

## Black Lives Still Matter - The Social Justice Committee at SiCM

Motivated by our values and faith, SiCM has called for equity and equality for people in our community for the past 53 years. Recent events have attested that racism is alive and well in our country. A justice committee was formed and together, they

hung a Black Lives Matter banner on Albany Street. A campaign was created to encourage all pantry guests to get registered to vote. For the full anti-racist statement written by the Social Justice Committee please visit our website at [www.sicm.us/about-us/social-justice](http://www.sicm.us/about-us/social-justice)

SiCM Staff hanging the Black Lives Matter Banner at 837-839 Albany Street



## Farmer's and Wellness Fest - Thank You to our Community Partners



Thank you to the volunteers, staff and community partners that came out to support the first annual Free Fall Farmer's and Wellness Festival here at the SiCM parking lot. Donning masks and being as socially distant as possible, SiCM encouraged guests to come get some free fresh local produce and learn about some of SiCM's community partners. Free ice cream was donated by Stewarts Shoppes. Over 100 guests were served fresh local produce from Indian Ladder Orchard, Gade Farm and Schenectady Urban Farms.

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Thank You to everyone who attended SiCM's virtual fundraiser CUT From The Pantry on November 19th.



## Steering Committee 2020

Rachel Curtis, President  
Rev. Peter JB Carman, Vice President  
Randy McGough, Treasurer  
Anne Cole, Secretary  
Sharon Astyk  
Diane Bennett  
Sr. Ann Christi Brink  
John Carter  
Rev. Tim Coombs  
Shae Fitzgerald  
Rev. Nicolle Harris  
William Monaghan  
Melanie Puerto-Conte  
Barbara Vivier  
Emerita Members:  
Rev. Diana Fletcher  
Past President:  
Shirley Readdean  
Jo-Anne Rafalik,  
Acting Executive Director

## Serving summer meals with grace, compassion, and integrity!



The Summer of 2020 has ended but the impact is still very fresh in our minds. This year will never be forgotten. The program operated safely during COVID-19. We were able to serve our Schenectady Families with grace, compassion, and integrity.

Over 58,625 Breakfasts and Lunches were distributed throughout the summer. The program started on July 1st and ended on September 11th and ran from Monday-Fridays during the Summer. Our Team consisted of 17 Staff and 5 youth workers from the Schenectady Youth Employment Agency. Covid-19 restrictions did not allow us to congregate at parks or pools this year so we adopted the grab-and-go model.



The Summer Meals Program set up camp at Our Lady of Carmel Church located in Mt. Pleasant. It was a big space and a big new neighborhood. This new location afforded SiCM to be a greater presence in Mt. Pleasant. SiCM canvassed the neighborhood with Summer Meal schedules, food pantry info, health insurance and food stamp info, as well as employment opportunities. We also helped with a MASS Food Distribution. Once families saw the Summer Meals Van, and our "green shirts," the smiles and a sense of trust was evident.

Meals were served at 29 locations throughout Schenectady; churches, parks, libraries to name a few. One of the greatest opportunities fell right into our lap. *Continued on page 3.*

# SCHENECTADY COMMUNITY MINISTRIES

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The Assembly of SiCM includes one faith group leader and two lay delegates from member congregations: Alplaus UMC, Altamont Reformed, Bellevue Reformed, Bethel AME, Burnt Hills UMC, Christ Church Episcopal, Church of St. Adalbert, Congregation Gates of Heaven, Duryee Memorial AME Zion, Eastern Parkway UMC, Emmanuel Baptist—Friedens UCC, Faith UMC, First Baptist, First Reformed, Sch'dy, First Reformed, Scotia, First UMC, Friendship Baptist, Good Shepherd Lutheran, Holy Name of Jesus PNC, Immaculate Conception, Immanuel Lutheran, Lishakill Reformed Church, Lynnwood Reformed, Parsons Memorial-COGIC, 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, Prince of Peace Lutheran, Refreshing Spring, Rotterdam UMC, St. Anthony's, St. George's Episcopal, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, St. John of God Parish CACINA, 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 Church, Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady, Zion Lutheran

Dear Friends of SiCM,

Since we turned the calendar into 2020, we at SiCM and each of you, have experienced life altering changes. These past few months continue to bring significant changes in our campus, and program operations.

The Building Ahead to the Future, Capital Campaign, is moving ahead every day. The music of hammering is surrounding me as I write this letter. The pantry has a brand-new floor in the main area, resurfaced floor in the warehouse, new bathrooms, new offices, updated intake areas, and brightly paint walls. It is a wonderful building to serve our guests and the community. Our next steps include some finishing touches, security system and lighting.

