



NIGHTLIGHTS

HOLIDAY 2022

The Night Ministry Community Comes Together to Celebrate the Holidays

The holidays are an important and busy time at The Night Ministry. Every year, staff, clients, donors, and volunteers join in seasonal traditions of giving and celebrations that elicit joy, provide comfort, and strengthen connections.

“The fact that we’re able to do this for people means something,” said Stephanie Cascio, Resource Coordinator at The Night Ministry. “Maybe life is hard for them, or they don’t have a ton of things to look forward to, so the holidays become a special time of year.”

Some traditions stretch back decades, like gifting holiday stockings to individuals served by The Night Ministry, which are filled with essentials such as socks, gloves, tissues, and deodorant. Others are newer and more program specific, such as providing backpacks to those the Street Medicine Team assists, individuals living in encampments across the city.

Each year, The Night Ministry receives donations of holiday gifts, carefully selected to suit the needs of clients. For example, children who come with their families to the Health Outreach Bus, which serves communities with high rates of homelessness and poverty, receive presents based on their age group. There are even gifts for Spanish-speaking children, such as Spanish language versions of popular kids’ books.

Young parents who are served by the agency’s Youth Programs can even make special requests for the presents their children would like.

“When we give our clients gifts that are thoughtfully chosen, we express our values of treating people respectfully and meeting them where they are,” Cascio explained.



Stephen Dougherty, Flexible Housing Pool Program Manager, loads up a van with holiday gifts for young adults and their families served by The Night Ministry.

In addition to donating gifts, friends of The Night Ministry play a vital role in the holiday celebrations too. This year, volunteers will help out at the special celebrations held at agency’s Youth Programs and at Health Outreach Bus stops. During celebrations at the Bus, for example, they will assist in passing out stockings and gifts and serving special meals.

For more information about how you can support The Night Ministry’s holiday celebrations, visit www.thenightministry.org/holiday-celebrations. ◇

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– Stephanie Cascio, Resource Coordinator

HUMAN CONNECTION • HOUSING • HEALTH CARE

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Survey Confirms Health Outreach Bus Visitors Face Challenges with Housing, Food Security, and Health Care

Precarious housing, food insecurity, and limited access to health care remain widespread challenges among visitors to The Night Ministry's Health Outreach Bus.

That's according to the 2022 Outreach and Health Ministry Bus survey, conducted by The Night Ministry's Learning and Impact Department. The survey also finds that the Bus provides an important source of human connection for its visitors, Chicago residents who are unhoused or experiencing poverty.

The Health Outreach Bus brings free health care, supportive services, and resources such as food directly to several Chicago neighborhoods. Annual surveys among visitors to the Bus provide The Night Ministry with a deeper understanding of who the program's clients are, the challenges they face, and the services and resources they access at the Bus.

Demographic information collected during the most recent Bus survey reflects housing and income inequities among historically marginalized Chicago residents. More than 60% of Bus clients identify as Black or African American; that's roughly double the percentage of Chicagoans who identify as Black or African American. Meanwhile over 20% identify as Hispanic or Latino. Only one in ten Bus visitors identify as white.

Although housing status varies among Bus clients, most are either unhoused or are living in precarious housing situations.

Roughly one in five Bus visitors reports living outside, in an abandoned building, or in a shelter, a ratio that has remained consistent through the years the survey has been conducted.

"Just as consistently, the majority of those who are housed tell us they have at least one condition indicating that their housing situation is precarious," said Damian Nelson, Director of Learning and Impact. "They may be 'doubled up,' staying temporarily in someone else's apartment, or they don't have a lease. Or the place where they live needs major repairs, or they don't feel safe where they are living."

Consequently, housing is one of the major concerns that Bus Case Managers help clients address, linking them to longer term housing solutions such as units offered through the Chicago Housing Authority or forms of housing that include supportive

Housing Situation of Health Outreach Bus Clients



services. Last year, 65 Bus clients engaged in housing case management, with eight finding more stable housing, while 41 clients applied for public housing with the help of the Bus Case Managers.

The survey indicates that the Bus program continues to help clients address a high level of food insecurity. While nearly all visitors cite receiving a meal as one of the reasons for coming to the Bus, almost 75% of clients rely on the program for at least some of their daily food intake.

