

## **FOCUS Grand Rapids Talking Points & Project Summary**

### **Main Message**

Orthodox Christians across Grand Rapids are uniting to serve our neighbors in need. And we need your help.

### **What is FOCUS?**

FOCUS North America is the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve.

- FOCUS is a national nonprofit and a ministry affiliated with the Assembly of Bishops. We mobilize Orthodox Christians from all backgrounds and jurisdictions, to face the needs of our neighbors, together.
- FOCUS currently operates in seven U.S. metro areas: Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Houston, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Southern California, and St. Louis.
- We're developing five new FOCUS Centers this year, including here in Grand Rapids, where we have the opportunity to acquire and stabilize an existing nonprofit that offers permanent supportive housing to fifty people.

### **What's Happening in Grand Rapids?**

FOCUS North America has assembled an Exploratory Committee in Grand Rapids, bringing together thirty-four parishioners and clergy from four parishes across the city to develop FOCUS Grand Rapids, a new Center to unite Orthodox Christians into service.

### **What is our Opportunity in Grand Rapids?**

Grand Rapids has a robust existing web of services, offered by both civic and nonprofit organizations. Our initial plan was to assess these existing services and identify a “crack” that FOCUS Grand Rapids can fill. Yet, a few months ago, we received word that an existing nonprofit was open to being acquired by FOCUS and becoming FOCUS Grand Rapids.

- [Shepherds of Independence](#) (Shepherds) is an existing nonprofit organization in Northwest Grand Rapids that has operated for over twenty years, offering permanent supportive housing for mentally and/or physically disabled adults who have become homeless (or are at risk of becoming homeless). They have fifty beds in two residence buildings, and also own an under-utilized warehouse that could allow for offering more future services (food pantry, additional beds, etc).
- The longtime Executive Director of Shepherds passed away a few months ago.. The Board Members are his two daughters, and they are excited about the possibility of gifting Shepherds to FOCUS so that the operations can be stabilized and further expanded, and so that their father's legacy can be honored.

- After a series of conversations and site visits, our Exploratory Committee has come to the consensus that acquiring Shepherds is our best potential move to develop a FOCUS Center in the city of Grand Rapids.
  - The Exploratory Committee was both moved by the current operation of Shepherds and eager to see how increased funding and support could lead to the further development of lifesaving ministry.

## What Would Shepherds Look Like as a FOCUS Center?

Shepherds is a lean operation that operates at a breakeven level, with roughly \$440,000 a year in Supplemental Security Income (SSI). This income allows Shepherds to feed and house its residents, as well as support current staff. However, Shepherds has struggled to offer residents a robust set of community building events and is not in a position to raise new funds or further expand its ministry offerings. There is much that we can do to improve and augment the existing ministry, both in terms of current residents and the wider community.

- FOCUS Grand Rapids would bring at least \$90,000 in new revenue to the operation (\$45,000 in initial funds raised matched by a \$45,000 grant; in subsequent years, the Center Director would be tasked with raising at least \$90,000 annually for the ministry).
  - These resources would allow FOCUS to appoint a Center Director who would assume overall leadership of the operation and cultivate relationships with new donors, network with other area nonprofits, engage new volunteers, lead the development of new ministries, etc.
    - Fundraising success (donations, new grants, etc) would allow for both the deepening of existing services and expansion into new services.
  - Existing SSI revenue would continue to cover all existing staff and operations.
- As a Center, FOCUS Grand Rapids would plug into FOCUS North America's existing network of operational support, which includes:
  - training for Center Directors, staff, and volunteers;
  - financial and auditing services;
  - technical support;
  - communication and marketing support;
  - comprehensive policies and procedures;
  - a growing network of experienced service providers across the country; and
  - status as an affiliate ministry of the Assembly of Canonical Bishops of the Orthodox Church in the United States of America.

## A Summary of our Next Steps

While still in the Exploratory Committee phase, below is a brief outline of key next steps as we develop a new FOCUS Center in Grand Rapids:

- **Completion of Due Diligence**  
FOCUS North America will perform its due diligence to ensure that there are no impediments to a potential acquisition of Shepherds (legal, financial, etc).

- **Satisfying \$45,000 Matching Grant**  
We must first meet our \$45,000 matching grant goal, which would give us \$90,000 in revenue to hire a Center Director and commence operating as a FOCUS Center.
- **Receiving Official Center Designation**  
Once we have identified what this new Center will do, where it will operate, and how it will be financially sustainable, the FOCUS North America Board of Directors will consider Grand Rapids for official designation as a Center City.
- **Activating Advisory Board**  
Once FOCUS Grand Rapids is officially designated, we can wind down the work of the Exploratory Committee (which will have completed its goals) and officially activate our Advisory Board, which is a key component of Center health.
- **Hiring First Center Director**  
The final step is the hiring of our first Center Director, who will assume leadership of local operations and guide the Center as it begins operating. Like all Center Directors, the Director of FOCUS Grand Rapids will report to the Director of Operations & Community Engagement.

## How Can You Help?

To help us establish FOCUS Grand Rapids, we have set an **initial fundraising goal of \$45,000 by August 31, 2024** in order to meet a matching grant we received. Thus, your contribution will be doubled.

- Donations are tax deductible as FOCUS North America is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.
- Donations can be [made online at this link](#).
- Checks can be made payable to “FOCUS North America” and mailed to:
  - FOCUS North America  
PO BOX 645039  
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-5039
  - Be sure to add “**FOCUS Grand Rapids**” to the memo line.