

SECTION H

RECOGNIZED MISSION PARTNERS

- 1 BACK BAY MISSION
- 2 THE DEFIANCE COLLEGE
- 3 GRACE COMMUNITY CENTER
- 4 INSURANCE BOARD
- 5 OHIO COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
- 6 UNITED CHURCH HOMES



Friends,

As I look back on this past year at Back Bay Mission, I'm filled with gratitude for everything we've accomplished together. 2024 was a year of growth, resilience, and transformation—not just for our organization, but for the incredible people we serve every day.

We expanded our housing efforts in big ways, adding two new programs: Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOWPA) and Home American Rescue Plan (Home ARP). Both programs are already making a difference with HOPWA housing nine individuals and although we received the funding this past December, Home ARP has already prevented a family of four from homelessness. Our Housing Recovery Program built five new homes, creating real opportunities for families in need of affordable housing. To meet the increasing demand for services, we welcomed seven new staff members, each bringing fresh energy and deep commitment to our mission.

We also made critical improvements across our campus, including upgrading our technology to serve our clients more efficiently. Our long-term volunteer cottage got some much-needed love—updated bathrooms, new appliances, and fresh mattresses to better support those who dedicate their time to our work. And if you've driven by lately, you may have noticed our buildings got a fresh coat of light blue paint, giving our campus the care and dignity it deserves.

Another bright spot this past year has been the return of volunteers. After years of uncertainty following the Covid-19 pandemic, we have seen our volunteer numbers climb back to pre-pandemic levels—a sign of the deep commitment and generosity of our supporters. However, as we look ahead to 2025 and 2026, we are projecting a decline in volunteer participation, which deeply concerns us. Volunteers are the backbone of our work, from rebuilding homes to serving meals and offering companionship to those in need. **So, here's my ask:** If you've ever considered coming down to Biloxi to serve, now is the time. If you've volunteered with us before, we need you again. If you know a church group, school, or organization looking for a mission opportunity, send them our way. The work we do is life-changing—not just for those we serve, but for those who serve alongside us.

But we're not stopping here. Looking ahead, we're dreaming big. We're working to build HomePort III, a 20-24 unit housing project that will provide stable, long-term homes for unsheltered veterans. We're also planning a major renovation of our Micah Day Center, expanding our services to better meet the needs of our unsheltered neighbors.

And, perhaps most importantly, we're shifting how we think about housing solutions. While our initial plan focused on tiny bedrooms, we've made a critical pivot—we're building tiny homes instead. This shift allows us to offer our clients a more permanent, income-based housing option—a space they can truly call their own. The decision wasn't just about vision; it was about practicality. We learned that solar panels alone couldn't provide enough power for air conditioning in the tiny bedroom model, and in Mississippi, that just isn't an option. We believe this new direction will create sustainable, long-term solutions for those we serve.

At Back Bay Mission, we believe in the power of community. None of this happens without the hands, hearts, and generosity of people like you. As we step into the future, we invite you to continue walking with us—to build, to serve, and to bring hope to those who need it most.

In gratitude and hope,

Rev. James Pennington

Executive Director, Back Bay Mission



If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.
~African proverb

For Fall 2024, Defiance College's class was 80% larger than the prior fall. The momentum continues in the recruiting of the class entering for Fall 2025. We continue our *DEFine Your Future* program.



In January 2024, we launched a new program in partnership with *OhioMeansJobs* called *DC Academy* (DCA). DCA was designed for high school students who aspired to college but didn't have the high school grade point average to be accepted. As a cohort model, students take college level classes supplemented with career readiness coaching in order to either matriculate to Defiance

workshops and academic College (or another college) or enter the workplace if it becomes clear that college is not for them. The program's first year results show 66% of the DCA students completed Fall 2024 in good academic standing with a cumulative GPA of 2.6 or a B-.

In August 2024, the *1850 Promise* program was launched. For eligible students in the seven contiguous counties, their DC education can be cost-free if commuting from home.

The year-long 175th Anniversary Campaign: Strengthening Defiance College raised over \$2 million for the college. Thanks to our many donors who contributed to this successful campaign. The goal was exceeded by \$24,099. Overall fundraising for the year ending June 2024 was the second highest fundraising year ever with over \$3.9 million raised. DC students benefit from our generous donors.

Part of that campaign was an estate gift by Dr. Jane Sherman, honoring her late-husband, Dr. Richard Sherman. With \$1 million dollars, two \$500,000 scholarships are being created for students in the STEM fields. One is named for Dr. Bernie Mikula; the other for Dr. James Frey.

Defiance College will begin a year-long celebration of its 175th anniversary on March 22 with a Gala. Festivities begin at 5:30 PM; Founder's Day on March 23 begins with a service at St. John UCC at 10:30 AM. See www.defiance.edu/175-anniversary-events for further details.

