

Pathways

2024



On the cover is the hunger and nutrition program in action.

All photos by Kennedy Jene, UMWC Media and Communication Specialist

A Note from the Director

It was a great year for the guests, shoppers, and patients of Urban Ministries' three service programs in health, hunger and nutrition, and homelessness/housing – and for our fourth program as well, as volunteers are returning even as COVID is rising as a “slow burn” in our community.

The Helen Wright Center used Wake County Bridge 2 Home funds to help 88 women sign leases on apartments, even as we pushed our occupancy to the high 60s-low 70s (a full house for sure). Helen Wright is so much more than an emergency shelter. It is a program assisting women in job searches, improving their skills (and their wages), and connecting them to the healthcare and housing services they need.

The Hunger and Nutrition program is so much more than a food pantry, providing 34-40 lb. healthy food boxes to food insecure families both through our popular Mon-Thurs morning drive thru and through our partner agency program, now serving an additional 120 families each week by sharing food boxes with case managers from partner agencies.





The Open Door Clinic remains the only “low barrier” free and charitable clinic in our community, providing basic care (visits, labs, testing, counseling, and generic medications) to all comers as well as enhanced care (more expensive medications and testing as well as specialty care) to persons needing referrals. Too, the clinic was excited to help over 300 patients apply for Medicaid, since expansion occurred in Dec. 2023.

Our staff has worked hard and tirelessly these past pandemic years and deserves a breather – if we can make it happen in the midst of increased need in our community.

We are especially thankful to our interns – students volunteering 8-12 hours a week – and our volunteers. Interns filled the gaps in our volunteer needs when people felt the need to protect themselves from possible exposure to COVID. Interns are enthusiastic college students seeking experience and references for graduate school. We are proud that so many of our interns are being accepted to medical school, nursing school, and graduate education.

And the increase in volunteers at our front desk and pantry create hospitality for all who seek our services.

Thanks to all of you who support us with time, treasure, and talent. We could not do what we do and we would not be who we are without you.



THE HUNGER & NUTRITION PROGRAM



Our food pantry is more than just a service; it's a lifeline for families and individuals facing food insecurity. Every meal provided is a step toward hope, resilience, and a brighter future. Thanks to the unwavering support of our community and the dedication of our volunteers, we continue to uplift lives in profound ways.

Our clients' stories show the true impact of our pantry. Robin B. depends on us to help feed her grandchildren nutritious meals. Ana P., visiting for the first time, came after our curbside pickup hours, but we made sure she still received enough food for her children. These moments remind us that our dedication to supporting our neighbors never stops.

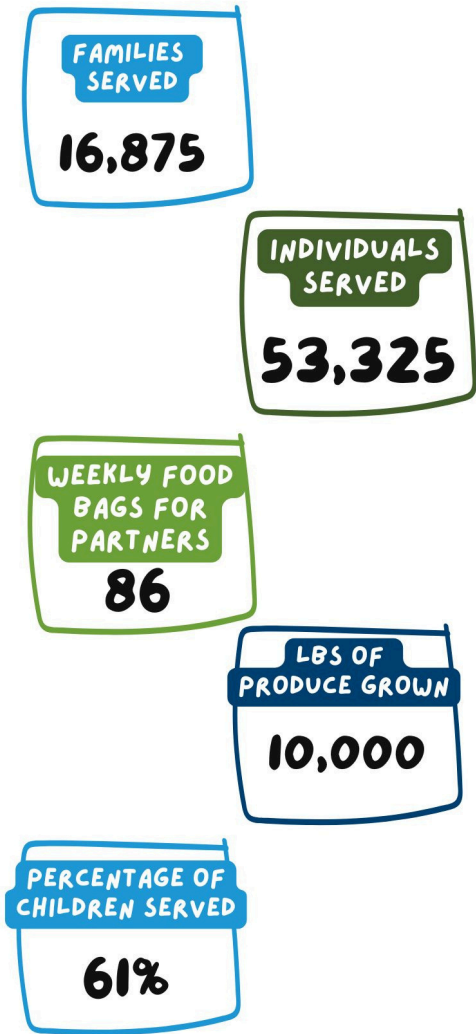
The gratitude we receive from clients is deeply moving. One anonymous individual shared, "When people give, it's like they have God living inside them," a powerful reminder of the impact generosity can have. James Penny, another client, praised not just the food he receives, but the warm, welcoming atmosphere and the way our staff goes the extra mile to support those in need.

Beyond food, our pantry offers connection and compassion. Teresa, a senior on a fixed income, finds comfort not only in the meals but also in the kindness of those around her, sharing what little she has with fellow residents at her senior home. Ellie, who has been with us for a few months, encourages others to hold onto hope, saying, "There is hope, there is a future."

The experiences of clients like Marta and Olivia Carrington further highlight the impact of our work. Marta recommends our services to anyone in need, while Olivia, who supports her family without access to SNAP benefits, is deeply thankful for the help.