The Resource Center building has a foundation, walls, and soon-to-be-completed roof. The Teaching Kitchen is framed – last on the list. St. Joe's, which had extensive damage due to the Super Bowl Day accident, now has a temporary front with construction starting on the main floor meeting space.

It is very exciting to see all the progress. The Rosch Contractors, Stracher-Roth-Gilmore Architects (especially Dave Barbier) and other subcontractors have been wonderful to work with on this project. They, along with the terrific SiCM staff and volunteers, have all been very sensitive to the needs of our guests. Fortunately we are able continue all programs at the pantry and St. Joe's during this construction project.

We continue to operate under the COVID-19 guidelines to keep everyone safe and healthy. Guests do not enter the pantry, SiCM operates on a grab-and-go system from the pantry doors. The pantry serves about 80 to 90 families every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Our staff has recently begun doing limited home deliveries to those unable to access the pantry and those quarantined due to the virus.

The Summer Meals Program was in operation from July 1st to September 11th under the direction of Shelly Ford. Great staff and volunteers served over 58,000 breakfast and lunches using six vehicles throughout Schenectady County. They worked everyday regardless of weather under COVID-19 guidelines.

Our newly formed Social Justice Committee has been created in response to the current social climate we are living in. The SCED Program (Schenectady County Embraces Diversity) is going to be reopened soon - more information to follow. Please check out our website for more information under the What We Do and Social Justice tabs. To join this group, please contact Shelly at [sford@sicm.us](mailto:sford@sicm.us).

Our Interfaith Committee has also been meeting, strengthening SiCM as an Interfaith Collaborative. A new brochure with a letter will be sent out soon inviting all congregations to recommit or join SiCM supporting the mission and serving our community. Check out the website for more information.

As we quickly move into the Holiday Season, please remember SiCM in your thoughts and prayers. If you are planning on a year end gift, please consider SiCM in supporting the guests we serve.

I thank each of you that serve and support SiCM through Steering, Assembly, Committees, staff, faith groups, and volunteers. Without each of you none of this work is possible. Stay safe and healthy! -Jo-Anne Rafalik, Acting Executive Director

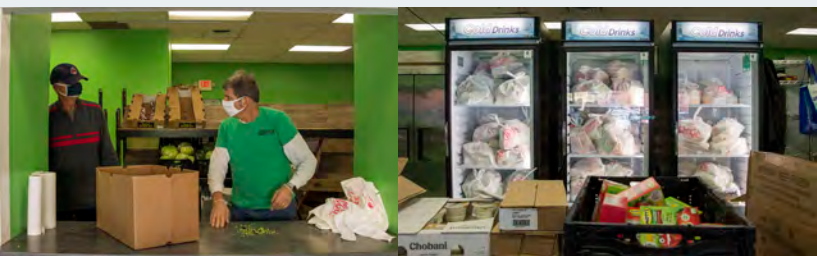




# BUILDING AHEAD WITH REV



Reverend Phil Grigsby visited the SiCM campus last week to see the progress in renovations. Our food pantry has a new tiled floor, fresh paint, new refrigerators, new non-slip floor in the warehouse, new bathrooms, and new offices including windows to Albany Street. Above Rev Phil outside of Resource Center. Below inside Pantry.



The resource center is almost complete and we look forward to having an event to welcome everyone in the Spring!



## Schenectady Community Ministries fill the van food drive

Tuesday, December 1st at Ellis Hospital 1101 Nott St. 9AM - 5PM Near Valet Parking\* Please bring non-perishable items



## Updates from Schenectady Urban Farms

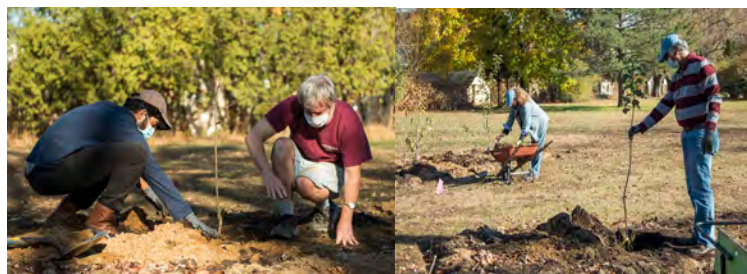
Although the frost has taken some of our growing veggies, we still have collards, kale, lettuce, carrots, leeks, cauliflower and cabbage, growing and available for harvest.