Jacket Journey, a nationally unique career readiness program, is now in its fifth year. The class of 2024 shares with their friends still on-campus that, in fact, they feel prepared for the profession, especially compared with some of their peers. The program is unique because it is required and is for academic credit. DC takes pride in its 5-year average student placement rate of 96%.

A recent keynote speaker at **Jacket Journey's** Jacket Days said to an auditorium full of students, "I really hope you know that your college, Defiance College, is batting above its league." (January 13, 2025). We are attuned to our students, faculty, and staff, and our 175-year history of transforming lives, serving community needs, and adapting to the future. We track legislation, and other external factors that could affect us, and are prepared to pivot at a moment's notice. Our diligent work prepares DC to the next 175 years.

Thus, Defiance College continues to reDEFine its future!

Happy New Year from your friends at Grace Community Center!

2024 has been a year of excellent accomplishment for our agency - along not only familiar paths, but new ones as well.

FAMILIAR...

- For the 30th year, we operated our summer Edu Camp. We enrolled 62 youths ranging from kindergarten to middle school. We employed as our camp staff 18 youth, ranging in age from 14-22, as well as 6 Seniors Citizens, all under the leadership of Jay Shavers. Math and reading skills were tested pre and post camp showing that no one experienced "summer slide," and several campers actually moved up a grade level or 2. Working with the Kent Branch Library, campers logged over 2000 hours of reading, and 100% of the campers signed a No Violence Pledge.
- For the 9th year in a row, we've planted, tended, and harvested vegetable crops out of our 10,000 square-foot, raised bed garden: over 4,000 pounds of it. 95% of that food has gone to food insecure families. The garden and what we are supplied by the City's food banks (with United Way grant funding) has been distributed to 2,253 families. The pandemic is over, but high food prices have kept people coming to our door in large numbers.
- For the 3rd year in a row, partnering with Central State University, we conducted our 30 week Fast Track Farming Program. In the first two years of its operation, we graduated 6-7 enrollees. This year we graduated 27.

NEW...

- With financial help from both Central State University and the Greater Toledo Community Foundation, we have operated an urban farming-oriented program for Jr. and Sr. High Youth. They visited 4 farms in Ohio and Michigan as well as toured Central State University's Extension program in Wilberforce, Ohio. All this was meant to open their eyes to the career opportunities available to them in the field of agriculture.
- Our director, Elaine Page, has found healthy funding for delivering fresh fruits and vegetables to seniors in a specific Toledo neighborhood. The **Area Office on Aging** research has shown the average life expectancy in that neighborhood to be 62, compared to 82 in neighborhoods close by. AOA identifies the seniors who are eligible to receive this service. Then, a major Toledo Area grower supplies fresh food for those 200 seniors, and twice a month, Grace does the delivery. This also provides the recipients with much needed friendly, compassionate human contact.

SUSTAINING ...

UCC support and prayers continue to be a bright light in all that we do at Grace Community Center since our beginning in 1969 out of the lower level of the Grace United Methodist Church on Fulton and Kenilworth, Toledo, Ohio. Romans 8:28 says that God works all things together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. Our shared faith is the bedrock foundation which informs all our work!



DID YOU KNOW?

Insurance Board is a nonprofit organization established by the participating Conferences of the United Church of Christ. All of our programs have been developed for the unique needs of your church.

**OUR INSURANCE SERVES YOU
SO YOU CAN SERVE GOD.**

As a United Church of Christ church, you are automatically a member of the Insurance Board. You are entitled to certain benefits, many of which are free, aimed at protecting your church and its ministry, and reducing the likelihood and magnitude of a disruptive loss.

Our mission: To connect faith-based institutions to comprehensive and customized risk and insurance management solutions anchored in shared trust and sacred responsibility.



**Report to the
The 62nd Annual Meeting of Northwest Ohio Association, United Church of Christ,
Heartland Conference
Saturday, April 26, 2025
Peace Community UCC, Waldon, OH**

We are a Jesus Christ Movement for Unity, Justice, and Peace!

Our Member Communions:

The African Methodist Episcopal Church, The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, The Alliance of Baptists, The Armenians Apostolic Church; The Christian Church in Ohio (Disciples of Christ) US and Canada, The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Christian Science, The Church of the Brethren, The Community Churches, The Episcopal Church in the USA, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, The Greek Orthodox Church, The Moravian Church in America, The Ohio Baptist General Convention, The Presbyterian Church (USA), The Religious Society of Friends, The United Church of Christ, and The United Methodist Church.

www.ohcouncilchs.org.

