

# Community Engagement

May 2020

## A Note to Say Thank You

From Rich General, Avon Lake UCC

### Dear Living Water Association,

I am a member of the Avon Lake United Church of Christ Mission Team. We are a congregation that is proud of our mission work. Because we are the largest UCC congregation on the west side of Cleveland we have many hands to help. My particular responsibility is to act as the team liaison for The Haven Center, a 68-bed facility that houses the homeless in Lorain County. It is the only center that operates 24/7 and houses men, women and children.

Like all of us, we want to help those that need it the most. Lorain County in particular is an area that has been hit hard in recent years. It has a large blue-collar work force. The main businesses are steel related and automotive production as well as all the small businesses that fed off of it.

With the closing of the main plants in the county it left a large portion of the workforce unemployed.

There are good forces at work. Second Harvest and Neighborhood Alliance are there to feed and help the hungry but the need is great. Our pastor, Kelly Brill, is very familiar with our Association. She has shared in our meetings about the fine work happening across our Association. It piqued my interest when she mentioned that the Association had grant money available. Last year, we had a plan to help the residents at the Haven Center by designating an area for an Employment Resource Center. They had an area that was basically used for storage. Our idea was to convert this area by painting, installing a new floor and equipping it with a workstation. This station would have a desk, a file cabinet, a phone and a printer. We had the man power but needed the money. I decided to apply for a grant, and it was approved. The work in the area was completed and it is now fully operational. The staff at the Haven Center assists the residents in looking for work by using Indeed and

applying for food stamps and other avenues for help. We want them to find employment so that they can be productive members of the community.

Since we were successful with the first grant, I recently wrote another grant. With the coronavirus, the needs are becoming more acute. My second grant was written to help all of the 7 agencies that we support at the church. We reached out to each agency asking what their most critical needs are. Most of the need is for

food and basic toiletries. One of the most important parts of obtaining a grant is to make sure we are good stewards of these funds so they will continue to be available to "Pay It Forward" to help those in need.

We are thankful for the support of the Living Water Association. With their support, we can continue to help meet some of the needs in our community.

—Rich General,  
Ministry Team,  
Avon Lake UCC



Before and after photographs of the new Employment Resource Center at The Haven Center in Lorain.