

Restoration Outreach Programs Annual Report for the Year 2013

ROP's Mission and Vision

The Mission of Restoration Outreach Programs (ROP) is *Meeting Needs, Building Relationships, and Restoring Lives through Christ on East Colfax.*

Our Vision is *to see the diverse people in ROP's neighborhood developing and using their strengths, gifts, and abilities to serve one another and work together to become the community of people God created and gifted them to be.*

Toward these ends, ROP is organized under and serves participants through two principal programs – ROP Resource Ministries and ROP Youth Ministries. The more specific missions of these programs are as follows:

ROP Resource Ministries – Provides resources and develops relationships that lead people to lives of self-sufficiency and wholeness in Christ.

ROP Youth Ministries – Provides a consistent, safe, Christ-centered place for teens and children living along East Colfax, thereby building character and stability into their lives.

2013 Activities and New Initiatives

ROP serves a very diverse community, including African Americans, Caucasians and Hispanics, and over the past several of years, we have also seen a significant increase in the number of refugees moving into our neighborhood. Like many others in our community, most refugees are introduced to ROP through our food and clothing banks where the refugee community makes up more than one-third (food bank) and more than two-thirds (clothing bank) of the people served.

The refugee community also has unique sets of needs, beginning with language and cultural barriers. ROP provides them with English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and we are inspired by their hard work as they progress, albeit often at a slow rate. Many of these people did not have a chance at an education in their own countries and endured unimaginable persecution before arriving in Aurora. The majority of our students are from Burma, with Nepal being a close second. We also have students from Iraq, Ethiopia, and Latin American countries.

The assistance these refugees need is too great for any one agency to provide, so in 2013, ROP created a new staff position, Director of Refugee Resources and Outreach, and began a targeted effort to reach out to our refugee neighbors and to collaborate with others who are working with the same population in Aurora. In 2013, we partnered closely with Denver Rescue Mission (DRM) in two separate outreach events to the refugees in our community, and looking forward, we expect to continue partnering with DRM and several other organizations in



Refugees Learning English in ESL Class

meeting the needs of our growing refugee population.

In 2013, ROP also took intentional steps beyond our regular programming and toward our vision of becoming a catalyst for connecting people and organizations. Last summer, we initiated a monthly prayer breakfast for the pastors ministering in our community where we pray for and look for ways to support one another. We have invited these churches to partner with us in this year's Back to School Outreach. For the first time, backpacks will be allocated to the churches to bless their congregation and to help them reach out to others in their community, rather than all backpacks coming straight from ROP.

Last year, we also saw progress in connecting suburban churches with urban churches by organizing and creating opportunities for groups of volunteers and individuals to use their talents and resources to serve. For example, through several sessions last April and May, members of Cherry Hills Community Church taught 30 leaders of Burmese churches how to have more effective Sunday school programs for their kids. In August, Foothills Bible Church and Eastern Hills Community Church played major roles in pulling off 2013's Back to School Outreach which fed more than 2,000 people and put backpacks filled with school supplies in the hands of more than 1,000 kids. Other examples include large teams of 100+ volunteers serving more than 300 families at ROP's Thanksgiving Outreach (Denver United Church and others) and serving more than 150 homeless and near-homeless people a hot breakfast and warm clothing on Christmas morning (Restoration Community Church).



1055 Kids Received Backpacks Filled with School Supplies at the 2013 Back to School Outreach

2013 Program Results

In 2013, more than 4,400 unduplicated individuals were served through **ROP Resource Ministries**, including the following programs:

- **Food Bank:** 965 different households received food during the year, representing at least 3,665 different adults and children. On a weekly basis the food bank served an average of 95 households.
- **GED Classes:** 101 different students attended at some point during the year. Some came regularly. Others only attended sporadically. The monthly average was 26 different students. 32 individual tests were taken, and two students met all requirements to earn their GED. Progress is slow due to language barriers and inconsistent class attendance. Indeed, some of our students will probably never pass their GED, but we welcome them and seek to meet their more basic needs for relationship and encouragement. In January 2014, the Colorado GED test changed to an online and more challenging format. As a result, some of our tutors teach basic computer skills while other tutors concentrate on the academic material required to earn the GED. Thanks to a 2013 grant, ROP's GED classroom is now fully equipped with seven new computers.
- **ESL Classes:** 107 students attended ROP's English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in 2013. Sixteen of the students have obtained work, and 14 have advanced to higher levels. These may not seem like a huge numbers, but student literacy levels are often in

the preliterate range, and there is no commonality between their languages and English. Some will take a very long time to achieve advancement. Many of the students are mothers and seniors, who do not plan to work jobs outside of the home. Like some of the GED students, many ESL students also come in order to find connections and encouragement that they do not find elsewhere in their lives.

