

# reaching our city

*Compassion, . . . Community, . . . Christ*

## Greetings from ROC's new Executive Director



Greetings, friends of the ROC! For those of you who don't know me, my name is Jason Rowinski and I'm the new Executive Director of Reaching Our City, Inc. It's my privilege to share with you in this year-end newsletter as we look back on 2018 and look forward to 2019.

I was first introduced to the ROC by Doug Forsberg when I joined the staff of Bethany First Church of the Nazarene in 2003. Fifteen

years later, this new chapter for me in ROC's story began this summer during a conversation with Troy Rhodes at a funeral here in Oklahoma City for our mutual friend Eric King. My wife Stefanie is from Oklahoma City, and our family is glad about being back home. We are excited to join the story of the ROC!

During our ROC the World event, I described that our culture has a current fascination with SUPERHEROES. While they don't really exist, MANY HEROES walk amongst us, people like Marilyn Denson whose compassion for the Greenvale community began the story of the ROC in 1998. Marilyn couldn't undertake this vision alone. Many people joined her. Heroes don't make a difference alone. The story of the ROC is a story of many heroes coming together to positively affect the people in this community.

I'm excited about some of the conversations I've already had with ROC staff and stakeholders. We're discussing ways to partner with Oklahoma City in order to help redevelop the neighborhood and provide affordable housing. We've examined ways we can revive old streams of ministry such as legal aid, medical services, and employment mentoring. New board members are joining to serve the ROC's ongoing mission. 2019 is shaping up to be an exciting and effective year for ministry!

The vision and need are GREAT. We need MORE HEROES to partner with us. You are a **H.E.R.O** if you: **HEAR** the cries of those in need and have compassion; **ENGAGE** the need with your time, talents, and treasure; **RESTORE** that which is broken by addressing the systems and structures that oppress people; and **OVERCOME** the adversity and challenges of the urban context by maintaining a deep commitment to the people and the mission. The ROC is a partnership and we need more partners in ministry.

It's a NEW ERA at the ROC but it's not a new story. It's actually an old story — the story of the True Hero Jesus Christ who left his throne above to come dwell among us, heal us of sin sickness, restore that which was broken, and create a new community to carry on his mission. Join with the ROC as we continue to participate in the greatest story ever told.

## Year-end Gifts will Poise ROC for Strong 2019

Like fuel for an engine, your financial gifts are crucial to the mission of ROC!

December has historically accounted for as much as 24% of ROC's unrestricted donations. (It's like having three months worth of donations in just one month!)

Your participation in ROC's mission through financial support directly supports ROC's current programs, funds research and development of new programs, maintains physical plant operations, offsets costs associated with community partnerships and fundraising, helps pay for administrative salaries and insurance, and services debt.

When considered alongside the food resources received by ROC and the labor of our volunteers, each \$1 of cash gifts represents \$3 of goods and services—a "loaves and fishes" return on investment!\*

ROC has achieved gains in 2018 in most program revenue categories. However, General Funding is below 2017's pace by 8% and behind 2018's expected revenue by 14% overall. The ROC the World fall fundraiser has

raised \$75,438 as of this writing, well short of its \$100,000 goal.

**Your gifts to ROC are needed this month to close the gap in unrestricted general funding and poise ROC for a strong 2019.** Please remit your gifts to the address below or donate online at [www.reachingourcity.org](http://www.reachingourcity.org) (please turn off all pop-up blockers to optimize online giving).

*\*Feeding America establishes a value for charitably distributed food. The value of the food and product distributed by the ROC Food Pantries plus the value of labor given by volunteers throughout the agency achieves an annual total roughly twice that of ROC's annual cash revenue from all sources.*

LIVE  
**COMPASSION**  
**December 2018**

Reaching Our City  
PO Box 272513  
Oklahoma City, OK 73137  
(405) 440-9994

## ROC Presents Service Awards

Reaching Our City's 2018 Community Service Awards were presented at the ROC the World event to ROC staff members Revs. Ken and Jennifer Couchman and ROC Board member Troy Rhodes. The Couchmans have served together at ROC since 2005. Ken is the Director of Administration and Jennifer leads the REACH after-school tutoring and summer day camp programs. Rhodes has served on the ROC Board of Directors since 2007.

