

# Restoration Outreach Programs Annual Report for the Year 2014

## **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.

## **2014 Activities and New Initiatives**

**Refugee Support** - ROP serves a very diverse community, including African Americans, Caucasians and Hispanics, and over the past several 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 25 percent (food bank) and more than 60 percent (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, where 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. During

2014, more than 80 percent of our ESL students were refugees. The majority of our refugee 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 2014, we again partnered closely with



*Partnering with Denver Rescue Mission  
in Easter Outreach to Refugees*

Denver Rescue Mission (DRM) in two separate outreach events to the refugees in our community. In 2014, ROP was also invited to participate in an advisory capacity in Aurora’s newly formed Refugee & Immigration Task Force which was formed to address the issues of the growing refugee community within the City of Aurora and especially within the part of Aurora where ROP is located. Looking forward, we expect to continue partnering with DRM and several other organizations in meeting the needs of our growing refugee population.

**Connector/Unifier of Local Churches** - In 2014, ROP continued our initiative toward becoming a catalyst for connecting and unifying local churches. Monthly prayer breakfasts for the pastors ministering in our community continued in 2014 under ROP’s leadership. At these breakfasts, 5 – 10 pastors come together to pray for our community and one another. Eight of these churches partnered with ROP in 2014’s Back to School Outreach. After many years of doing this as purely an ROP outreach, for the first time backpacks filled with school supplies were allocated to participating churches in order to bless their congregations and to help the local reach out to others in their community. As part of our ongoing efforts to bring the local churches together, we have also planned a work day for later in April 2015 where members of our participating churches will come together to do simple clean up and maintenance projects at the two local schools that serve the kids in our community.



*Young Burmese clothing bank customer is tired of shopping*

In 2014, ROP decided to make a strategic shift in how we operate our clothing bank. Before 2014, all clothing was distributed at ROP’s building, but beginning in July 2014 all clothing bank distributions have been done in partnership with local churches at their facilities. By the end of the year, we had provided clothes for distribution at 6 local churches. The churches provided all the volunteers and distributed the clothes to people in their community. Rather than sampling giving clothing away to many of the same people, we are partnering with local churches, facilitating their efforts to reach out to more people and providing many more people with needed clothing.

**Suburban-Urban Church Partnerships** - Part of ROP’s expanding vision also involves connecting suburban and urban churches. In 2014 as in past years, we provided opportunities for hundreds of volunteers from suburban churches to serve underprivileged and marginalized people in the city through two large outreach events – our summer Back to School Outreach (BTSO) and our Thanksgiving Outreach (see 2014 results below). Going forward, however, we made the strategic decision to discontinue the Back to School Outreach in its previous format.

While the former BTSO model has been great for mobilizing a lot of volunteers for a one-time “feel good” experience in the city, it conflicts with other ROP values centered on relationship building and limiting one-way giving. In order to minimize this conflict, we decided to restructure the way we do the BTSO rather than simply eliminate it. Instead of doing one large outreach for the people of our community – where recipients come and go and we never see them again until next year – our plan going forward is to use smaller BTSOs to facilitate ongoing partnerships between suburban and urban churches.

Our hope and expectation is that one suburban church would partner with one urban church in putting together a BTSO for the community served by the urban church. Rather than being a one-time event, the BTSO would act as a first step toward building an ongoing partnership between these two churches which would grow over time. After working together on a BTSO, the suburban church might also be able to bless the urban church by facilitating classes in things like household finance, parenting, cooking, English language conversation, etc. We also anticipate the urban church will bless their suburban church partner perhaps in less obvious ways, like introducing them/us to their culture and showing them/us how we can experience more joy with less stuff in our lives.

**2014 Program Results, Commentary and Future Plans**

A primary objective of **ROP Resource Ministries** is leading participants toward greater levels of self-sufficiency. In 2014, more than 4,000 unduplicated individuals were served through **Resource Ministries** ongoing programs and another 3,300 people were served through several outreach events. The following provides summary results and, where appropriate, commentary on the status and future plans for **Resource Ministries'** existing programs:

- **Food Bank:** 884 different households received food during the year, representing at least 3,358 different adults and children. On a weekly basis the food bank served an average of 110 households compared to 95 households per week in 2013. Plans for the Food Bank include the incorporation of mentoring for participants seeking to take next steps toward greater self-sufficiency. Training has been developed but implementation of mentoring is dependent on mobilizing a core of volunteers which is proving to be a significant challenge.
- **Clothing Bank:** Almost 15 tons of clothing was distributed to more than 1,000 families through 8 clothing distributions. As mentioned above, mid-year ROP made a strategic shift to distribute clothing through local churches rather than at ROP's building in order to build relationships with these churches and reach more people.
- **GED Classes:** 72 different students attended at some point during the year. Some came regularly. Others only attended a few times or sporadically. The monthly average was 19 different students. These numbers are down significantly from the previous year, but the biggest drop was in tests taken - 1 in 2014 vs. 32 tests taken in 2013. These declines dramatically reflect the impact of the changes in Colorado's GED program implemented in 2014. Many say it is now much more difficult to get a GED than to get a high school diploma. These changes are causing us to rethink and expand the scope of the program to better meet the needs of our community. We will continue to tutor students who want to pursue the GED, but we also plan to expand the program to include computer, English language and job application skills. We have informally provided this kind of training to students who needed it in the past, but going forward we plan to promote it and incorporate it more formally into the program. We are also looking at what it would take



*ROP's awesome Food Bank Team*

to offer these education/job readiness classes in the evenings rather than just the afternoon in order to make the program more available to those already working day jobs.