- **Outreach:** 2013 saw some rethinking in ROP's Outreach activities. Large outreach events can be quite expensive. They do very little in terms of building relationships with people. And they tend to be one-way giving events, i.e. events where people just receive stuff for free with no investment on the part of the participant (see "Lessons Learned" below). On the other hand, large outreach events provide one of our best opportunities to give volunteers from our supporting churches an opportunity to "dip their toe in the water" of city ministry and be introduced to ROP. They also give us a chance to share the Gospel with people, build awareness, and remind participants of the services ROP offers. With these considerations in mind, ROP has scaled back its large outreaches to just two events per year, the Back to School Outreach in early August and our Thanksgiving Outreach. 2013's outreaches saw 433 volunteers serve almost 3400 people. And we saw more than 200 people either receive for the first time or recommit their lives to Jesus Christ.
- **Street Ministry:** Our team served almost 2900 hot meals to the homeless and near homeless over the course of 2013. Regardless of the weather, people knew they could not only count on some hot food (and when available, warm clothing and personal hygiene items), but they would also encounter a listening ear and a caring heart from our Street ministry team.

Our primary objectives for **ROP Youth**

Ministries include keeping the kids in school and teaching them to make good decisions, so that they become self-supporting and contributing members of their families and communities. During 2013, we served 227 different youth ages 5 to 18. We try to reach and influence them before they drop out of school and become problems. None of the kids that participated regularly in our programs in 2013 dropped out of school or got in trouble with the legal system. Overall, we have seen improvement in behavior in all of our youth. Additionally, we have seen improvement in the students who participate in our after-school tutoring program, both in academic skills and behavior. We are currently developing a system to better measure how much academic improvement we are seeing in our youth.



Vacation Bible School Offers a Great Opportunity to Reach Out to and Bless Kids in Our Community

While ROP's overall spending for 2013 came in about 3% lower than budgeted, **ROP Youth Ministries** expenses were greater than budgeted, especially for camps and off-site activities. However, this was mostly good news as it reflects the participation of more kids than we expected. In fact, we doubled the number of youth served in the 2013 summer program, and the year-round programs grew by about 50%. As a result, we are increasing our budget for youth program expenses in 2014.

Lessons Learned and Looking Ahead to 2014

Every year, our staff and board select a book to read and learn from together. In 2013 that book was Toxic Charity, by Robert Lupton. The essence of the book is encapsulated in the first two statements of its *Oath for Compassionate Service*.

- *Never do for the poor what they have (or could have) the capacity to do for themselves.*
- *Limit one-way giving to emergency situations*

The basic message is that one-way giving and doing things for people that they can do for themselves creates toxic relationships that undermine the dignity and destroy the motivation of the receiver (replacing motivation with a sense of entitlement). At the same time, one-way giving over time can also create a very unhealthy and unbiblical sense of superiority on the part of the giver.

ROP has been convicted by and is seeking to make the lessons learned from Toxic Charity more and more a part of our reality. For instance, for the first time in 2013, ROP adopted the Christmas store model where parents have the opportunity to buy presents for their kids (albeit at significantly reduced prices) rather than simply receiving gifts bought by someone else for free. We have also started charging a very modest fee to our ESL students at the beginning of each semester. The point here is not so much to create a revenue stream, but rather to create a sense of investment on the part of our participants. We have also changed our nomenclature. No longer are we serving “clients” who are at the receiving end of a one-way relationship. Now, we work with “participants” who make investments in their own well-being – a subtle, but significant change in how we perceive ourselves and one another.

Admittedly, we are finding it harder to get totally away from one-way giving in our Outreach events and programs like our Food and Clothing Banks. As mentioned above under 2013 Results, we have intentionally reduced our annual outreach events from 6 to 2 over the past couple years and are continuing with our Back to School and Thanksgiving outreaches because they help us achieve other important objectives in terms of evangelism and volunteer participation. Programs like our Food and Clothing Banks also help us meet another objective which is to provide opportunities for those being served to step up and enjoy the sense of dignity and satisfaction that comes from giving back and blessing others. Most of the volunteers that serve in these two programs come from ROP’s community.



