



# TOGETHER

WE RAISE FOUNDATION | ANNUAL REPORT FY2021

*Dear Friends,*

As we continue to lead our organization through the unprecedented challenges of a global pandemic and growing unrest in our cities, we want to express our deep gratitude for the investments you are making in others through your gifts to We Raise. We are in this together, the difficult times and successful solutions – and the struggle that accompanies both. We experience it all ... together.

We consider We Raise a facilitator – of ideas, communities, people, and organizations – that are aligned with a commitment to put faith in action. If you're receiving this annual report, you are a part of that community of partners and we are humbled by your dedication to improving the lives of others.

We are expanding our strategies at We Raise to engage, formally, with other grant makers so our investments in community programs are even more impactful. We believe that by working together we can accomplish so much more. Thank you for making We Raise a priority in your philanthropic commitments. We remain, as always,

Gratefully yours,



Mr. Darron Lowe  
Chair, Board of Directors



Mr. Paul C. Miles  
President and CEO





**Building Stability & Prosperity for Community Transformation  
St. Marcus Lutheran School, Milwaukee, Wis.**

# - Together -

**We Raise Foundation is honored to present our fiscal year 2021 Annual Report, which reflects the impact of your gifts from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.**

At We Raise, our mission is to support, encourage, and collaborate with organizations that advance freedom in Christ and hope for the future. As our partners in this work, you know this is a daunting task as we navigate a world forever changed by divisive political rhetoric and the separative effects of a worldwide pandemic.

Throughout our history, We Raise has known that collaboration is key. We have served as a facilitator, bringing together people, organizations, and ideas to create sustainable solutions to serious issues facing communities. Together, we are much more effective in supporting agents of change in our communities, the organizations and programs that offer solutions within the areas of education, workforce development, and criminal justice.

There is beauty when like-minded people gather their resources and work together for the common good. In its account of the beginnings of Christianity, Acts 2:43-47 contains a vivid, moving description of intentional collaboration and what can happen as a result:

*Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (NIV)*

This past year, We Raise Foundation has made great strides in creating partnerships to support organizations and programs working for a better world for all. We are grateful for the faithfulness of our donors, providing (and sometimes sacrificing to provide) the financial support needed to lift up long-neglected communities and neighborhoods. Our partnerships with like-minded organizations allow us to make a greater impact on students and families living in poverty. We are very proud of our partners who demonstrate on a daily basis that they can best help marginalized individuals, families, and children when collaboration and consistency of resources are elevated and emphasized. **Working together, we can accomplish great things.**



Farming Hope Impact Expansion  
Farming Hope, San Francisco, Calif.

## Our Vision

People free from poverty, violence, and inequality.

## Our Mission

Called by Christ to serve others, We Raise Foundation partners with Christian organizations to support and develop sustainable programs that help people thrive.

# People Served in FY2021

During Fiscal Year 2021, We Raise Foundation grantee partners  
**served over 5,380 people**  
through their programs!



After-School Enrichment + Youth Leadership Programs  
Harbor House Ministries, Oakland, Calif.

# Volunteers Engaged in FY2021

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Volunteers are the lifeblood of so many nonprofit organizations.  
During Fiscal Year 2021,  
**over 700 individuals volunteered**  
their time with We Raise Foundation grantees for a total of  
**20,744 hours!**

*"Serve one another  
humbly in love."*

Galatians 5:13



Path2Math  
Children Rising, Oakland, Calif.



## *Program Support in FY2021*

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We Raise's grant programs are about much more than money. Long-term successful programs and leaders also benefit from expert advice, connections with other inspired leaders, and additional funding opportunities. We Raise grants aim to provide both **financial**

**support and expert resources**

to strengthen the program for sustainable impact.

**Total Program Support in FY2021**  
**\$545,982**

6-Cycle Youth Job Training through Bicycles  
Village Wrench, Greenville, S.C.



Cross-Age Peer Mentoring Program  
Kidz Express, Chicago, Ill.

# Donor Support in FY2021

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Everything We Raise Foundation does is made possible by our generous, faithful supporters.