Past recipients of the award are as follows:

2017: Dr. Hal Cauthron and VarietyCare

2016: Lori Smith and Caring Communities Support Center

2015: Linda May and Sgt. Robert Skalla (OKCPD)

2014: Marilyn Denson and Friends of NW 10th Street



*Pictured (L to R): Reaching Our City Board Chair Rev. Jim Cooper, Revs. Ken and Jennifer Couchman, Troy and Lea Rhodes, Emma Rhodes, Lily Rhodes, Rev. Jason Rowinski.*

## Quick Facts about ROC Programs:

**ROC Food Pantries:** One-third of those receiving food from the ROC Food Pantries are children. Another 20% of our food pantry clients are senior citizens. Through September 2018, ROC Food Pantries have served 892 new families this year. Last year, ROC distributed an average of 11,584 pounds of food and product each week. About 80 different volunteers serve in the ROC Food Pantries each week. 90% of these volunteers are senior adults!

**ROC Resale Shop:** The Resale Shop will set a new all-time annual sales record in 2018. All of these sales come from merchandise donated to the store. The Resale Shop works with the Department of Human Services to provide job training. The Resale Shop has assisted 16 individuals to enter the workforce in 2018!

**ROC REACH Program:** ROC's after-school tutoring program expanded this fall to include a second elementary school and now serves both second and third graders. This fall's enrollment was 19 children.

**The VINE:** ROC's weekly women's support group averages about 60 women each week for lunch, prayer, and inspiration. Businesses, churches, Sunday School classes, and individuals prepare or sponsor most meals.

**Community Partnerships:** In 2018 ROC has hosted multiple groups: ReMerge to conduct its "Getting Ahead in a Just Getting By World" classes, Smart Start of Central Oklahoma for Early Birds school-readiness classes, Parent Promise for Parent Connection events, and an informal senior adult art club for monthly art sessions!

## ROC Touches Lives Beyond the Programs...

Reaching Our City's programs seek to organize talents and resources to solve problems. However, people often arrive to ROC with more going on in their lives than what any one program can address. Sometimes, this means that our volunteers and staff refer folks to other organizations for additional help. But other times, such an encounter is the start of a relationship that extends beyond the boundaries of a formal ROC Program.

► Cassandra Fowler, Director of Operations, is a listening ear for "Ms. R", an area resident who came to ROC initially for food assistance but soon responded to an inner prompting to share her story in order to help others. Ms. R says that her life from adolescence to adulthood was defined by substance abuse. She learned to steal to support her habit, and wasted years of her life in jail and prison, losing the opportunity to learn to read along the way. The Lord found her in prison and turned her life around. She visits Cassandra every week to have her story put onto paper so that others in similar circumstances can have hope for a changed life.

► Lori Smith, Manager of the ROC Resale Shop, describes how the store is a second home of sorts for her friend Hank\*. Hank managed life fine until he lost his mother to cancer. From that point forward, the struggles that Hank had been managing began instead to overwhelm him. Lori and her staff are a family for Hank. Lori helps Hank get to doctor's appointments, and the staff has championed Hank to his landlord, helping him achieve part-time work to offset some of his rent. \*Name has been changed to respect Hank's identity.

► Kathy Powell, Coordinator of the VINE women's support group, offers one more perspective on the "informal" ways that lives are touched at ROC. Kathy describes three couples attached to Council Road Baptist Church who volunteer weekly at the ROC. Long before the weekly luncheon is served, these couples arrive early on Friday and get to work—the women to the kitchen to prepare the dinnerware and lemonade, the men to the Food Pantry to assist with packing food boxes. Then, once the luncheon is finished, the couples re-unite to clean and re-set the gym and kitchen, to take out the garbage, and to see to any other tasks that can be delegated to them. These couples demonstrate weekly that behind the scenes of every 90 minute luncheon, there are multiple hours of preparation and care. Though we at ROC talk about the VINE program in terms of the women who attend, ROC's volunteers are touching lives well beyond the start and stop time of the program.

*19 Years on N.W. 10th Street...*

Reaching Our City, Inc. is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation located at 7710 NW 10th St. Oklahoma City, OK.  
Submit change of address to [ken@reachingourcity.org](mailto:ken@reachingourcity.org)  
(please indicate "ROC newsletter change of address" in the memo line).

**DONATE NOW at [www.reachingourcity.org](http://www.reachingourcity.org)**



Enclosed is my gift: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in volunteering at ROC.

I am committed to pray for ROC each week.

**Simplify your monthly giving!** Reaching Our City can assist you to simplify your monthly donations:

▶ by monthly bank drafts from your checking or savings account.

▶ by recurring monthly charges to your credit or check card.

For more information, call Ken at the ROC: (405) 440-9994 x108.

Reaching Our City will not rent or sell your personal information.

**To give online, visit [www.reachingourcity.org](http://www.reachingourcity.org)**

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Reaching Our City, Inc.

PO Box 272513

Oklahoma City OK 73137