Last year, medical professionals on the Bus prevented nearly 120 visits to the emergency room and treated more than 350 health conditions for which their patients would have otherwise not sought care if they had not visited the Bus. Survey results underscore the important role that the Bus plays in helping visitors access medical care. Overall, 15% of Bus clients have

no health insurance, while more than a third report that they rely on the emergency room for primary care or would go to the emergency room if the Bus's health care services were not available to them.

The survey found accessing health care a particularly difficult challenge for residents of Pilsen, one of the neighborhoods served by the Bus.

"Over 60% of clients in Pilsen are uninsured," said Nelson. "The majority of those who are uninsured report relying on the emergency room for care, not seeking medical care at all, or not knowing where to go if the Bus were not there to provide health care services." (continued on page 3)

"We know the connections Bus clients establish with The Night Ministry staff and with other visitors help alleviate the loneliness many of them feel."

– Damian Nelson,
Director of Learning and Impact

Conferences for Youth Programs Staff Strengthen Capacity to Serve Young People

Professional development, skills-based learning, and experience sharing brought staff from across The Night Ministry's Youth Programs together for a series of workshops this past summer, with the goal of ensuring that the agency continues to provide the best possible support to the young people it serves.

"These sessions were important to team members because we want to be at the forefront of utilizing best practices, so that we have the capacity to provide gold standard support to the residents of our shelter programs and the young people we serve who are living in the community," said Nieal Marie Ross, Manager of Youth Supportive Services.

Staff attended sessions over the course of two-day conferences held at the agency's Bucktown headquarters. Topics ranged from utilizing The Night Ministry's client database to learning how to identify and assist victims of human trafficking, recognizing mental health challenges, and holding restorative conversations to resolve conflict. Presenters and discussion facilitators included members of The Night Ministry staff as well as outside experts.

"The response to the conferences from staff was overwhelmingly positive," said Betsy Carlson, Director of Youth Programs. "In addition to the workshops, we also asked staff from each program to identify a goal for their team to champion together this year that would strengthen their program's support of its clients."

The conferences were the first time that staff from across Youth Programs had convened together in person since the



Miguel Rodriguez from the nonprofit Alternatives leads a workshop for Youth Programs staff about restorative justice.

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– Nieal Marie Ross,
Manager of Youth Supportive Services

COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020. Over the last few years, The Night Ministry has developed several new programs to serve young people, such as the Parenting with Purpose transitional living program for young pregnant and parenting mothers and the Flexible Housing Pool for Youth, which supports previously unhoused young adults who are now living in

their own apartments. The conferences created opportunities for staff to learn about each other's programs and from each other.

"Another critical piece to us coming together to learn and share was the opportunity for us to fellowship, network, catch-up, and connect," Ross said. ◇

Health Outreach Bus Survey (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

Bus visitors in Pilsen are also more likely to be unhoused, or, if they do have housing, to be significantly more rent-burdened, paying much more than is considered affordable for their housing.

"We don't ask this question, but we suspect that a large percentage of our Pilsen clients are undocumented," said Nelson. "Because of their immigration status, they are ineligible for a range of safety net services, such as food and unemployment benefits and subsidized housing."

The survey also found that the Bus plays an important role in fulfilling visitors' social needs.

"Folks who come to the Bus tend to have very few connections in their lives," said Nelson. "We know the connections Bus clients establish with The Night Ministry staff and with other visitors help alleviate the loneliness many of them feel."

"The vast majority, over 90%, believe they can trust the Bus staff, while eight out of ten clients report that talking to staff or each other is important to them," he said. ◇

High Rental Costs May Push Low-Income Households into Homelessness

With skyrocketing rents and high inflation rates, many low-income earners can no longer afford housing and therefore risk facing homelessness.

According to data from the real estate marketplace Zillow, the median national rent rose by 15.9% across a one-year period ending in May 2022, far outpacing wage growth and leaving many struggling to stay housed.

“The unprecedented increases in rent prices over the past year are further exacerbating our country’s affordable housing crisis, pushing more people into homelessness each year,” said Brooke Schipporeit, Manager of Field Organizing at the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

“As COVID-19 emergency resources are being depleted and pandemic-era renter protections expire, renters are faced with increased inflation and skyrocketing rents,” Schipporeit added.

“Rising rental prices are associated with an increase in homelessness,” Schipporeit continued. “The U.S. Government Accountability Office found that a \$100 increase in median rent is associated with a 9% increase in the estimated homelessness rate, even after accounting for other relevant factors.”