**We received donations from more than 5,000 individuals during fiscal year 2021.**

Donors supported the work of We Raise in a variety of ways including planned gifts, IRA charitable rollover gifts, gifts of stock, memoriam/honorariums, Thrivent Choice Dollars, and Amazon Smile.

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**Working together, we can accomplish great things.**

We've highlighted four We Raise program partners that inspired us this past year, projects made possible only by our partners and donors working together.

*Grantee Highlight*

## MAAFA Redemption Project

MAAFA Redemption Project, Chicago, Ill.

**A faith-based residential program enabling high-risk men ages 18-20 in Chicago's West Garfield Park neighborhood to work together for leadership development, community outreach, and the prevention of gun violence.**

The MAAFA Redemption Project began in 2017 with its first cohort of young men receiving spiritual life coaching, housing, employment, training in the construction and landscaping trades, academic enrichment, and a host of wraparound social services. From the beginning, the idea of young men working together to help themselves and each other was key for MAAFA co-founder Marshall Hatch, Jr.

"The overall goal—and I think it was successful—was to create a brotherhood, a sense of fraternity, and a structured, safe, and stable living environment," Hatch says.

We Raise, in partnership with the MIGMIR Fund, awarded MAAFA a \$300,000 grant, enabling them to rehab a three-unit neighborhood building to house more men—scaling their capacity by about 50%—and to hire more staff for coaching and mentorship programs. The project also emphasizes activism and civic engagement as essential to improving individual outcomes and helping the community thrive.

"We're blessed to be in relationship with We Raise, because we know We Raise is not just about financial contributions," Hatch says. "Through We Raise, we've developed relationships with and access to nationwide networks that open up an even bigger platform to talk about our program and our community."



*Grantee Highlight*  
**Youth Artist Organizers Program**  
Freedom Arts & Education Center, St. Louis, Mo.

Arts education, academic enrichment, mentoring, and employment opportunities so that Black youth in systemically-divested communities can become highly creative, literate, and independent individuals.

Andrew Gibson co-founded the Freedom Arts and Education Center (FAEC) in 2012 to fill the gap created at a time when art and music programs were being cut in local schools. FAEC quickly created a catalog of arts workshops easily facilitated in any setting to any age and worked to create strong partnerships with several organizations, including St. Louis County Libraries, Kingdom House, Children's Home Society, and Neighborhood Houses.

Key to FAEC's mission is its Youth Artist Organizers program, which financially compensates enrolled scholars in 5th-10th grade. These scholars actively work together with FAEC teaching artists and local organizations to intentionally grow in their creativity, professionalism, and community awareness while bringing transformative arts education to the younger members of their community.

In July 2020, Gibson received a We Raise Emerging Leader grant that enabled FAEC to start a pandemic microscool based in the arts, faith, Black culture, and a decolonized curriculum developed with program youth. A professional musician who has worked on albums and musical performances with high-profile recording artists, Gibson calls We Raise "intentionally relational," adding that he is "incredibly grateful to the generosity of donors."



*Grantee Highlight*

## AGAPE Reentry Program

The SoulFisher Ministries, St. Louis, Mo.

**Strengthening the relationship between women involved in the criminal justice system and service providers by ensuring that case management includes both pre- and post-release services.**

After a lifetime of repeated incarcerations, Shawntelle Fisher had a lightbulb moment that resulted in her pursuing her education and graduating from St. Louis's Neighborhood Leadership Academy. In addition, Fisher established The SoulFisher Ministries to identify barriers to successful community reentry of previously incarcerated individuals and help key stakeholders and community representatives work together to attain that goal.

The AGAPE Reentry Program consists of four components: Homeward Bound, Home to Stay, Restored for Success, and Fisher Transitional Living for Women. We Raise's \$100,000 GrantsPlus grant supported permanent housing placement for 10 women, permanent housing maintenance for 10 women, and direct services for up to 30 women newly released from jail or prison.

A vital aspect of the AGAPE Reentry Program is for ex-offenders to develop a positive attitude toward social responsibility and accountability. AGAPE caseworker Tiffany Brooks notes that an essential part of the program is counseling. "Getting people to change their ways and thought process and their ways of doing things—it's a much-needed program for these women in the long run," she says.

