



UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, INC.

## 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



A partner agency of  
the United Way of  
Saginaw County





# MISSION

Our mission is to empower survivors  
and create a culture of safety and  
respect in our community.

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*Spanning the generations!  
Prevention Coordinator, Shawn Schutt,  
visits with Underground Railroad  
founding mother, Barbara Klimaszewski,  
at a community event*





# A letter from our CEO

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Dear Friends,

As we share our annual report, I want to take a moment to provide you with an update on our work and where we are heading in the future. It's hard to imagine a time before the COVID-19 pandemic hit our community, and created an overwhelming need to assist survivors of abuse who were desperate to find safety.

In the time since, Underground Railroad has begun to balance out the crisis thanks to the incredible support of our community and funders. At the state and federal levels, COVID relief funding was offered in an effort to combat the current crisis, as well as increase the long-term health and safety of our clients. Underground Railroad was awarded over \$100,000 for health upgrades to emergency shelter including anti-microbial paint and furniture, automatic flush toilets, no-touch sinks, air purifiers, mobile clear room dividers, portable UV sanitizing lights, and occupancy sensors. We also replaced puzzle piece flooring in shelter with flooring that can be more easily cleaned and disinfected, and scheduled regular disinfectant foggings and deep commercial cleanings.

With COVID numbers now trending downward, we are looking into the future and creating our strategic plan for the next three years. In particular, our focus is on a renewed commitment to providing diverse, equitable and inclusive services to strengthen our organization, and better serve our clients and our region. We value the distinct identities, cultures, and experiences of our staff, volunteers, and Board of Directors, and seek to have representation that reflects the whole of Saginaw County.

There is, without a doubt, still a long road ahead, but I am optimistic that we are moving in the right direction for the sake of our survivors, our community, and the world beyond our walls.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christi Birchmeier".

Christi Birchmeier  
Executive Director

# Board of Directors



JAMIE NISIDIS—CHAIR  
Braun Kendrick

CHRISTI BIRCHMEIER—PRESIDENT  
Underground Railroad, Inc.

JON PICKELMAN—VICE CHAIR  
Tri Star Trust

TERRIE CHRONOWSKI—TREASURER  
Yeo & Yeo

ALISA DIVINE ZEHNDER—SECRETARY  
Personal Power Press

DAWN BOUCHER  
Mannor Group

DAVID BROWN  
Isabella Bank

SHARON HOPPER  
Future Insurance Agency

JODY KOMYATHY  
My Member Insurance Agency

MARI MCKENZIE  
Retired, Yeo & Yeo

MEGAN MICHELS  
Thrive Social

DAVID NALL  
Covenant HealthCare

ERIC NEUMEYER  
My Member Insurance Agency

JAY PEPLINSKI  
Glastender

JEN WYSONG  
Independent Bank





Crisis Helpline



Emergency Response



Emergency Shelter



Advocacy & Counseling



Youth Services  
& Childcare



Housing Assistance



Court Support



Safeplace Supervised  
Visitation & Exchange



Community Education



Volunteering



Girls on the Run



Underground Railroad  
Resale Store



# OUR PROGRAMS

WE BELIEVE THAT SURVIVORS NEED ACCESS  
TO SAFETY, INFORMATION, OPTIONS, AND  
RESOURCES TO MAKE INFORMED CHOICES FOR  
THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILDREN.





*"When I first started talking about my own abuse, I didn't know there were organizations like Underground Railroad available. I didn't know that they can help not just the survivors, but family members and friends, understand what the survivor is going through, and provide resources to help them on their healing journey. I believe Underground Railroad has been instrumental in helping survivors feel like they do have a voice and they are important and they should be believed. It's nice to know that there's a community of support to help survivors through this difficult time in their lives."*

*Trudy, Survivor & Volunteer*





## OUR PROGRAMS

**12,181** safe  
nights in shelter



**98** households  
received  
**over 36,000**  
nights of housing  
assistance

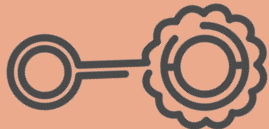
**3,662** hours  
of individual  
& group  
counseling

**3** pets   
were kept safe  
with their families  
in shelter

**\$171,794**  
worth of  
individualized  
assistance was  
provided

**3,715**   
crisis calls  
answered


**1,060** hours  
of  
childcare



**85** families  
spent time in  
**Safeplace**

*"Thank you for helping me get through everything with the judge, my ex husband, and his lawyer. I was sweating and a nervous wreck. But I did it! It's been a long process and I never imagined it would have gotten this bad. Thank you for being so kind and warm. I appreciate all you have done and am excited to move forward with my life!" - Survivor*



**439** PPOs provided  
 **4,111** court  
hearings attended





# OUR COMMUNITY

WE WILL PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN OUR  
COMMUNITY ON ISSUES AFFECTING SURVIVORS.  
PREVENTION THROUGH EDUCATION AND  
ADVOCACY IS THE ULTIMATE GOAL.



