



Steering Committee 2020

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Secretary-vacancy

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Emerita Members:
Rev. Diana Fletcher
Shirley Readdean

Jo-Anne Rafalik
Acting Executive Director

Schenectady Community Ministries

SEFA #50-00396

Web: www.sicm.us



We Are SiCM: Need During a Pandemic



The SiCM Food Pantry remains open to help Schenectady's most vulnerable population due to the incredible dedication and flexibility of our staff and the generous

support of our community and volunteers.

The Pantry has adjusted its food program process since COVID-19 guidelines from the state have been issued. The Pantry is open every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9AM-11:30AM. No guests may enter the building as to minimize our contact and adhere to social distancing. All staff and volunteers must wear a mask and gloves.

Pantry Service continues to serve 40-60 families each day. *Continued on page 3.*

Welcome Congregation Gates of Heaven—Our first Interfaith Partner

Early this year SiCM officially became an interfaith organization. Since our founding in 1967, SiCM has existed with a two part purpose: 1) to serve the needs of Schenectady in ways no single faith community could do alone and 2) to break down barriers between peoples of various faith traditions through that common service.

We would like to formally welcome our friends at the Congregation Gates of Heaven to our list of affiliated congregations and faith partners. SiCM is also looking to expand the interfaith AdHoc Committee. If you have interest in joining please call the office (518) 374-2683 and speak to Jo-Anne Rafalik.

SiCM's Exciting Community Garden Expansion

Meet Melissa MacKinnon, Director of Schenectady Urban Farms, who has detailed the rich history of Vale Urban Farms, the future with SiCM, and becoming Schenectady Urban Farms. Excerpts from "Vale Urban Farms Grows into Schenectady Urban Farms" and "Growing in Schenectady" by Melissa MacKinnon.

Vale Urban Farm (VUF), located in Schenectady's Historic Vale Cemetery, off Brandywine Ave, started as a community-supported farm in 2012. Over 8 years VUF partnered with many local organizations to create a thriving .6 acre farm that in 2019 fed 60 nearby families and provided fresh food to families during our Saturday Summer Lunch program and to volunteers and food pantries thru the growing season. Vale Urban Farm welcomes all ages with a children's play area as well as chickens, rabbits, fruit, flowers, vegetables and herbs all growing at the farm! The majority of the farm work is done by members, volunteers and school groups.

In 2017 we formed a Leadership Team and in 2020 Vale Urban Farms grew to become a project of Schenectady Urban Farms. Six volunteer Leadership Team members and one paid Director currently guide the organization. Schenectady Urban Farms will continue to run Vale Urban Farm. In addition



Schenectady Urban Farms will run a community orchard and two additional urban farms, Hulett St Garden and Fehr Ave Farm! The Hulett St Garden will continue as in the past, bringing in interested members from the surrounding community to grow food. The difference will be that everyone will work together to grow the food and share the harvest. The Hulett St Garden will continue to grow as much as possible to be able to continue providing fresh food for the SiCM Food Pantry as well.

Schenectady Urban Farms vision is a green Schenectady where everyone has access to fresh food and small farms abound, providing economic opportunities throughout the city with the growing of specialty crops and selling or trading locally. *Continued on Page 3*

Ministry Notes

Warm Welcome from Acting Executive Director, Jo-Anne Voris Rafalik



Schenectady Community Ministries (SiCM) celebrates the partnership of 51 member congregations "relating the resources of the congregations to the needs of the community," supporting ministries of social service, education, witness and social action.

The SiCM newsletters and annual reports and more detailed financial and program information is available from SiCM at 837 Albany St, Schenectady, NY 12307, online at sicm.us or call 518.374.2683.

SiCM's finances are audited annually by an independent auditing firm.

SCHENECTADY COMMUNITY MINISTRIES

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Schenectady, NY 12307
Phone: 518.374.2683

E-mail: infomation@sicm.us
Website: ww.sicm.us

The Assembly of SiCM includes one clergy and two lay delegates from member congregations: Alplaus UMC, Altamont Reformed, Bellevue Reformed, Bethel AME, Burnt Hills UMC, Carman UMC, Christ Church Episcopal, Christ Community Reformed, Church of St. Adalbert, Congregation Gates of Heaven, Duryee Memorial AME Zion, Eastern Parkway UMC, Emmanuel Friedens Baptist UCC, Faith UMC, First Reformed-Sch'dy, First Reformed-Scotia, First UMC, Friendship Baptist, Good Shepherd Lutheran, Holy Name of Jesus PNC, Immaculate Conception, Immanuel Lutheran, Lisha Kill Reformed, Lynnwood Reformed, Messiah Lutheran, Mt. Olivet Missionary Baptist, Niskayuna Reformed, Our Lady of Grace, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Lady Queen of Peace, Our Redeemer Lutheran, Refreshing Spring, Rotterdam UMC, St. Anthony's, St. George's Episcopal, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, St. John the Evangelist, St. Joseph's-Sch'dy, St. Joseph's-Scotia, St. Paul the Apostle, St. Paul's Episcopal, St. Stephen's Episcopal, Scotia UMC, Society of Friends (Quakers), Stanford UMC, State Street Presbyterian, Tabernacle Baptist, Trinity Presbyterian, Trinity Reformed, Unitarian Universalist Society of Sch'y, Zion Lutheran

