.



# impact

## WE ACQUIRED A SECOND TRANSITIONAL RENTAL PROPERTY

Our Transitional Rental Program, started in 2014, improves our program offering and organizational sustainability in the following ways:



**An Affordable monthly rent and flexible lease:** 30% below market rate, making it possible for families to stay in the neighborhood while awaiting their home buying opportunity.



**Stability:** As an extension of our Family Development Program, we treat our renters with dignity, mutuality and respect.



**Built-in savings:** a portion of the monthly rent is set aside in an escrow account to be applied at the successful completion of a mutually agreed upon end goal — i.e. purchase of a home.



**Ongoing source of ministry revenue:** this recurring income helps our ministry move toward greater sustainability.

## RENOVATION WAS COMPLETED ON TWO PROPERTIES

OHM rehabs vacant properties when a family is mortgage ready. These properties usually require gutting and extensive work on all major mechanicals: electrical, plumbing, insulation, windows, and roofing to meet code.

The pandemic initially brought home rehab work to a complete halt. Even as things eased up and with Covid 19 precautions in place, we were limited to the number of volunteers on work days.

In spite of all this, **we were still able to complete work on one house, begin work on another and complete critical work on our transitional rental properties.** In the fall of 2020 while the transitional rental units in our duplex were idle, we upgraded the heating and electrical for increased utility cost efficiency, and prepared for new tenants by deep cleaning and painting.



# What's Next for OHM?

*deepen*

OHM stands ready to rise to the challenge of the tightening competition of the real estate market and increasing property values in Pittsburgh's East End. We will continue to pursue this endeavor with creativity, integrity, and a commitment to meeting our organizational goals by helping our families achieve theirs.

**We see many opportunities to help those that we serve reach their goals for financial wellness. There are five prime areas of growth for as we move ahead this year:**

## **LAUNCH 7TH FAMILY DEVELOPMENT COHORT**

### **FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT > GOAL SETTING > TEAM MATCH**

**We will add another group of up to 10 families to our Family Development Program community.** They will complete financial assessments, set goals, and select a volunteer team to assist them as they work to make their goals a reality. New participants join our already established community with participants from our six previous cohorts.



# relationships

## DEEPEN RELATIONSHIPS

### PROMOTE COMMUNITY CONNECTION IN POST-PANDEMIC PGH

Racial & socioeconomic lines are too rarely crossed in our city. **We will continue to provide meaningful volunteer opportunities for churches and businesses** within our Family Development and Construction programs. We also plan to launch a new resource for those interested in learning how to build bridges across what seemingly divides us.



## BUY AND HOLD VACANT PROPERTY

Through continued partnership with the philanthropic community, businesses, individuals, community development corporations, and churches, we know **we must increase the number of homes that are available for affordable home ownership in Pittsburgh's East End.** This may entail us buying and holding real estate, to save it for the purposes of home ownership for black and brown residents.



The Michael and Holly Stanton fund was established to build the sufficient cash reserves necessary to acquire properties to support our mission. This fund, in addition to our lines of credit, should allow us to procure vacant properties and renovate them in Pittsburgh's East End.



## HOME RENOVATION AND REHABILITATION

We acknowledge the need to increase the pace at which we can make affordable homes available to our community. As a start, in 2021, **we hope to begin renovation on at least three properties and complete at**



**least two of those renovations.** All this depends on how we are able to scale our staff and volunteer base to help with the demolition and subsequent renovation for these properties.

## HOME MAINTENANCE PLANS FOR HOMEOWNERS

Now that many of our Family Development community members are homeowners or are close to achieving this goal, **our programming is being expanded to include tips and guidance on how to maintain their homes.** Topics include creating a home maintenance plan, workshops, and training on basic housing maintenance.



# A Brief Look at *support* Our Financials

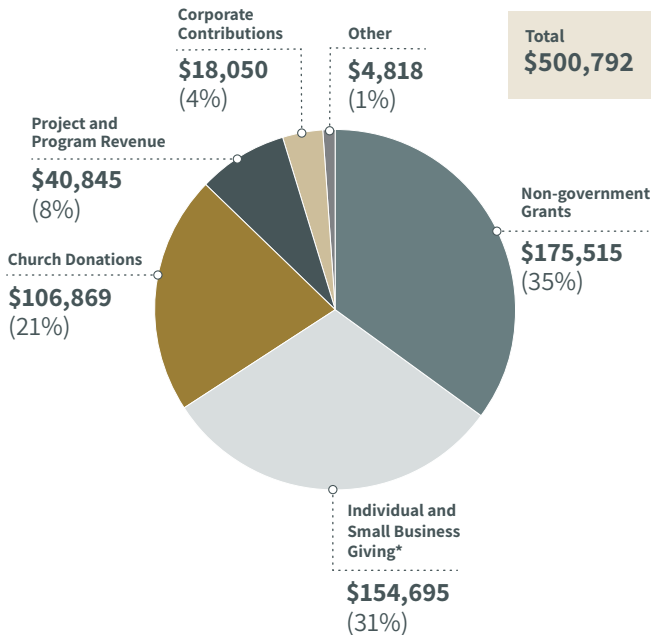
Open Hand Ministries, although significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, ended 2020 on a positive financial note.