ROP's Thanksgiving Outreach is a Great Opportunity to Introduce People to ROP's Ministry

Another major initiative for 2014 is the implementation of a new mentoring program integrated with our food bank. The plan is to ask all food bank participants to visit with a Food Bank Advocate every time they come. Advocates will stay updated on their participant’s status and progress in various aspects of their lives (food, jobs, housing, relationships, addictions, etc.). In the process, they will have the opportunity to build relationships and make referrals for mentoring and/or to external resources. We plan to roll this initiative out slowly as we have opportunity to mobilize and equip the volunteers we need to make this initiative a reality.

Other 2014 goals include the following:

- Develop a network of agencies that are currently serving the refugees in the Original Aurora community. The goal is to prevent duplication of efforts and maximize the impact of refugee navigation.
- Create a student advisory council, consisting of elementary, middle and high school students, to help plan and have a “voice” in special events and regular programming.
- Integrate mentoring into our Food Bank program and recruit 12 volunteer mentors to provide 30 clients with mentoring services.
- Increase ESL tutors from six to ten, providing ESL tutoring to 60 students per week and see at least 30% of students progress to the next level.
- Teach 30 GED students per month with five students successfully completing all five GED tests and another 12 tests successfully completed by GED students. (Students must pass five individual tests to earn the GED.)
- Build the network of small churches serving our community and find some ways (like the Back to School Outreach) that we can work together in meeting the needs of our people.
- Expand ROP’s kitchen, adding much needed counter and cabinet space (contingent upon securing the necessary funding)



GED Students Learn Computer Skills on New Computers from Foundation Grant

Financial Report – Results for 2013

2013 was another good year financially for ROP. We experienced a modest increase in cash reserves as a result of revenue exceeding expenses by \$20.1k or 4.8%. Available cash at 12/31/13 was \$96.0k.

	<u>2013</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2009</u>
Revenue	\$441.8k	\$477.2k	\$361.4k	\$363.4k	\$362.3k
Expenses	\$421.7k	\$469.6k	\$369.3k	\$347.9k	\$300.5k

Decreases in expenses from the previous year were primarily related to the purchase of capital items funded by targeted grants in 2012 (youth van - \$19.4k, HVAC unit - \$15.5k, retractable wall - \$12.0k).

Donations from individuals continue to be the primary source of funding for ROP's ministry. Sources of revenue for 2013 were as follows: Individual Donors (50%), Foundations (19%), Churches (12%), Events (10%), Businesses (6%) and Rents (3%).

In addition to financial gifts received, ROP received gifts in-kind (food, clothing, household items, furniture and building materials) totaling approximately \$113k. Most of this was food raised in food drives for the benefit of our food bank and our Thanksgiving Outreach and donations of free food by Food Bank of the Rockies.

Summary

By God's grace and provision, 2013 was another fruitful year for ROP's ministry to the underprivileged living in northwest Aurora and east Denver. Many of our programs are at or near capacity in terms of available space. These include our ESL, GED, Food Bank, and our weekly elementary and middle school programs. Where growth was possible, we saw some growth, including in our after-school tutoring program and our summer youth programs. Overall ROP served more than 4,600 different people through our regular programs (excluding outreach events). Certainly, 2013's Back to School Outreach was our largest and best ever with more than 2,000 people attending, more than 1,000 kids receiving back packs filled with school supplies and well over 200 accepting or recommitting their lives to Jesus Christ

As we look forward to 2014, we are excited to see what God has planned. We are encouraged by the momentum we have established through organizing regular monthly prayer breakfasts for local pastors, and we are prayerfully looking for ways we can work together, starting with this year's Back to School Outreach. We are also eager to see what God does through our newly focused efforts in reaching out to those who minister to our growing refugee population (both secular and faith-based) and in facilitating how we can work together more effectively. Finally, we look forward with anticipation to the implementation of our new Food Bank Advocacy and Mentoring programs. We have been seeking to better integrate our Food Bank with ROP's other programming for years and through a lot of hard preparatory work and with God's help, this will be the year this integration begins to become a reality.

One thing we know is that God has plenty of room to work as we step forward in obedience and faith. With the partnership of our volunteers, supporting churches and organizations, and donors, we look forward to meeting the practical, emotional, and spiritual needs of many people in our community. In the process, we know we will be the ones most blessed. **Our commitment to God and to all of our ministry partners is to faithfully seek His direction and to exercise good stewardship over all the resources – human and financial – that He entrusts to our care. To God be the Glory.**



Burmese Church Leaders Receive Instruction from ROP Partner Church Team on Developing a More Effective Sunday School Program