



The Reverend Deborah Fae Swift, *Pastor*  
Laura Hungerford Bachman, *Associate Pastor*

## Report on the GVP Second Chance Grant 2018

Our thanks to the Presbytery for your gift of \$1,000 last fall in support of our Urban Youth in Action program. Per our application to you, we split the amount equally between our LOL (Love Our Lord) Youth Group and Monroe Milers.

From our Annual Yearbook (a.k.a. Annual Report), we share the following about those two programs which were greatly enriched through the Presbytery's support.

Growing up Black and Hispanic in Rochester, NY (the third poorest city in the nation) brings with it its own challenges and obstacles to overcome. This year, the LOL Youth Group has been trailblazing within the Presbytery. As the only Presbyterian youth group to boast an entirely minority membership, our LOL advisors have found themselves working to address the needs and situations of our young people.



In February, Pastor Katrina took our older kids to the ROC SALT Mission Center (Rochester Serving And Learning Together) for a week-long immersion experience that required them to grow beyond their own comfort zones. Working with homeless and poor people, helping at the Foodlink Distribution Center, connecting with people who they normally might just pass by on the street, and then



being led by group leaders through theological reflection on their experiences, our young peoples' eyes were opened. We began to see change in their awareness of others and how they interact with them.

Fast forward to the springtime release of the movie, *Black Panther*, and the time came for our youth, their parents, four of South's college student members, and the youth advisers, to look at the contributions possible for them to make to the world. While the older kids saw that movie, the younger ones viewed *A Wrinkle in Time* and then all came together – with parents and advisers – to discuss what it was like to view strong Black characters on the screen and to begin to see themselves in those positively portrayed roles.

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As a result of those events, we applied for (and received) a grant to forge a new partnership with the Center for Youth on Monroe Avenue. Beginning in the fall, our LOL Youth Group started meeting at the CFY twice a month for classes and discussions revolving around Conflict Transformation and skill building that will help them achieve those goals.



Our thanks to the many people around the Presbytery, and in the community, who answered an appeal for funds to help us with these projects. This year's Youth Group's activities are a by-product of the connectional church that we are a part of. Many thanks to Pastor Katrina and the adult volunteers who helped these experiences to have deep meaning for our young people.

Coordinating all of these efforts are the two Co-Leaders: Barbara Durfee who coordinates our program with the Center for Youth, and Barbara Woodruff who arranges for the monthly Field Trips (ranging from sledding and swimming, to the Zoo, the RPO, plays, museums, etc.) None of this would have been possible without the advisors, including the two coordinators as well as Janis Castrogiovanni and Nancy Allinger who opened her home for us for Sunday meals and programs, even tolerating us making slime (with glitter - so much glitter!) and Christmas cookies. Additionally, this year we held a family summer picnic at Charlotte Beach, which was attended by both parents and youth, as well as other members of New Life on Monroe and even residents of Cobb's Hill Manor.

LOL meets the weeks that Monroe Milers is not in session (since all of our kids train with the Milers). In addition, we take the month of August off.

Many, many thanks to those who led LOL this year, and the countless numbers of people – both in the church and beyond – who financially supported our youth. Through their donations, for instance, all of our kids received Christmas presents, and all of them (plus their families) were able to see and discuss the *Black Panther* movie (*A Wrinkle in Time* for the younger ones) and have a pizza party to continue the fellowship; through private donations, all of the dinners are paid for on the Center for Youth nights when individual dietary restrictions prevent making a one-dish-for-all supper.

***When asked during the Center for Youth workshop, "What makes you feel loved?", one of the youth responded;***

*"I feel like the food makes me feel loved.  
I feel like the people that provide the food make me feel loved.  
I feel like the people who make the food make me feel loved."  
That's what your food money donations are all about!*

**THANK YOU!**



Monroe Milers, which began in 2011 with 7 kids, now has enrollment fill up so fast with suburban kids that we have to reserve 30% of the available slots for our urban youth. A bi-product of this program is the cross-cultural, cross-ethnic community that forms around running.

Again, from our Annual Yearbook (Report), we share this about the Milers' program that your grant is supporting:



Monroe Milers is a high quality, developmentally appropriate youth running program. Over 8 weeks, kids train for a 5K or one-mile race. They walk/run in groups of six or seven with two to three coaches. Running games are a regular part of practice. Youth, ages 8 and up, train for a 5K race. There is a group for walkers. A young runners group, ages 6 and 7, trains for a one-mile race.

The Monroe Milers held two training sessions in 2018. The first session was held in March and April at school #35. The Wegmans Family 5K was the graduating race.



The second session was held in September and October at ROC SALT and Fleet Feet at the Armory. The Pumpkins in the Park 5K (at Cobbs Hill Park) was the graduating race.

68 youth runners participated in the program, 39 of whom participated in both sessions.

38 coaches volunteered over the two sessions.

We had many, many small successes: Walkers running the graduation race for the first time; significantly improved attendance by our runners from struggling families; an increase in the number of volunteer coaches; exploration of new parts of the city; veteran Milers youth serving as assistant coaches; many returning runners having PRs (Personal Records); and one of our walkers who didn't want to participate in the fall, stayed involved by becoming our attendance and prize volunteer.

Given our proximity to Mt. Hope Cemetery during the fall season, many of our runners combined history with exercise and visited the graves of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass.

