



NIGHTLIGHTS

SPRING 2021

The Night Ministry Expands Its Outreach on Public Transit

Many people experiencing homelessness ride trains and buses for shelter and safety. That is why The Night Ministry is now offering health care and outreach services at two CTA train stations, two nights a week.

The Night Ministry first began outreach on the CTA early last year, but the scale and scope of what the agency can provide on public transit have expanded because of funding from the Chicago Department of Public Health.

“A team comprised of a Medical Provider, a Case Manager, and two Outreach Professionals are at an end-of-the-line station on both the Red Line and Blue Line for four hours, late at night,” said Mary Poliwka, Community Health Manager at The Night Ministry.

“We are offering health care and case management as well as food, hygiene supplies, and winter gear,” Poliwka said.

Erin Ryan, Senior Vice President, said the initial outreach The Night Ministry conducted at the CTA last year proved there was a need for services on public transit.

“We encountered many more people who were not utilizing the traditional shelter system and who were also not using the informal networks of support that exist in encampments,” she said.

“These folks are really falling through the cracks. What we are doing at the CTA is very much aligned with The Night Ministry’s mission to fill in the gaps,” Ryan said.

The endeavor involves direct service providers from across the agency. Staff from the Bus and Street Medicine staff are taking



Kyanna Johnson, Public Ally at The Night Ministry (left), provides a client with a meal at the CTA Forest Park Blue Line station.

part, as are Case Managers from the Youth Outreach Team (YOT).

“What we are doing at the CTA is very much aligned with The Night Ministry’s mission to fill in the gaps.”

– Erin Ryan, Senior Vice President

“It takes a special skill set to work with young people. Having specialists who can engage with youth who are on the trains and get them connected to age-appropriate services is important,” Ryan said.

YOT Case Manager, Allison Boyle, says that having compassionate interactions with clients is an important part of why The Night Ministry is at the train stations.

“It can be such a long road from staying on the trains to being stably housed, so having somebody fighting in your corner and supporting you through it is so important.” ♦

HOUSING • HEALTH CARE • HUMAN CONNECTION

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Peer Support Advocate Brings Lived Experience to the Street Medicine Team

Keith Belton brings unique experience and perspective to The Night Ministry's Street Medicine Team. As a Peer Support Advocate, he has struggled with many of the same challenges that some of The Night Ministry's clients do.

"I grew up in an abandoned building on the West Side of Chicago," Belton said. "With my mom, there were five of us kids living in an abandoned building."

Belton continued to experience homelessness as an adult while also grappling with addiction. Just as it was with many of his family members, criminal activity provided an income, and when he wasn't living on the streets, he was behind bars. Finally, an intervention by a judge, prosecutor, and public defender helped start him on a path to greater stability.

"I was ready to change my life," Belton said. In lieu of a prison sentence, he entered into a drug treatment program where he began to recover from addiction, and which he credits with starting his interest in community building. Upon release, Belton began volunteering with Heartland Alliance, at first handing out flyers for the nonprofit's health clinics but later joining its community advisory board and board of directors.

Belton first encountered The Night Ministry while speaking on behalf of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council at a conference attended by members of The Night Ministry's staff. With their encouragement, he started to volunteer with the Street Medicine Team, which brings health care, survival supplies, and supportive services to encampments across Chicago. He later became an employee.



Keith Belton (right), Peer Support Advocate, brings lived experience to the Street Medicine Team.

Today, Belton believes his own experience with homelessness helps him build trust with the individuals served by The Night Ministry.

"I have one-on-one conversations with them, let them know where I'm from and where I've been. When they hear that I share some of their experiences, it helps bring down barriers," he said.

Belton said that, through his work at The Night Ministry, he has learned to not assume that he knows what is best for the individuals he helps.

"My teammates have taught me to accept each person's choices and respect where each client is on their journey," Belton said. ◊

"When they hear that I share some of their experiences, it helps bring down barriers."

- Keith Belton, Peer Support Advocate

CORPORATE SPOTLIGHT: BREAKPOINT ADVISORS

Breakpoint Advisors, a commercial real estate appraisal firm, has built philanthropy into their business model.