If evicted or forced to move due to rent hikes, tenants enter a market with steep competition for the few available affordable units. Section 8 vouchers, a Federal program offering assistance to low-income renters, are hard to come by. With few places to turn, some may have to enter the shelter system, try to survive on the streets, or “double up”—stay temporarily in other people’s



The Street Medicine Team visits an encampment in Chicago. The increasing cost of housing is putting more community members at risk of losing their homes.

homes. According to the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, an estimated 49,585 people lived doubled up in Chicago in 2020, an increase of more than 20% from 2019.

Unless major policy measures are undertaken, the near future looks dim.

“The unprecedented increases in rent prices over the past year are further exacerbating our country’s affordable housing crisis.”

– Brooke Schipporeit, National Low Income Housing Coalition

“Congress must increase investments in long-term solutions to address the underlying shortage of affordable, accessible homes and to increase choice in where households live,” Schipporeit shared. “Until permanent solutions to widespread housing unaffordability are enacted, implemented, and enforced, the lowest-income renters will continue

to face housing precarity and instability.” ♦

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Meetings at Downtown Library Help Case Managers Connect Clients to Housing and More

During the pandemic, Case Managers from The Night Ministry's Health Outreach Program had few options for locations where they could meet clients to fill out applications for housing, public benefits, and identification cards. That is, until May 2021 when the agency began providing case management to clients once a week at the Chicago Public Library's Harold Washington Library Center. The benefits of the offering were so great that Lead Case Manager Mirella Rodriguez and Street Medicine Case Manager Sylvia Hibbard have kept it up and running ever since.

"Though we have housed a lot of clients through our Health Outreach Program, we've further expanded their housing opportunities by being at the library," said Hibbard.

Unhoused individuals do not have a permanent address and may not have a phone number, so it can be hard for the Health Outreach Case Managers to locate them. When applications for housing, benefits, and other support require follow-up meetings with Rodriguez and Hibbard, these complications can lead to lost opportunities—which is where the library comes in.

"If a client gets matched with housing, we have usually about a week to come up with all the documents for the application.

That is not a very long time," Hibbard continued. "By having a set location each week where we can meet with them, we are greatly upping the chances of them getting housed."

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- Sylvia Hibbard, Street Medicine Case Manager



Youth Outreach Case Manager Zama Buthelezi (left) and Lead Case Manager Mirella Rodriguez (center) meet with a client at the Harold Washington Library.

"Harold Washington is a great resource," added Kyanna Johnson, Lead Street Medicine Outreach Worker. "Clients can be inside in the winter and meet with our Case Managers in person. Other organizations are also here throughout the week so clients can get further services."

These other services include assistance from organizations such as Legal Council for Health Justice, which provides legal services to unhoused

people, and Thresholds, which offers housing and other assistance to individuals with mental health or substance use challenges. ◇



KUDOS TO OUR STAFF!

Congratulations to The Night Ministry's own Sylvester Farmer, who has been honored with the Jim Goodwin Driver Excellence Award by the Mobile Healthcare Association! Sylvester is an integral part of our Health Outreach Bus program as a Driver and Outreach Professional. He recently accepted his award at the 18th Annual Mobile Health Clinics Conference in Phoenix, Arizona.

The Night Ministry is also honored to have been recognized this fall by the Health & Medicine Policy Research Group as a leader in advancing health equity in Chicago.



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Happy Holidays!

All of us at The Night Ministry wish you and your loved ones health and happiness this season.



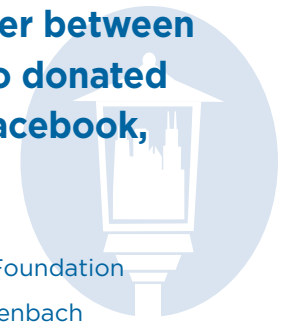
The Night Ministry's impact last fiscal year:

- Nearly **6,000** individuals served
- **535** young people and **101** of their children provided with housing and supportive services
- **1,638** free health assessments provided and **383** visits to the emergency room prevented
- **66,240** meals served to individuals who would have otherwise gone hungry
- **156** individuals connected to improved housing situations

Your support of our mission allows us to make a difference in our community. Thank you!



Thank you to those who generously gave at the \$500 level or higher between August 8 and October 31, 2022. Thank you as well to everyone who donated during this time period through alternate giving portals, such as Facebook, AmazonSmile, Workplace Giving, and more.



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