The chickens have gone to their winter home with Chad and Spero. Next year we plan to bring more hens to Vale and build a chicken house with a run at Fehr Ave Farm too!

At Vale we have been cleaning up the farm and preparing new beds for our Vale Community Orchard! At noon on Sunday 11/9 our beekeeper, Cyrus, talked about winterizing the beehive for a facebook Live at the Beehive video.



Winterizing bees at Schenectady Urban Farms at Vale



After winterizing the bees we planted the orchard at Vale.

Looking ahead, we have contracted to have a fence put around Fehr Ave the first week in December! We still have some work to do before then, moving mulch and soil along the fenceline.

*Wishing everyone extra care and gentleness today -Melissa*

## summer meals continued

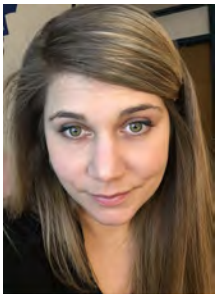
We were able to give a breakfast and lunch right to those who were accessing the Food Pantry three times a week.

I must give a "Big Shout Out" to my team. Adorned with masks and gloves in 80 degree or above weather, the team loaded up in 6 autos, ready for the day and challenge at hand. Laughs could be heard daily while over 600 breakfasts and lunches were being assembled. Thank you again for your perseverance and energy during this time.

We don't know what next Summer will bring, but I do know the Summer Meals Program will be saying, "Bring it on!" They proved to me that they are ready. Thank you again to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church along with every Church that allowed us to sit in their driveways or outside their property, to our many volunteers and to the city of Schenectady. I say thank you for your support! -Summer Meals Director, Shelly Ford.



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## The Last Word by Rachel Curtis, President

The discourse over the last seven plus months has certainly been centered around COVID-19, and all of the nuances therein. It's hard to believe that just this past January I was in attendance at Reverend Phil's retirement party held at Union College. Inside, seated at a table with several others. Not six feet apart, and no masks! I certainly felt that by sitting there, in a catering hall at my Alma

Mater, congratulating a pillar of our community on his retirement, that things had come full circle for me. After all, it was 15 years ago that I began my ultimate path of community social work, serving at Union College's Kenney Community Center and SiCM.

The circle was not yet closed because here I am, writing this as President of the SiCM Steering Committee, a month into the position. I am both humbled and honored to be here, and thus far, it's been off to the races! Figuratively speaking of course because, well, COVID.

Since last January, SiCM itself has undergone tremendous change. The Capital Campaign has made great improvements to the infrastructure of the buildings, also known as the SiCM Campus, which the staff is excited to showcase to the guests and community alike. I've come to realize that Jo-Anne Rafalik has superb abilities in the domains of organization and finance, and for this, SiCM is lucky to have her. Another exciting development is that SiCM is now categorized as an Interfaith Organization, with representatives from the Schenectady Clergy Against Hate now connected. This cohesive effort against hate and racism is needed now more than ever. Schenectady Urban Farms operates three community plots throughout the City of Schenectady, and is now under SiCM's umbrella. A fun (and free!) Farmer's Festival took place earlier in October

as a result. I look forward to seeing what the chefs prepare for the "Cut from the Pantry" Challenge coming up, Laura Pinckney's brainchild. Chinira Lovick floored me with her portion of the presentation for "Living My Best Life," presented at the United Way's "Perfect Pitch," another progressive program coming to SiCM with the new spaces and resources available.

SiCM has also formed a Social Justice Committee under Shelly Ford. Connected here is SiCM's involvement in the Schenectady Police Reform & Reinvention Collaborative, with Randy McGough and myself representing our great organization at the table. The Social Justice Committee is working hard to shed light on, and provide solutions to, the racial injustice in this country. As such, multiple steps have taken place in order to correct this injustice. An anti-racism statement has been authored and is published on our website. A Black Lives Matter banner now dons the front fence on Albany Street. Several \*non-partisan\* voter registration events coordinated by Natalie Monaghan have taken place. The committee emphasizes anti-racism education, bringing unity, and creating a path forward. There is much work to be done, but as Shelly says, we must stay the course!

I would like to end with an African Proverb: "The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth." I believe we have seen this metaphorically, and even actually, since George Floyd's murder. The country, and world, have begun to proverbially "wake up." This is possibly linked with the inner reflections folks have been forced into due to the limitations of the coronavirus. Collectively, we must lean into the discomfort, end the privilege of certain voices over others, and do the work we have been charged with by our Greater Good. Despite the changes SiCM has undergone, the essence remains the same: An organization with heart and an accurate pulse on our Schenectady County Community.