- **ESL Classes:** 76 students attended ROP's English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in 2014. Six of the students obtained jobs and 27 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:** ROP's outreach events served 3,287 people in 2014, principally through its Thanksgiving Outreach and a Back to School Outreach (BTSO) where 1100 backpacks filled with school supplies were distributed to kids. However, 2014 saw some further 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. As a result, we decided to discontinue the large Back to School Outreach in favor of promoting one-on-one ongoing partnerships between urban and suburban churches which might include smaller scale BTSOs among several activities by which the two churches would partner together. (See Suburban-Urban Church Partnerships above)
- **Street Ministry:** Our team served almost 3100 hot meals to the homeless and near homeless over the course of 2014. 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.



*Street Ministry Dishes Out Hot Food and Much More Every Monday Night*

A primary objective of **ROP Youth Ministries** is keeping kids in school and teaching them to make good decisions, in order that they become self-supporting and contributing members of their families and communities. During 2014, Youth Ministries served 251 different kids. The following provides summary results and, where appropriate, commentary on the status and future plans for each of **Youth Ministries'** existing programs:

- ROP's evening group mentoring programs for elementary, middle and high school students (**Spark, Ignite and Impact**) ministered to 65 different kids during the course of 2104 and an average of 50 kids per month. A big blessing for Youth Ministry in 2014 was bringing a new Teen Ministry Director on staff, but an ongoing challenge remains the absence of a Children's Ministry Director. In the mean time, ROP has been blessed by three high-capacity volunteers who have assumed leadership of the Children's program for the 2013-14 academic year, but this arrangement appears unlikely to continue beyond May 2015.

- **After-School Tutoring:** 28 different students received more than 400 hours of tutoring. Most of the students in ROP's after-school tutoring program are Karen refugees from Burma. During 2014, ROP leadership met with the Principals of the elementary school (Crawford) and middle/high school (West) where most of our kids attend. Our desire is to build relationships with the schools that would allow us to better collaborate in meeting the needs of our kids. The schools encouraged us to place primary attention on the language skills of our refugee kids as the resources available to kids that speak Nepali or Burmese are much more limited than the resources available to Spanish speakers.



*Local Schools Encourage ROP's Tutors to Help Our Refugee Kids with English*

- **Summer Camp:** During the summer of 2014 ROP provided 5 weeks of Day Camp to 158 different kids, most of whom attended multiple weeks if not every week. Through our partnership with Eagle Lake (The Navigators), sixteen of these kids were also able to enjoy a week of camp in the mountains at very low cost. In addition to giving the kids in our community a safe place to have some fun during the summer, the Day Camps provide a great opportunity to develop leadership skills in our middle and high school students who earn the opportunity serve in a variety of capacities that fit their abilities and level of maturity.
- **Christmas Store:** 2014 was the first year that ROP conducted its own "Christmas Store". We like this model for a Christmas outreach much better than the previous give-away approach because it allows parents to shop for and purchase presents for their kids, albeit at deeply discounted prices. This year's store provided presents for 150 kids. It was not technically a Youth Ministries program, but was administered by Youth Ministries for the benefit of all ROP families.

## **2015 Goals**

The following is a summary of ROP's major goals for 2015:

- **Suburban/Urban Partnerships:** Find at least three churches to partner with one of our local churches in putting together a back to school outreach for the families in the church and as an outreach to other families to whom the local churches are reaching out.
- **Building Unity among Local Churches:** Facilitate a work-day/s at both the elementary school (Crawford) and middle/high school (West) serving the kids in our community. The date of April 25<sup>th</sup> has been set and both schools have agreed to participate. We expect to mobilize volunteers from both the urban and suburban churches with which ROP partners.
- **GED:** Formally expand the scope of the "GED" program to include computer and other job readiness skills. Explore the possibility of beginning an evening Job Readiness program on Monday evenings.