Together, We Raise donors are helping formerly incarcerated women live above the poverty line while remaining free from criminal activity.



## *Grantee Highlight*

# Building Stability & Prosperity for Community Transformation Project

St. Marcus Lutheran School, Milwaukee, Wis.

**A school serving a historically Black neighborhood since 1875 expands support services it launched in 2017 to build a more racially and economically diverse community.**

Residents of the Harambee neighborhood on Milwaukee's north side live up to their community's name, which means "to pull together" in Swahili. After the area was impacted by economic decline, slum clearance, freeway construction, and race riots, residents and community organizations worked together to bring in new social services in conjunction with local churches, the University of Wisconsin Extension, and the City of Milwaukee.

Since St. Marcus Lutheran School launched their "Building Stability and Prosperity for Community Transformation" project, they have served almost 700 individuals through collaborations with community partners like Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation, ACTS Housing, Milwaukee JobsWork, and Habitat for Humanity.

In June 2021, We Raise joined with Siebert Lutheran Foundation to provide a \$300,000 grant for the project, enabling St. Marcus to expand its support services for all school families. "Any time two leading foundations collaborate on an essential vision with the central city of Milwaukee as its focus is an incredible blessing," said Henry Tyson, Superintendent of St. Marcus School. "We are grateful for their partnership and the impact it will have on the Harambee community."

The project will provide services like financial literacy classes, homeownership workshops, one-on-one financial coaching, and job networking for family members and residents, as St. Marcus works steadily toward a vision of peace and opportunity in a thriving community.



# 2020 Richard E. Herman Leadership Award

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## Mr. Derrick Braziel



Braziel co-founded and currently serves as development director at MORTAR in Cincinnati, Ohio, a nonprofit organization that aims to create diverse communities by enabling historically marginalized entrepreneurs, most of whom are in Black and minority populations, to access the resources needed to start and run successful businesses. As development director, he supports MORTAR by deepening relationships with various community stakeholders while providing opportunities for external partners to support local entrepreneurs and their ideas.

MORTAR runs an Entrepreneurship Training Academy, hosts pop-up shops to test out ideas around the city, and invests in small-business owners, all the while committing to lifting up disadvantaged leaders.

Braziel's work has led to recognition from the Indianapolis Star, YES! Magazine, and NBC Nightly News. He was named to Forbes' "30 under 30" list for Social Entrepreneurs and "One to Watch" by Cincinnati Magazine. The Obama Foundation Fellowship named Braziel one of its 2019 Fellows.

**"This award means so much to me. To be recognized for the work that I'm doing and to have our organization recognized for the work that we're doing, well, there really aren't words to express my gratitude. But, thank you! I'm really grateful for this award and the support of We Raise.**

*- Mr. Derrick Braziel*

The Leadership Award recognizes the commitment and service of one leader interrupting the cycles of poverty, violence, and inequality in the United States, whether through their professional work or as a volunteer.

The Leadership Award was established in honor of Dr. Richard Herman, We Raise Foundation's fourth president (2006-2015), a passionate supporter and encourager of young adult Christian leaders.

# Thank You!

The issues facing our communities today require strong partnerships, with individuals and organizations joining forces to change the status quo and to create a more equitable social and economic landscape for all.

We Raise Foundation is proud of our grantee partners as they show their strength in creating sustainable programs while reaching out with love and compassion.

We are honored that our donors partner with us as we work to bring communities the peace and hope that they deserve.

