



We Must Not Turn Them Away

Spring Newsletter 2023

Dear Friend of RPM,

What do you do if you are shy and introverted and don't know the language spoken by 80% of the people around you? If you are like Yolanda, (pictured at right), you face fear and uncertainty every day of your life.

She could have retreated and hid, but instead she courageously stepped way out of her comfort zone and looked for a place to take English classes. She told us, *"I wanted to be able to communicate better at work."* She found Roosevelt Park Ministries (RPM) and noticed the sign outside our entrance offering English classes. She's now taken nine months of classes that have helped transform her life.

Yolanda is from Guatemala and has only lived here two years. She recently shared this:

"I was so shy about saying anything in English but thanks to the classes I've been helped to overcome this. I love how you teach here. I've learned how to communicate better with my co-workers."

It's exciting to see students like Yolanda grow more self-confident and secure. This semester she branched out even further and took our basic computer course.

She is just one of a growing number of our students and clients. They represent over a dozen ethnicities, many who are immigrants. Last Fall our enrollment increased by over 60% from the year prior. Normally our Spring semester decreases slightly. Not this year. It increased by an additional 18% to 136 students.

We are faced with a serious challenge. We either expand our facilities or start turning people away.

This semester we made room for more students with the generous help of two of our neighbors—the Potter's House Christian school and the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan. Both places provided classroom space at no charge so three of our classes could meet offsite. Unfortunately, that is not a long-term solution. We need a larger facility with more classrooms and more parking.

A Miracle in the Making

Grand Rapids is facing a housing crisis and space shortage. It would take a miracle for RPM to find a place to expand within our neighborhood. Well, let me tell you about our miracle in the making.

The property right next to us went up for sale. Although the owners had full price offers submitted to their realtor, they said no to these. Instead, they offered it to us for well under their asking price. In today's real estate market, that is a miracle. They did this because they believe in RPM's mission and appreciate the work we've done for over 26 years in this community.

After months of prayer and seeking wise counsel, our board decided to step out in faith and purchase this property. We recently signed a Buy-Sell agreement to acquire this land which will double our property size. The main building is an empty shell and will likely need to be torn down.



In the short term this property allows us to more than double our available parking. In the long-term our dream is to build a multi-story, multi-use ministry facility that will allow us to grow and benefit our community. One option we are considering would include expanded ministry space, a coffee shop, and 40-50 apartments for low-income seniors, a huge need for our community.

It's a breath-taking development and we are going to need a lot of help.

This project will move forward in four phases:

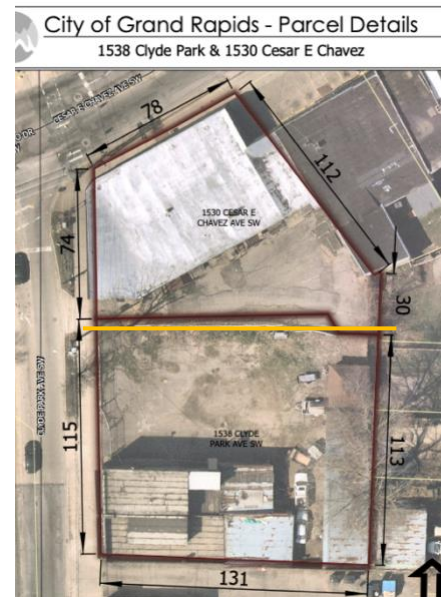
Phase 1: Raise the money to acquire the adjoining property.

Phase 2: Plan and design a multi-story, multi-use building.

Phase 3: Launch and complete a capital campaign for the new facility.

Phase 4: Build this new ministry and community center.

Phase 1 is crucial to the rest of the phases. Our goal is to raise \$280,000 in 8 months or less to purchase this property.



Current RPM Property (Top)
Adjoining Property (Bottom)

We'll be sharing more details soon, but here are three ways you can help right now.

1. Pray for God's Provision

- Ask God to connect us with people who have a heart for a hurting and needy immigrant and refugee community right here in West Michigan.
- Ask God to grant our board, staff, and me wisdom as we pursue this vision of a beautiful, safe space for people to learn, live, and build relationships with God and others.

2. Give as God Leads

- Any and every donation gives us greater capacity to build bridges between cultures and languages using literacy and the love of Jesus. Whether you give \$10 or \$10M (or anything in between), you share in RPM's life-changing work on behalf of people at risk.

3. Spread the News

- Tell others in your social and spiritual circles about RPM's exciting work bringing life transformation through literacy.
- Schedule us to come talk to your church, small group, reading club, travel guild, mission's committee, etc. about the opportunities to bring hope, healing, and homes to the poor, the marginalized, and the disadvantaged right here in our own West Michigan community.



Together we can bring the Kingdom of God to our Roosevelt Park community and make a difference for people like Yolanda (pictured in her computer class). **Email me so we can talk more. Joel@rpmins.org**

Compassionately connecting the here and now to eternity,

Joel

Joel B Groat, Exec. Dir.

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All donations to RPM are tax-deductible and received with gratitude.