Dear SiCM Members,

This is my first letter for a SiCM Newsletter since I took over as Acting Executive Director. It has been an interesting and certainly challenging four months. As we get ready to release this newsletter, SiCM is dealing with the Corona Virus Pandemic, SiCM's Capital Campaign, search for a new Executive Director and two major accidents to St. Joe's building.

Our pantry has remained open during the pandemic thanks to our wonderful staff and some of our volunteers. We have been following all the guidelines issued by the federal, state, and local officials. Our process of distributing food is very different than normal operations but we are reaching about 60 to 70 families each day of operation. SiCM is one of the participating agencies working with the county response team. This amazing group of leaders, agencies and government offices have reached out to serve thousands of local families and individuals. I am proud to be part of this group representing SiCM. Unfortunately, St. Joe's drop-in program has not been able to meet during the pandemic. Patty's Place continues to operate two days per week staying in contact with the guests to assist in meeting their immediate needs.

The Capital Campaign is still reaching out to foundations, congregations, and individuals for support. The plans to break ground in Spring 2020 is still achievable. We are currently waiting for permits to be completed, supplies ordered and the state's OK to begin construction. Anyone wanting to support the campaign should contact the SiCM offices for more information.

St. Joe's Building suffered from two accidents in February. The first accident occurred on February 2nd, Sunday afternoon. A car drove into the front of the building, resulting in extensive damage. St. Joe's drop-in program and Patty's Place continued to meet using the pantry. The second accident occurred on February 16th when our neighbor's water main pipe burst causing the basement to flood. Thanks to Quick Response, Rosch Brother's, Maloney Plumbing, Ed's Electrical and the City of Schenectady. We are making progress in repair work. Thank you to all that have helped in making the building safe for the administrative staff to continue working.

Our Steering Committee continues to meet using Zoom. Our immediate tasks are in these areas. First, welcoming to SiCM all congregations as we are now an interfaith organization. Second, working to expand the Steering Committee with new members for the upcoming year. And third, moving forward the search for a new Executive Director. The Assembly has not met since February due to the current restrictions of social distancing.

Please refer to our website and Facebook pages for updates on the Virtual Crop Walk information. Summer Meals is being planned by Shelly Ford. The details of how this very important program will look this summer are yet to be determined.

SiCM is very excited to work with Vale Urban Farms. This collaboration has allowed the Vale group to assist in expanding the Hulett Street garden and the Fehr Ave garden under the SiCM umbrella. More information on how you can be member of the gardening group (and purchase a share) contact Shelly Ford in the SiCM offices.

Stay safe and healthy,

Jo-Anne Voris Rafalik
Acting Executive Director

SPECIAL THANKS! Thanks for Supporting Souper Bowl Sunday!

Results are still coming in but YTD we are over \$11,000! and counting!



Thank you for Supporting SiCM's
FILL THE VAN FOOD DRIVE
February 14, 2020!

621 lbs. of donated groceries &
\$186.50 in cash!

Thank you to Niskayuna Co-Op for
hosting the event!

BUILDING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE

An Update On SiCM's Capital Campaign...

Thank you to our donors of the Capital Campaign! We are looking forward to breaking ground as soon as our building permits are approved by the City.

Thank you to the Schenectady Foundation for helping us get a new roof for the Food Pantry.

The builder updated the total cost of the campus renovations and the plans need to be revised and scaled back. We need the help of the Building Committee to meet to review to help us get under budget. If you would like to join the Building Committee please contact the office at (518) 374-2683.

Thank you to the Wright Family Foundation, William Gundry Broughton Family Foundation, Mother Cabrini Health Foundation, The Schenectady Foundation, Teaching Kitchen Family (John and Sandy Reschovsky), Emmanuel Friedens Church, The Little Family Foundation, Golub/Market 32, CDPHP, and Individual "Shares" of \$1800 each. If you would like to contribute to the Capital Campaign please contact the office (518) 374-2683. You can learn more about the Capital Campaign by visiting our website www.sicm.us and you can download the brochure here: <https://www.sicm.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/4-Fold-for-PDF2.pdf>



Need During A Pandemic Continued from page 1.

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Families and individuals seem to be adjusting to our new method of service. We continue to have new families and several calls from DSS and other programs looking for food at this time. We have adequate supplies of product and United Way continues to send much needed volunteers. Recipes, census information and printouts from Schenectady Coalition are being put into all food boxes while the pantry phone rings non-stop.