While the work is daunting, we rest in our faith in Christ. Ephesians 4:16 tells us that:

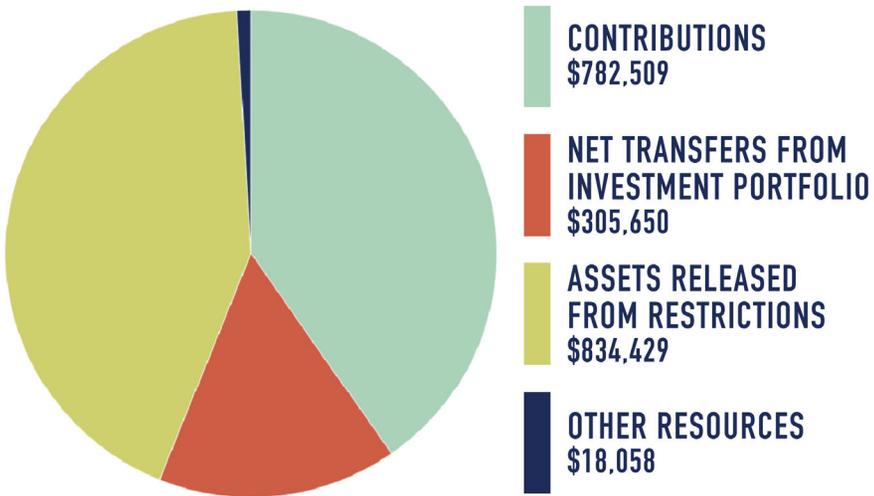
*From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

**We are blessed by your participation in this work and thank you for another year serving people and communities that need our care and compassion.**

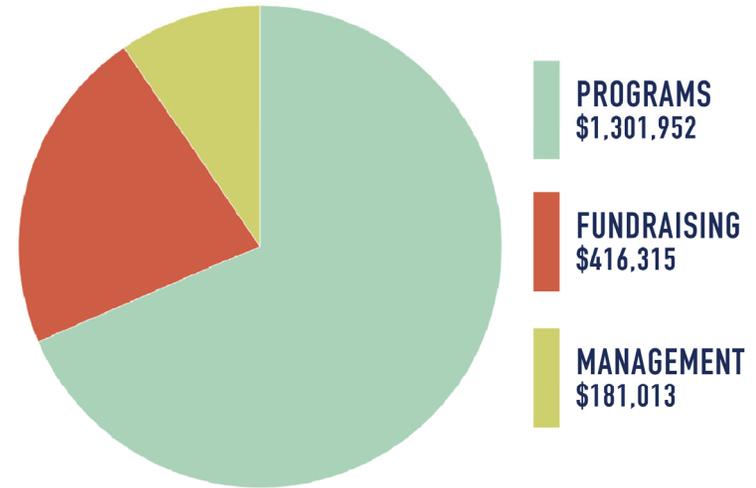


# FY2021 Financials

## BREAKDOWN OF OPERATING REVENUES \$1,940,646



## BREAKDOWN OF OPERATING EXPENSES \$1,899,280



Program Expense is comprised of: Grants and Projects (\$677,434), Program Education (\$360,247), and Program Support (\$264,271).

Total Net Assets at 6/30/21 were \$11,960,430.

A full copy of our audit report is available online at [weraise.org](http://weraise.org).



# Board of Directors

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Fiscal Year 2021

**Mr. Mark Duesenberg**, Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary,  
Ferro Corporation, Rocky River, Ohio

**Mr. Gregory Jordan**, Senior Vice President and Senior Managing Director,  
Foundation & Institutional Advisors, Northern Trust, Chicago, Ill. (Vice Chair)

**Dr. Ciunial Lewis**, Senior Executive Director, Gateway Foundation, Wood  
Dale, Ill.

**Mr. Darron Lowe**, Vice President, Wells Fargo Consumer Credit Solutions,  
O'Fallon, Ill. (Chair)

**Mrs. Christine Messerschmidt**, Associate, Thrivent Financial,  
Barrington, Ill.

**Rev. Wayne Miller**, Former Bishop, Metropolitan Chicago Synod, Evangelical  
Lutheran Church in America, Chicago, Ill.

**Mrs. Monique Nunes**, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coach,  
Concordia University Irvine, Bronxville, N.Y. (Secretary)

**Carson Williams**, Investment Banker, Croft & Bender, Atlanta, Ga.

# Current Staff

**Paul Miles**, President and CEO

**Meredith Capocci**, Senior Accountant

**Matt Croll**, Director of Finance

**Sandi Croll**, Director of Finance

**Jennifer Sievers**, Manager of Advancement Services

**Anne Schoenherr Turner**, Director of Development & Communications



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