Looking ahead, we remain steadfast in our mission to combat hunger and provide support to those who need it most. With the continued generosity of our community and the commitment of our volunteers, our food pantry will remain a place of hope, nourishment, and kindness for all who come through our pickup line. Together, we can continue making a difference—one meal, one family, one life at a time.





THE OPEN DOOR CLINIC & PHARMACY

Ana Cecilia Cardoza's journey to the United States was marked by uncertainty and fear. Leaving her home in Venezuela, she faced the daunting task of rebuilding her life in a new country. As a diabetic with hypertension, her health concerns added an extra layer of complexity to the challenges she encountered.

Without health insurance and limited financial resources, Ana found herself in a desperate situation. The medications she had brought with her were dwindling, and the prospect of affording the necessary treatment seemed impossible. It was during this difficult time that a friend recommended the Open Door Clinic (ODC).

The ODC became a lifeline for Ana. The compassionate care and comprehensive services she received provided her with the stability and support she desperately needed. With access to regular medical checkups, essential medications, and personalized guidance, Ana was able to regain control of her health.

"The ODC was like a beacon of hope," Ana shared. "They treated me with such kindness and respect, making me feel welcomed and cared for. I am so grateful for the care I received."

One particularly memorable experience for Ana was the clinic's unwavering commitment to patient care during the height of the pandemic. Despite the challenges, the ODC staff went above and beyond to ensure patients like Ana continued to receive the care they needed.

Today, Ana is proud of her progress. With her blood pressure and blood sugar under control, she is thriving in her new life. Her experience at the ODC has inspired her to pay it forward, encouraging others to support the clinic and its mission.

Carla, Ana's daughter, is a medical doctor who witnessed firsthand the impact of the ODC on her mother's life. Her experience has deepened her commitment to providing accessible healthcare to underserved communities.

"My mom's gratitude for the ODC is immeasurable," Carla shared. "Seeing her health improve and her spirits lifted gave me a new perspective on the power of compassionate care. It reinforced my belief in the importance of organizations like the ODC, and it inspired me to become more involved in serving my community." Carla now works in the ODC, dedicating herself to compassionate care.

Ana and Carla's story is a testament to the life-changing impact of the Open Door Clinic. By providing comprehensive healthcare services to those in need, the ODC empowers patients like Ana to overcome challenges, regain their health, and build brighter futures.

PATIENTS
SEEN
1,535

PRESCRIPTIONS
FILLED
35,071

TOTAL
IMMUNIZATIONS
1,293

PATIENT
VISITS
7,806

OVER HALF
OUR PATIENTS
ARE 45
AND OLDER



THE HELEN WRIGHT CENTER

for Women

The Helen Wright Center for Women is more than a shelter; it is a direct pathway from the streets to a home. Last year, 88 Helen Wright Center guests signed a sustainable lease in their own name. This was made possible by the perseverance of our guests, direct rental aid, housing vouchers, and the relationships our staff and partners have built with local landlords.

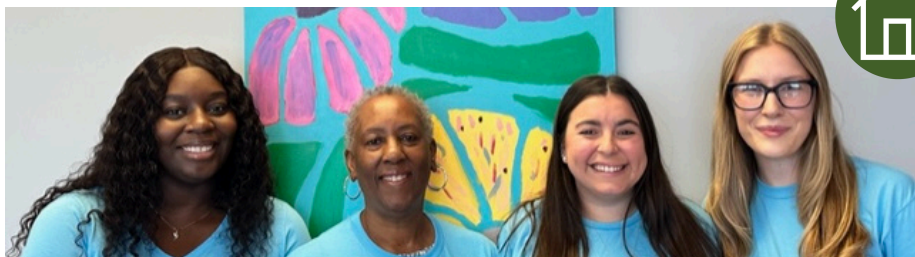
Direct rental aid, enabled by our generous donors and partners, allowed the Helen Wright Center to help many women overcome the nearly insurmountable obstacle of saving for a security deposit plus first month's rent. This aid helped women quickly depart the shelter to a home. Our case managers helped other women apply for one of the limited housing vouchers available in our community, and some were fortunate to receive one. Through these various methods of support, so many stories were transformed, empowering women to leave behind homelessness forever.

Afisa A. Lawson, a former guest of the Helen Wright Center for Women, is a living testament to perseverance and the power of support. Arriving at the Helen Wright Center in November, she stayed until April—six months that changed her life in more ways than one. Reflecting on her journey, she says, "I plan to become a donor in the future. I want to give back to those who helped me."

Originally from Michigan, Afisa moved to North Carolina after losing her job and facing personal challenges. She moved to NC, but Afisa soon found herself without stable housing. After a brief stay with a friend that didn't work out, she sought refuge at The Women's Center on New Bern Avenue, which helped her begin her mental health journey and assisted her with searching for housing and her current apartment. While she waited for a bed to open in a shelter, Afisa camped in the woods of I-5501 near exit 270.

Thankfully, Afisa soon found solace at the Helen Wright Center for Women, where she was supported during her transition.

She secured a temporary overnight job at Walmart, with her case manager, Mich, providing her with the necessary work clothes. Though the schedule was grueling, she pushed through, leaving each day at 4 p.m. to catch the bus and not returning until 10 a.m., working tirelessly to get back on her feet.