Our income was greater than our expenses. Cash flow remained solid and the organization effectively had no debt.

Our fundraising efforts from local churches, individuals, and corporations, who support the mission of Open Hand Ministries, made up 56% of our total giving in 2020. This included money raised from our year end campaign as well as our involvement in the Pittsburgh Marathon and the Pittsburgh Day of Giving.

## INCOME

Income was impacted by the pandemic but in general, pledged donations met or exceeded expectations.

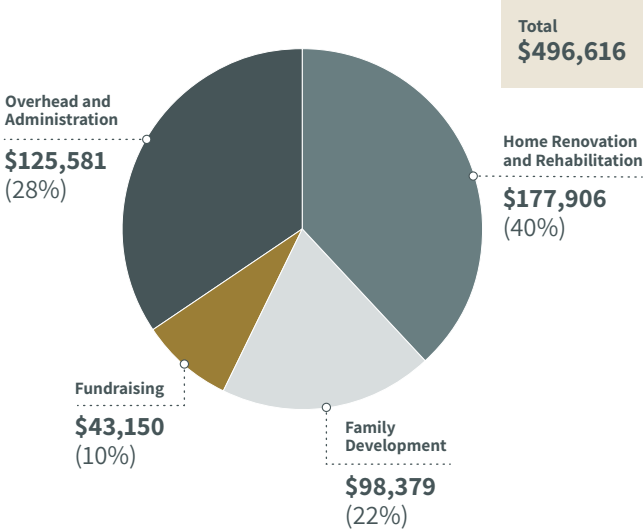


\* includes virtual Pittsburgh Marathon income and donation (Day of Giving, year end ) campaigns

# the mission

## EXPENSES

We were able to manage expenses and our exposure in 2020. Because of the requirements imposed by the pandemic, we were unable to finish some of the home renovation work we had started. Additionally, we had an overlap in salary for executive director due to the transition from Michael Stanton to Wayne Younger.



## FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGNS

Open Hand Ministries actively raises funds to help support its mission. We felt that 2020 was a very good year in spite of the pandemic and the impact it had on fundraising.

CAMPAIGN	AMOUNT RAISED	
Pittsburgh Marathon	\$9,085	Early days of the Covid pandemic. Marathon was a virtual event in 2020
Pittsburgh Day of Giving	\$11,000	2020 was the first year we participated in the Pittsburgh Day of Giving. We are proud to announce that we finished 47th out of 400 organizations that participated. 100% of our board members donated during this campaign.
Year-end Campaign	\$67,000	Our year-end campaign was successful in 2020 and met our expectations.

As mentioned above, Michael Stanton, the founding executive director of OHM, stepped down in the fall of 2020. To recognize all that Michael did for the organization, a fund was established to help with the acquisition and renovation of properties. To date, that fund has over \$24,000.



# Letter from the Board of Directors President

Dear Friends of Open Hand Ministries,

Our Board of Directors was very active in the year 2020, guiding a monumental shift in leadership for us.

Our founder, Michael Stanton, was very generous in providing stability during the nationwide search for his successor. **Despite Covid, we managed to celebrate Michael & Holly Stanton's years of service by having a parade for them at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.** The Michael & Holly Stanton legacy fund was established in honor of their great impact and raised \$19,300 in 2020.

After thoroughly vetting numerous candidates, our search committee realized the person to lead us into the future was right in our own backyard. **We welcomed Wayne Younger as our new Executive Director in September 2020.** Wayne is a native of Pittsburgh. Wayne brings a great deal of leadership experience, enthusiasm and vision to our ministry. He and his wife Leeann live in and pastor a congregation on Pittsburgh's Northside.

Rev. BJ Woodworth stepped down as Board President. BJ was so instrumental in caring for the staff during this transitional time. I was honored to take on the role of Board President in 2021.

Our Board is committed to strengthening and growing our organization's impact on Pittsburgh. **We want to continue to help people build wealth through debt elimination, credit building, starting new businesses, home purchase or achieving educational goals, with an encouraging support team.** We are also committed to expanding our ability to buy and rehab vacant houses cost effectively to allow the people in our community affordable home ownership opportunities.

The Board continues to restructure itself to help our mission thrive in 2021 and beyond. **We are very blessed and fortunate to have come through this leadership transition and the Covid-19 pandemic in a strong financial position.**

President of the Board,

*Paul Roberts*

Rev. Paul Roberts



## Sharon P.

I knew I wanted to purchase a home, and didn't know how or where to start. OHM helped me learn how to clean up debt, save for a down payment and **because of their program, I was able to actually purchase a home.** They gave me direction and encouragement during the long process. I built friendships that have lasted long beyond the closing.

Not only have I been able to reach a big goal, I am now able to encourage others as they are reaching for their goals, in much the same way that I was encouraged by the OHM Community. **What a gift to realize more than ever we are stronger together.**



**Justice.**

**Community.**

**Homeownership.**



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