Report of 2024 Activities

- The OCC's Anti-Racism Team sponsored our fourth Anti-Racism Sunday on October 20, 2024. Several OCC member congregations participated in this effort which was designed to draw attention to the faith that racism is sin. Heartland Conference Minister David Long Higgins was the preacher for the service.
- The Executive Director and Associate Director, Rev. Dr. Amariah H. McIntosh spoke in person at the Ohio Statehouse and provided written and in-person testimony on several bills, including opposition to raising the threshold on citizen led ballot initiatives and legislation that is harmful to LGBTQIA+ and trans youth, and abolition of the death penalty.
- In partnership with the State of Ohio, we received a grant from the State of Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services. We partnered with HEAL Ohio to host a conference at the Methodist Theological School of Ohio that dealt with loving people recovering from addiction. The event was held August 29, 2024..
- The Executive Director and the Associate Director attended the Christian Unity gathering of the National Council of Churches in Nashville, TN. The Executive Director is a member the Governing Board representing the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and is also on the Faith and Order Commission. He was a contributing author to the book *Confronting Racism and White Supremacy in the US*.
- We received a grant from the West Virginia Council of Churches that enabled us to bring Rev. Jim Wallis to Columbus on November 2, 2024 to speak on countering white Christian nationalism.
- We are in the process of implementing "Pastors and Laity Advocating Nonviolence (PLAN)". This will recruit and equip clergy and laity in OCC member churches (and others) to preach and teach peacemaking and nonviolent conflict resolution.
- The Associate Director contributed to videos and op-eds that spoke to non-violence in elections and was a panelist for a discussion on reproductive justice.
- The Associate Director gave presentations around the state on Project 2025.

We are grateful for the leadership of Rev. Dr. David Long Higgins who faithfully serves us as our Governing Board Chair. His gifts and leadership are a blessing.

Rev. Dr. Amariah H. McIntosh, Associate Director
amcintosh@ohcouncilchs.org
419-503-5556

For 109 years, United Church Homes (UCH) has been committed to transforming the lives of older adults through exceptional housing and compassionate care. Now the **19th largest multisite nonprofit senior living organization in the U.S.**, UCH serves nearly **7,000 residents** across **116 communities** in 15 states and two tribal lands. With a mission to redefine aging, UCH continues to foster a culture of **community, wholeness, and peace** while leading the way as a founding member of **Radiant Alliance**.

UCH is proud to serve the following senior living communities in the NWOA association: **The Parkvue Community, The Parkvue Community on Catawba Island, The Villas at Sheridan, Brownstone Terrace, and HardinCrest.**

Programs and Education from The Center for Abundant Aging:

The Center, established in 2017, serves as a hub for thought leadership on aging in the 21st century. Through innovative resources, engaging events and meaningful dialogue, The Center explores and redefines what it means to age with purpose, dignity and abundance, fostering a culture that values older adults and their contributions to society.

- Hosted the **9th Annual Symposium** focused on Meaning, Purpose & Redefining Retirement.
- Delivered **Another Day Older 2.0** at local UCC congregations, supporting churches in aging ministry.
- Facilitated **Church Leadership Training** and **online Wisdom Conversations** for older adults in congregational life.
- Conducted **Quarterly Lunch and Learns** for local clergy at The Parkvue Community.
- Organized workshops at the **NWOA Annual Meeting** and the **Heartland Conference UCC/DOC Adult Conference**.
- Rev. Beth Long-Higgins provided **Clergy Boundary Training** to engage clergy about issues of elder justice.
- Offered online **Enliven** courses that nourish the spiritual wellbeing of older adults, including the launch of a virtual **Caregiver Support Group**, facilitated by Rev. Darla Metz.

Expanding Reach Through Innovation:

- UCH is participating in the **GUIDE** (Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience) Model through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Aimed to enhance dementia care by comprehensive, person-centered support to individuals living with dementia, their caregivers and reducing hospitalizations.
- The **Abundant Aging Podcast Series** gained momentum with 158% growth in subscribers in 2024, offering conversations with national leaders in aging.
- UCH received \$20,000 in grants to expand its **NaviGuide** service coordination program in Erie County, enhancing care transitions for patients referred by local health partners. The program, which has already reduced hospitalizations by 82% at Firelands Regional Medical Center, provides personalized support to approximately 100 patients annually, improving health outcomes and reducing healthcare costs.
- Rev. Andrea Mericle continues to serve The Parkvue Community, which opened a new **Butterfly Garden**, providing a place of reflection and beauty.
- UCH, in collaboration with other members of **Radiant Alliance**, closed on a **strategic alliance** with CareSource to advance value-based care and expand access to innovative healthcare solutions.

Looking Ahead to 2025

Leadership Transition: Rev. Ken Daniel, with 14 years of ministerial standing in the NWOA, will retire in June 2025 as part of United Church Homes' leadership transition. Ken Young, a 20-year veteran of UCH and a diakonal minister through the CHHSM Nollau Leadership Institute, will assume the role of President and CEO in February 2025, ensuring a seamless continuation of UCH's mission and vision.

We are proud to partner with NWOA to support aging ministries and provide innovative solutions for older adults within their communities. ***Together, we remain committed to enhancing the lives of those we serve.***