



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

### BOARD MEETING –JANUARY 27, 2025

#### **Board & Governance**

- The Board of Directors welcomes three new board members to its roster in January 2025: Alen Amini, Jeff Risk, and Bob Hennekes.

#### **Strategy & Planning**

- FM received four responses to the strategic planning RFP. Upon review, Ryan Mulligan/Sidekick Services best fit FM's size, needs, and goals. He will provide Phase I services focused on assessment with information to be gathered through meetings with staff, a board retreat, and other data-gathering exercises. The resulting report will guide the next phase, which will produce a full strategic plan, and then the final phase, which will focus on programming and evaluation.

#### **Development**

- The 2025 St. E and SFP funding requests were fully approved, including hiring the administrative assistant position who will support development, the Community Garden, and Tau House.
- Migration from the old fundraising/CRM system is complete.
- Fundraising activities this past quarter include the following:
  - 2024 Annual campaign: \$ 23,675.00 (Jan to Dec 2024)
  - 2024 General giving: \$51,875.00
  - Significant gift to Tamar's Center: [Paul Wenzel](#)
  - Grant submissions:
    1. Sisters of Precious Blood Heritage Foundation to support strategic planning \$10,000. The request was declined. The process is restricted to the first 100 applicants, and the window closes once received. The grant was submitted online 15 minutes after opening, but the application process closed with 100 applicants within minutes.
    2. SeedMoney campaign to support the garden raised \$1900, including a \$700 donation from a new donor.
    3. Preparing
  - "Piggest Raffle," part of the Flying Pig events in May is set up. We gained several new donors from last year's event.

## PROGRAM REPORT

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**The Community Garden** The 2024 gardening season concluded with 475 pounds of produce formally donated from the Garden. Many gardeners donate independently without reporting their contributions, extending the Garden's impact. Efforts to address necessary repairs on the fence surrounding the Garden continue, and we have raised approximately \$12,000 to fund these repairs and to address faucet repairs anticipated for 2025. Applications for the upcoming season have been distributed, and we are actively collecting responses. There are already 11 individuals on the waitlist, demonstrating continued strong demand to participate.

#### **Haircuts from the Heart**

The mobile haircutting program is running smoothly, with only a few open slots remaining. Almost all 2025 fees and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) have been collected. We are currently in discussions with two or three new sites interested in joining the program. Operations at the shower house (Mary Magdalen House-MMH) continue functioning efficiently. The partnership with MMH remains strong, with regular assessments and process adjustments to ensure service continuity. The voucher program continues to grow, and we are actively pursuing additional funding to meet increasing demand. Recent support includes nearly \$2,500 from St. Columban's Giving Tree and an anticipated \$4,000 distribution from the Church of the Incarnation, with an invitation to apply for further funding this spring.

#### **Tau House**

In October 2024, Tau House hosted a group of ten for a mini-trip before transitioning into its usual "down-time" during the late fall and winter months. The lease with St. Clement will continue through the end of 2025 without any addendums. Additionally, our partnership with St. Columban Parish remains strong, allowing us to use their space as needed when available.

The 2025 schedule is fully booked for summer groups, slightly ahead of last year. Site for spring trips are currently being confirmed. Below is a summary of bookings to date:

- Winter: 3 retreat groups - 43 ppl total and 1 mini-trip 18 ppl total
- Spring - 2 mini-trips - 28 ppl total
- Summer - 8 trips - 163 ppl total
- Fall: Groups typically book during the summer

#### **Tamar's Place**

As directed by the Board of Directors in July and in concert with the overall strategic planning effort, staff have continued exploring how to proceed with Tamar's work.

In the Spring of 2024, in a discussion of Tamar's future, Sr. Wilma shared that she was happy to not only see women receive help themselves but also pass these learnings on to other women. Success should not only be measured by what happens AT Tamar's but also by what happens in women's lives when they leave Tamar's.

Through their research, staff discovered one way to approach Tamar's work is the implementation of strengths-based programming via culinary therapy. Strengths-based programming focuses on an individual's assets (personal strengths and social/community networks) to build confidence and self-esteem. Increased confidence and self-esteem contribute to better physical and mental health and an increased quality of life, among other benefits. On the practical side, culinary therapy is a natural fit for Tamar's Center, as it has an equipped kitchen, tools, staff expertise, and a history of providing food to women in the neighborhood.

Beginning in September of 2024, staff have been conducting a pilot project using Tamar's house as a teaching space for groups of women to learn various culinary skills and experience the therapeutic effect of the work. Staff have hosted 7 pilot sessions with women from various demographics and backgrounds. Each session is a planned cooking or baking activity, such as bread making, a simple lunch for the group, icing/decorating skills, and even gnocchi taught by Sr. Giannica!

Through the 7 sessions, staff have discovered that women crave connection with other women. They are lonely, lack self-esteem, feel lost, suffer stress and anxiety daily, and have experienced varying degrees of trauma. Both *emotional* and *financial* poverty run high among the women participants. Cincinnati is a deeply philanthropic community and offers many resources for financial assistance. However, through these sessions, women have stated that there are few opportunities to come together in a therapeutic, safe environment for fellowship and emotional connection.

Pilot results to date show women participants are eager to attend more sessions and want to bring their friends, daughters, and mothers. Women in the groups also share their culinary knowledge with other women and form their own mini-groups, fostering healthy relationships and emotional support. Finally, participants indicated they were willing to donate to Tamar's in return for the culinary sessions, adding a revenue generation possibility to support Tamar's work, which continues to be defined through the strategic planning process.

As the board moves into this year's strategic planning work, volunteer leadership will be asked to consider where it seeks to commit the organization's resources. While there are certainly many paths to take to serve women in our community, culinary experiences may be one way to accomplish this. So far, the pilot work has shown that this option could serve a wide range of women from all backgrounds, provide collaborative opportunities with other FM programs (such as the Community Garden or Tau) as well as outside partners, and function as a revenue-generating opportunity. More research, deliberation, and planning work is needed and staff is looking forward to it.