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Finding a permanent home for the group has proven elusive since the sale of New Life. It looks like we'll be moving to St. John's Home for our spring 2019 session (corner of Highland and South Avenue). We still need to firm up details. One of our coaches works there and is facilitating this. I am hoping to involve residents in our program somehow (still percolating on this).

by Nancy Allinger

Since the publication of that report, we can share that the March-April (2019) training season will be anchored at St. John's Home which is wonderfully near Highland Park, Mt. Hope Cemetery, and – on rainy days – the South Avenue Rec Center. St. John's has offered this **at no cost** but they would appreciate a donation to their Foundation. South is happy to do that. We are exploring cross-generational activities with Milers and residents of St. John's Home through the Home's Spiritual Life Committee.

## ***Finances***

In an effort to determine the actual costs of these two programs, i.e. what would it cost to operate them if the church were not underwriting their expenses, we have learned the following”

### **LOL Youth Group**

The total cost for this program is just over \$4,000/year (\$4,078), \$788 of which is taken up by staff time – Associate Pastor present for 1/hr/mo for the 7 months and 1 hr prep/mo for 7 months plus the overhead of office/staff time for ordering and coordinating purchases, reports, etc. The other costs include:

Field Trips, snacks, etc.= \$1,800,

Center for Youth program fees = \$1,000,

Food for the kids = \$35/wk x 14 wks/yr = \$490/yr

### **The Second Chance Grant covered one-half of the already 50% discounted fee for the Center for Youth program.**

At Monday night's Session meeting, I asked Barbara Durfee, the LOL/CFY Coordinator how the program is going and it was reported that it has exceeded our hopes and expectations. Nine of our children have participated since it began in November (following the fall Monroe Milers season). They will take a break in March and April when Milers starts up again, and then will resume from May-July.

Our youth – all of whom are struggling children of color who, without the Wednesday night meal that we provide them, might not have a meal until school the next morning – are excited to arrive every Wednesday evening. They have been learning – and are beginning to master – skills related to anger management, self-control, and conflict transformation/reduction. Each shares accounts of practicing the latest skills during the week in school, and Barbara also volunteers at one of the schools that one or two of our kids attend. She reports being so proud to watch the quality of their interactions improving.

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## Monroe Milers

The total cost of this program for two training sessions per year (spring and fall – 8 weeks each) is just over \$7,000 (\$7,250) with none of that staff time. Their expenses include:

St. John's Home location - NO RENT (though in 2018, we were paying \$25/week to ROC SALT for the 8 weeks, and \$35/week to the City of Rochester for the use of School #35 for the earlier session),

Postage = \$100 for registration forms, ordering supplies, etc.,

Consumable supplies = \$600 (Attendance awards, socks),

Healthy snacks = \$600,

Coaches' gifts \$300 (These are usually \$5 - \$10 gift cards for the 35 coaches who volunteer twice a week for the 16 weeks of the program),

Necklaces & Show tokens = \$65 (55 runners for two seasons),

Medals for 1-mi race = \$70,

End of season dinner \$250 (Much of it donated by the coaches)

T-shirts = \$550 (Every kid gets a free T-shirt which not only helps identify us when we are running in neighborhoods and races, but adds to the sense of identity and belonging for each child),

Running Shoes = \$3,500 (a fraction of the cost for each child to get a pair of free running shoes with the cost offset coming from Fleet Feet at the Armory),

Race entry fees for coaches = \$1,165

Between season race entry fees for youth = \$500

**Because of the running schedule, we did not need the full \$500 for race entry fees between seasons, and so we took what was left of that and applied it to the cost for healthy snacks.**

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Often, when writing these kinds of reports, I am able to speak to “what worked and what didn’t work” to our funders, but in both of these cases, there wasn’t anything this year that “didn’t work.”

The partnership with Center for Youth was new to South, *and* new to the Center. They had never done this kind of a program with a faith community before, and they are so pleased that we have been told they are sharing the idea with other churches, temples, and mosques.

The Monroe Milers is working at capacity right now and two weeks ago, our Associate Pastor who oversees all of our Acts of Faith, Laura Bachmann, and I met with the two leaders of the program. It had originally been started as a means of occupying neighborhood youth who had a lot of energy during our worship services in the former New Life building on Monroe Avenue. But now, none of the kids lives in the Upper Monroe neighborhood and there don’t seem to be youth in that neighborhood who are hanging

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out on a Sunday morning. So, although we initially had a great deal of loyalty to the neighborhood, we are finding that our definition of neighborhood is changing.

Transporting our kids from their homes to both Milers practices and Youth Group is a **major challenge**. We have looked into using another church's van or other agency's vehicles, but insurance and liability issues are prohibitive. Currently, our members drive (sometimes as far away as Lehigh Station Road) to bring kids to these events.

Laura has recently started conversation with Cameron Community Center to see if some of their children would like to be involved in Milers. We have set aside 5 slots for them in addition to our own kids because we sincerely want to keep a mix of urban and suburban participants. If we don't reserve slots for the urban kids, the suburban families would close out the registration within a day of opening it for the season. It's a wonderful running program, but South's commitment is to the diversity of families involved.

We also decided at that same meeting to explore the possibilities of partnering with a summer program in a toned-down version of Monroe Milers during the summer. And as we begin to look at possibilities for the future, a Vision Meeting will be scheduled post-season, for coaches and older runners that Laura will facilitate in order to map out some options for the program's future.

One nice challenge we are facing is the number of runners who have grown up through the program and are now returning to become assistant coaches. There is an opportunity here for leadership development training that we are excited to explore.

The spring session of Monroe Milers will begin on Ash Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>.  
The summer LOL Youth Program will resume on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

If you, or any members of the grants committee would like to come and witness, first-hand, how your support is enriching the lives of our children, we welcome your participation. Please call the South office (585-271-5078) to make arrangements for your visit.

Thank you again, for your support of these two ministries to our youth.



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*Pastor*

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