Hunger does not stop for a pandemic. Birthdays, anniversaries and milestones continue to approach and the SiCM Food Pantry is open to help provide not only meals, but hope that Schenectady will continue to look after its most vulnerable citizens.



Food Pantry Director Ariel White gives a pantry guest a tiara and other gifts for a 3 year old girl's birthday.

SiCM's Exciting Garden Expansion *Continued from page 1.*

The heart of our vision is a healthy community and one of our driving missions is to lower barriers to access to fresh food. Because we see SiCM as having a mission similar to our own, we are excited to have begun the work of affiliating with SiCM this year.

Schenectady Urban Farms wants to focus on growing food at our urban sites and teaching people to grow and process food, while creating economic opportunities with agricultural work.

Right now, with a pandemic raging, we are sadly unable to run our farms in the same way, providing open hours for people to stop by. We are committed to getting food started and growing at the farms. We hope to resume our community programs some time in the summer.

Meanwhile, farmers and growers across the country are encouraging people to grow more food. We believe we need to grow more food in Schenectady to share with people in the coming months and process for winter storage. Schenectady Urban Farms is part of a national movement to get people access to seeds and growing information. Locally we are starting extra plants to give away. We also purchased 5 gallon pots and potting soil we are giving out to encourage people to grow at home, even if they can not plant in the ground. We are looking at online possibilities for meet ups and classes on growing and processing food.

There can be an upside too. More people growing food means stronger and healthier local food systems. It means more opportunities to feed and care for each other in some of the healthiest ways we know. One of our best events last summer at Vale Urban Farm was our Saturday Summer Lunch program. We made food to share from the farm harvest and came together to eat. Everyone sat down

together and ate. We are all part of the same community. Another benefit of growing plants and being in green spaces is measurable, increased, positive mental health. This too benefits our community. Here's to more opportunities to grow Schenectady!

Growing in Schenectady *April is planting season in Schenectady!*

We are very lucky that Schenectady is an area geographically suited for growing many different food, flower, fiber, and medicinal plants! Haudenosaunee people (the Iroquois) are legendary, literally, in their ability to grow corn, beans and squash, the Three Sisters, along the Mohawk River, providing plentiful stores of food for their communities.

Right now, in April, we can direct seed into healthy soil: sugar snap peas, shelling peas, radishes, carrots, beets, onions, lettuce, kale, collards and spinach. We call these cool season crops. They like the cooler days of spring, or fall, to germinate, grow and flourish. Under grow lights and in greenhouses we can start broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, tomatoes, peppers and eggplant now. Broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower also like the cooler season and we transplant them into the ground in late April or early May. The most important part of starting plants from seed is making sure the soil stays moist once the seed is planted until it germinates.

Spring snow, after planting cool weather crops like peas and lettuce, is actually a benefit to our garden. Spring snow brings fertilizer to the soil providing germinating plants a source of trace elements and, importantly, plant-available forms of nitrogen.

The **Summer Meals** program is seeking summer interns!

Download the application by visiting our website:

<https://www.sicm.us/what-we-do/summer-meals/>

We are still waiting for guidelines from the department of education and the Schenectady school district on how the Summer Meals program will be impacted by the COVID-19 virus. Stay tuned for more information!

Schenectady Community Ministries

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The Last Word

by Rev. Peter Carman, President

Dear SiCM friends,

Who would have thought that the winter/spring of 2020 would bring so many challenges to all of us? SiCM is no exception. From not far away, I have watched your staff, volunteers and Steering Committee rise to the challenge, in ways that have been inspiring indeed.

Jo-Anne Rafalik, freshly appointed as your acting Executive Director, has been at the wheel as the organization has shifted gears, working closely with the County to coordinate mass food distribution. Staff have stepped up to make sure the Pantry keeps distributing, given the necessity of most volunteers staying home, and temporary changes in how food is given out. All this in addition to their regular responsibilities, performed largely from home.

Meantime your Steering Committee has done a fine job, special thanks to the tireless efforts of your treasurer Randy McGough! At the time of this publication, we are just getting organized with a search committee for our new long-term Executive Director, and meeting electronically for our ongoing business. We anticipate our Annual Meeting will be in June rather than May, for delegates, and will announce just how it is going to happen!

All this while we make our final appeal in the Capital Campaign and finalize the building plans for our soon to be renovated campus. I ask for your prayers for our staff during this challenging time, and for your continued financial and personal support for SiCM. It is a privilege to serve as President in an organization with such deep commitment, flexibility, and ability to roll with the punches, and such a broad base of interfaith support. In the best sense, YOU are SiCM, and we need you.

In Peace

Peter JB Carman, President

See website for details: www.sicm.us

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