During her stay at the center, Afisa took advantage of every opportunity to improve her situation. She attended classes at Step Up Ministry twice weekly, gaining valuable computer and financial literacy skills. Step Up Ministry provided great assistance in helping her secure her driver's license and find a job with Invictus, an African-American-owned Amazon provider.

Afisa speaks with deep gratitude for the staff at the Helen Wright Center, especially Mich, who went above and beyond to support her, and staff members Taneka, Aubrey, and Adriana who ensured she had everything she needed—even saving her food when she returned late from work. "When I get in the position, this organization has my undivided attention, time, and money," Afisa shares, vowing to give back to the mission that helped her during her time of need.

She is proud to now have a stable home, thanks to a housing voucher. Afisa remains hopeful about her future. She's grateful for the support she received and reflects, "There are still people who care. I'm most grateful for that. I was able to persevere through everything because of just five women."

When Afisa first arrived at the Helen Wright Center, she struggled with something many take for granted—her smile. Missing teeth and health issues had long affected her confidence, and she would hide behind a face mask, unwilling to reveal her smile. However, the encouragement of Ms. Kitty, one of the case managers at the Helen Wright Center, began to shift Afisa's perspective.

"Take it off! You deserve to smile," Ms. Kitty would say, reminding Afisa that her teeth were removed for her health and that she had every right to feel proud of herself. Ms. Kitty, alongside Afisa's case manager, Mich, pushed her to seek out partials and reminded her that she was worthy of showing the world her smile.

That encouragement stayed with Afisa, eventually leading her to seek out the dentist, where on September 25th, she finally solved the problem she had struggled with for five years. Now, she proudly shows off her pearly whites and thanks those who believed in her when she didn't.

When asked what advice she would give someone facing homelessness, Afisa shared this: "In life, we are all tested, and in the end, it becomes our testimonial. Advocate for yourself relentlessly!"

Afisa's story is one of resilience, empowerment, and hope. It shows us all the transformative power of community and the importance of believing in yourself—even in the face of adversity.



Volunteer Services



At UMWC, we're more than just a nonprofit—we're a catalyst for meaningful careers and positive community change. Our volunteer program offers a variety of opportunities for individuals to give back, from one-time projects to ongoing commitments. For those seeking a structured experience, our internship program provides hands-on training and mentorship in various fields.

We're fortunate to have passionate and dedicated individuals who bring fresh perspectives and valuable experience to our team. This year, we're proud to highlight one of our Volunteer Coordinator Interns, Sophia Anderson.



Sophia, a graduate of Florida State University with a major in Interdisciplinary Social Science and a minor in Sociology, is currently pursuing a Master of Public Administration (MPA) at North Carolina State University. Her academic background and ongoing studies equip her with a robust understanding of social issues and innovative solutions, making her an invaluable asset to UMWC.

When asked why she chose UMWC for her internship, Sophia emphasized the diverse programs we offer. "I chose UMWC for my internship because of the opportunities to learn about all the different programs and how they operate and run," she explained. For Sophia, UMWC offers a unique chance to immerse herself in the multifaceted world of nonprofit management, where each program offers distinct insights into serving the community.

Throughout her internship, Sophia is eager to learn the intricacies of managing and operating a nonprofit with a wide range of services. Her previous experiences with both large and small nonprofits have given her a unique perspective on what makes organizations successful.



"Having past knowledge of how other nonprofits are run gives me the advantage of knowing what ideas work for some nonprofits and being able to brainstorm ideas," she shared.

At UMWC, Sophia witnesses the impact of her work every day. "We provide an outlet for those who want to volunteer and also for those in the community who need help," she said. From medical services to the fresh produce we offer, UMWC makes a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve.

As Sophia continues her internship, we are confident that her dedication and expertise will leave a lasting impact on UMWC and the people we serve. Her journey exemplifies the spirit of volunteerism and the power of education in driving social change.

Join us in making a difference! Whether you're looking to volunteer your time, gain hands-on experience through our internship program, or support our mission in other ways, there's a place for you here. Together, we can continue to make a positive impact in our community.



Want to get involved?

- Volunteer onsite with us
- Host a food drive
- Donate items



Visit urbanmin.org/get-involved

SCAN HERE

TOTAL # OF
VOLUNTEERS

527

YOUNGEST
VOLUNTEER

10

OLDEST
VOLUNTEER

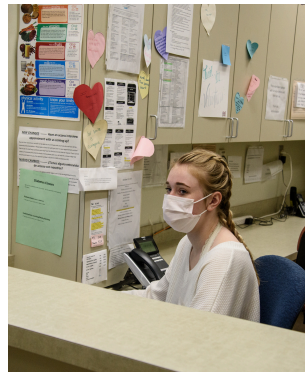
84

TOTAL
VOLUNTEER
HOURS

16,009

OF
CLINIC
INTERNS

92





Establish your legacy with a stock donation, gift from your IRA, join the Circle of Compassion, or sign up to become a volunteer.



Scan the QR code above to give.



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