*ROP's First Christmas Store was a Big Success*

- **Clothing Bank:** Use clothing bank to help local churches bless their congregations and reach out to others. Rather than doing clothing distributions at ROP’s building, we are transporting the clothes to other churches that host the event and provide the volunteers. This also makes it more of a two-way partnership.
- **Youth Group Mentoring:** Recruit at least 4 additional volunteers so that we can add another night of group mentoring for our elementary age kids and split our middle and high school kids into two nights.
- **Children’s Ministries:** Hire a new Children’s Ministries Director, allowing Youth Ministries Director to spend more time on program development, volunteer support, church relationships and personal and organizational support-raising.
- **Adult Mentoring:** Implement a new mentoring program for people looking to take next steps toward greater self-sufficiency.
- **Building:** Complete the Kitchen Expansion project providing more counter and cabinet space. (ROP already received a \$10k grant from the Anschutz Foundation in 2014, but work was delayed due to the discovery of the need to move structural support and redesign. We are working on finalizing plans.)
- **Fundraising:** Implement a new fund-raising event. Four local ethnic churches (Nepali, Burmese, African American and mixed-race) are partnering with ROP in a May 2<sup>nd</sup> fund-raising dinner for 300+ participants. Each church will be featured along with one or more of ROP’s programs in one of four separate rooms. Each church will prepare and serve food representing their culture, and ROP will underwrite the cost of the food. We are pretty excited about this as we expect it will highlight ROP’s vision of being a resource to and unifier of the local churches, while also facilitating long-term relationships and partnerships between urban and suburban churches.



*“Snow Days” May Be the Favorite Annual Event of Our Youth Ministries Kids*



*GED Students Working on Computer Skills*

### **Human Resources**

ROP’s most precious resource is the people who serve with us in ministry. In addition to our staff of 13 (8 full-time and 5 part-time, 3 of whom are volunteers), we are blessed to serve alongside a great team of volunteers. The following numbers underscore the significance of volunteer participation in this ministry on 2014. Truly, there would be no ministry without them and we thank God for their partnership.

	<u>No. Volunteers</u>	<u>Hours Served</u>
High Impact (regular)	104	7,365
One-time	1,047	9,784

**Financial Resources**

2014 was another good year financially for ROP. We experienced another increase in cash reserves as a result of revenue exceeding expenses by \$38.5k or 8.2%. Net working capital at 12/31/14 was \$123.8k.

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2009</u>
Revenue	\$506.0	\$445.6k	\$477.2k	\$361.4k	\$363.4k	\$362.3k
Expenses	\$467.5	\$423.3k	\$469.6k	\$369.3k	\$347.9k	\$300.5k

Increases in expenses from the previous year were primarily related to Staff Salaries (+\$34.0K from adding a Teen Ministries Director and other staff raising more personal support) and Outreach (+\$10.8k from Back to School Outreach which is being discontinued in this large-scale format).

**Donations from individuals continue to be the primary source of funding for ROP's ministry.** Sources of revenue for 2014 were as follows: Individual Donors (51%), Events (16%), Churches (16%), Foundations (14%), and Rents/Fees (3%).

In addition to financial gifts received, ROP received gifts in-kind (food, clothing, household items, furniture and building materials) totaling approximately \$126k in 2014. More than \$73k of this was food raised in food drives for the benefit of our food bank and our Thanksgiving Outreach. In addition, approximately \$30k of clothing was donated to ROP's clothing bank and \$18k of school supplies and food were donated to the August 2014 Back to School Outreach.



*Learning English is A Critical Need for Refugees*

**Summary**

By God's grace and provision, 2014 was another fruitful year for ROP's ministry to the underprivileged living in northwest Aurora and east Denver. Some of our programs remain at or near capacity in terms of available space, including our ESL and Food Bank programs. However, some programs have experienced declines from 2013. Our evening group mentoring programs for kids have been cut-back from four to two night each week due to the absence of a Children's Ministries Director and volunteers. Also, as discussed above our GED program has experienced significant declines as a result of the GED requirements becoming much more difficult. We are taking steps to address these situations, i.e. attempting to recruit more volunteers and to hire a Children's Ministries Director, and expanding the scope of the GED program to become more of a job readiness program. Lord willing, we hope to achieve these goals and the others listed above in 2014.

As we look forward to 2014, we are excited to see what God has planned. Much of our excitement relates to our expanding vision of being a facilitator of connections between the local churches and between the urban and suburban churches. Since this is a more organic and less program-driven effort requiring the involvement of others outside the ROP umbrella, we are

holding our plans more loosely and expecting many adjustments as we move forward. We are encouraged by the ongoing participation of the local churches in our monthly prayer breakfasts, but we are also taking additional steps we feel led to take in terms of things like:

- (1) Organizing a Community Work Day for the local churches to bless our neighborhood schools,
- (2) Encouraging our urban and suburban church partners to prayerfully consider entering into one-to-one partnerships, and
- (3) Partnering with four urban churches to host an event to share our expanding vision (and hopefully raise some money in support of it).

We will see what happens as a result of these initiatives and adjust accordingly. Through these new initiatives and our existing programs, it is our desire to move a few steps closer to the realization of ROP’s Vision - *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.* Ultimately, if we are successful, we would love to work ourselves out of a job. In the mean time, there is a lot to be done.

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.**



*The Unofficial Mission Of ROP – Creating Smiles*