*"Thank you for your time, and even more so, the awareness. I often ask myself "Was it really abuse? Did I provoke him? Was I a bad wife and mother? What if I had been stronger?" I always had a counter-thought to justify it. I still want to be wrong, but I can no longer lie to myself. Now I understand what abuse is. I didn't have to be punched or end up in the hospital, but I was still abused. The man who vowed to love and care for me never did. Your presentation helped me reach and achieve acceptance."*

*- Community Presentation Participant*







## OUR COMMUNITY



*"My daughter learned so much about adaptability and grace, and has grown tremendously in the past two months. Thank you GOTR for your thoughtful safety adaptations to give our girls a place to connect with their peers and mentors during the pandemic. The things you are doing for these girls is nothing short of life changing. I know that my daughter will be better adjusted and able to handle more of the situations that come with growing up because of what she learned from her coaches."*

*—Girls on the Run Parent*

2,693 K-12  
youth attended


**191**  
educational  
presentations

287 girls

in Saginaw, Bay,  
Arenac, Huron  
& Tuscola counties

**were  
inspired  
through**



**287** 

community members  
ran the  
**GOTR 5Ks**

**Touchy Subjects**  
Podcast had

**3,497**  
new downloads in  
1,076 cities &  
58 countries/territories

Mid-Michigan  
Human Trafficking  
Task Force  
gave **12**  
presentations

**72** community  
education

  
public  
awareness  
events



# YOUR IMPACT

OUR SUPPORTERS MAKE THIS IMPACT POSSIBLE.  
THROUGH MONETARY AND IN-KIND DONATIONS,  
AND VOLUNTEERING, THE SAGINAW COUNTY  
COMMUNITY UPLIFTS AND EMPOWERS SURVIVORS.





*"I cannot tell you how grateful I am for what you did for me and my kids this Christmas. It's people like you that breathe hope back into people's souls. You have no idea how much brighter our holiday will be now that we've been blessed by 'Angels on Earth'. You have given me hope for brighter days."*

*- Survivor*

*"Thank you for getting my mom a new coat. She really needed one."*

*- Survivor's Child*







## YOUR IMPACT

**483** volunteers  
donated over  
**16,321**  
hours of service



Community groups  
& businesses  
raised over  
**\$16,000**  
through  
third-party  
fundraisers

**175** adults &  
children  
were adopted for  
the holiday season



Over  
**\$246,000**  
worth of merchandise  
donated to  
Underground Railroad  
Resale Store

**\$27,629**  
worth of merchandise  
benefitted  
survivors directly  
through vouchers



Our generous  
donors gave over  
**\$90,000**  
to our annual  
fundraisers, providing  
crucial operating  
support



*This year we hosted our 10th annual Advocates For Change Luncheon. For a decade, this event has brought together community members who share the vision of ending abuse in our region. After last year's absence, we were thrilled to have everyone together again for this milestone celebration. With the support of so many of you, we surpassed our fundraising goal, generating crucial, unrestricted funds to support survivors of abuse in our region.*

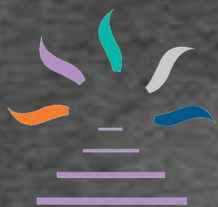




# OUR FUNDING

WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR ORGANIZATION AND ITS MISSION. WE WORK TO DIVERSIFY AND EXPAND FUNDING SOURCES TO ENABLE THE AGENCY TO ADAPT TO CHANGING POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENTS.





# EXPENSES

## PROGRAMS/SERVICES

**\$3,482,221**



Shelter & Services	\$1,390,678	39.94%
Court Support	\$410,769	11.80%
Transitional Housing	\$974,720	27.99%
Sexual Assault	\$80,967	2.33%
Resale Shop	\$189,639	5.45%
Fundraising	\$88,225	2.53%
Education/Outreach	\$129,111	3.71%
Management	\$218,112	6.26%

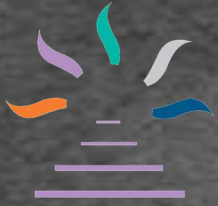
## OPERATING EXPENSES

**\$3,482,221**



Personnel	\$2,158,098	61.97%
Occupancy	\$321,646	9.24%
Office Expenses	\$301,306	8.65%
Specific Assistance	\$438,211	12.58%
Miscellaneous	\$42,131	1.21%
Interest	\$17,700	0.51%
Travel & Training	\$30,496	0.88%
Advertising	\$14,547	0.42%
Depreciation	\$149,944	4.31%
Membership Dues	\$8,142	0.23%





# REVENUE

## CONTRIBUTIONS

**\$672,255**



Businesses	\$36,638	5.45%
Churches	\$11,527	1.71%
Clubs / Groups	\$11,731	1.75%
Foundations	\$355,610	52.90%
Individuals	\$167,690	24.94%
In Kind	\$27,629	4.11%
United Way	\$61,430	9.14%

## INCOME

**\$4,073,441**



Contributions	\$672,255	16.50%
Rent & Fees	\$32,626	0.80%
Grants	\$2,986,661	73.32%
Interest	\$4,849	0.12%
Special Events	\$74,668	1.83%
Store Sales	\$253,796	6.23%
Miscellaneous	\$48,586	1.19%





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. Membership currently includes more than 100 individuals and families. The list below reflects gifts made between October 1, 2020 and September 30, 2021.

### **Inspiration Level \$1,000+**

Mary Sue Barry  
Julie & Peter Bender  
John & Sharon Benson  
Tammy & David Bernier  
Brent & Barbara Boggess  
Letitia Bolt  
Warren & Anna Booms  
Terri Carmichael  
Bethany Charlton  
Mary Chris & James Church  
Louis & Karen Constan  
Leslie & Terry Duperon  
Brianna Evans  
Jane Hadfield  
Mara Hetzner  
Nancy & Thomas Hollerback  
Linda & Howard Hollingshead  
Michele Hutchinson  
Jami & Matthew Kelly  
Annette & Kevin Lange  
Caleb Mayer  
Mari McKenzie & Jeff Roberts  
Dave & Gretchen Nall  
David & Lori Pendleton  
Gene & Lori Pickelman  
Annette Rao  
Jeannette Ruhl  
Arleen Schrank  
The Stockman Family

Tina & David Szarenski  
Believe Inspire Beauty Boutique  
Joyce Van-Ochten  
Gretchen & Gregory Witherspoon  
David & Michelle Youngstrom

### **Partner Level \$749—\$999**

Dimitrios & Jamie Nisidis

### **Advocate Level \$500—\$749**

David & Nicole Albrecht  
Margaret & Gene Beitz  
Thomas & Mary Damuth  
Susan Grodsinsky  
Todd & Lumpeny Hall  
Janice Hennessy  
Paula Holevac  
Shari Kennett  
Barbara McDonald  
John & Elizabeth Polzin  
Toby Robertson  
Marcey Schadel  
David & Kristine Schaeffer  
Lauren Thomas  
Kristen & Adam Wuerfel  
Jennifer Wysong  
Judy Zehnder

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

Joseph Adel  
Renee Aumock  
Amy Bickel  
Lynda Bickel  
Heidi Bolger & David Wallace  
Carol Champagne  
Robert & Theresa Chronowski  
Thomas & Helen Egleston  
Jimmy Greene  
Amy & Mike Grossi  
Annelise & Alexander Holcomb  
Sharon Hopper & Lee Latocki  
Martha & John Kaczynski  
Beth & Allan Kawiecki  
Jody Komyathy  
Karen Lang Krause  
Timothy & Linda Lou Kreager  
Kay & Steve List  
Michaele Malecki  
Felecia McBride  
Jane Mcleod  
David Morley  
Laura Morris  
Jean Nobach  
Jay & Denise Peplinski  
Susan Piesko  
Joan & David Ramm  
Tom & Beth Rohde  
Anna Schaenzer

CR Schian-Aldrich  
Paula & Scott Silverthorn  
Mary & Joe Spadafore  
Carrie & Mark Thompson  
Frederick & Sue Tobin  
John & Mary Unger  
Angie VanWormer  
Alisa Divine Zehnder  
William & Karen Zehnder

### **Friend Level \$150-\$249**

The Bellile Family  
Lawrence & Maureen Bishop  
Pam Blondin & Harold Lenhart  
Dawn & Matthew Boucher  
Kim & Christine Braeutigam  
Matthew Byler  
Jaime Cramer  
Mary Damask  
Joseph Parker Day  
Greg & Christina Eisengruber  
Michael & Patricia Forster  
Gary Fountain  
Tara Frank  
George & Jane Gugino  
Barb Handley-Miller  
Sarge & Renee Harvey  
Wesley Hawtin

Steve & Ashley Hensley  
Thomas & Judy Hudak  
Susan & Pat Kaltenbach  
Elaine Karls  
Angela & Kevin Kern  
Lindsay Kerry  
John & Laurie Llewelyn  
Jennifer McDurmon  
Bernice McGlothlin  
Philip & Kathleen Mcgrandy  
Janice & Michael McMeans  
Greg Meter  
Thomas & Patricia Middleton  
Elizabeth Mueller  
Jeanne Murphy Causley  
Veda Nasser  
Carmen Pasternak  
Dave Puskar  
Scott Reed  
David & Michelle Riddick  
Bonnie Rose  
Terry & Donna Ross  
Ed & Connie Schneller  
Sharon Calligaro  
Eric Sowatsky  
Pat & Katharine Tessin  
Edwin & Jill Wetmore  
Katie Zehnder Weiss  
Laurie & Darrell Zolton





## UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, INC.

5647 State Street, Ste A

Saginaw, MI 48603

Business Phone: (989) 399-0007

Fax: (989) 399-0010



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your email address to stay up  
to date on news and events**

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