"We donate 10% of our gross revenue to charity," said Joel Bevis, Director at Breakpoint Advisors. "When we started three years ago we wanted to do things differently and make giving a central part of our ethos."

The company has offices in Boston, Los Angeles, and Chicago, where Bevis and his wife, Caitlin, who is Breakpoint's Founder and Managing Principal, lived for more than ten years. It was during their time in Chicago that they became supporters of The Night Ministry.

"We are really impressed with the breadth and quality of The Night Ministry's services," said Bevis. "And we appreciate how the organization makes good use of funding. As a donor, that is so important when you are looking at making an impact with your donation."

BREAKPOINT ADVISORS RECENTLY MADE A \$25,000 DONATION TO THE NIGHT MINISTRY. WE THANK THEM FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF OUR MISSION.



To find out more about corporate support opportunities, please contact Heather Nash, Senior Director, Foundation and Corporate Philanthropy, at (773) 506-6029 or heather@thenightministry.org.

Board Member's Work in Affordable Housing Connects to Service with The Night Ministry

Serving on The Night Ministry's Board of Directors is an extension of the professional life of Bennett Applegate, Jr. Applegate is an attorney whose legal practice focuses on the financing and development of affordable housing.

"If you look at the spectrum of housing solutions, I'm involved in the area of permanent housing, whereas The Night Ministry is focused on the beginning stages of an individual's journey to greater stability," said Applegate. "It's rewarding to be involved in both ends of that continuum through my work as an attorney and also my service on the Board of The Night Ministry."

Applegate began his relationship with The Night Ministry while earning his MBA and JD from Northwestern University. As a Kellogg Board fellow, he served as an *ex-officio* member of The Night Ministry's Board of Directors, working on special projects while gaining experience in board governance. He joined the Board as a full member in 2019.

"What I really appreciate about The Night Ministry is its combination of sophistication and flexibility. The agency is able to provide a high quality of care while also literally meeting people where they are at," Applegate said.

Like much of the rest of the country, in Chicago, the demand for affordable housing outweighs the supply. Bennett said availability of funding to support the development of new units is limited.

"Tax credits are the primary financial tool utilized to create more affordable housing units. And while those tax credits have incrementally become more accessible, decreases in other federal and state funding that has historically been used to develop affordable housing and provide related supportive service make



Board Member Bennett Applegate, Jr., seen here speaking at the 2019 Lighting Up the Night benefit, is an attorney specializing in the development of affordable housing.

these projects difficult to get off the ground," he said.

"But it's more than just increasing funding," Bennett said. "Projects must fit within the often competing regulatory and underwriting requirements of both public and private funding sources. This not only increases the cost of development but also narrows the population that the housing can serve. Very often it leaves out populations who need housing but for different reasons don't qualify, such as ex-offenders or youth experiencing homelessness.

"The solution is not only having more sources of funding but making sure that funding is flexible and broad enough that more populations who need housing will qualify." ◇

RAPID RE-HOUSING EVENTS HELD AT YOUTH PROGRAMS

More than 20 young people served by The Night Ministry recently found permanent housing through rapid re-housing events held in January at two of the agency's shelter programs.

"The accelerated moving events were targeted at medically vulnerable individuals," said Betsy Carlson, Director of Youth Programs. "Money from the CARES [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security] Act is providing subsidies for security deposits and rent."

Clients met with housing navigators from All Chicago, an organization that coordinates homelessness services in Chicago, at the Response-Ability Pregnant & Parenting Program and The Crib overnight shelter. They toured available apartments virtually, submitted their rental applications, and selected furniture from the Chicago Furniture Bank. Clients are also receiving ongoing case management services to help them maintain their housing.



Stephan Koruba, Senior Nurse Practitioner at The Night Ministry, administers a COVID-19 vaccine to a patient on the streets of Chicago. The Night Ministry has been offering the vaccine to clients of both its Health Outreach Program and Youth Housing Programs. The City of Chicago has been relying on the agency's expertise in outreach and its relationships with those whom it serves to vaccinate some of our community's most vulnerable residents. *Photo by Lloyd DeGrane*

Flexible Housing Pool for Youth Has Its First Successes

For many individuals experiencing homelessness, the offer of an apartment of their own might seem too good to be true. Kevin Garvey encounters that skepticism when he's reaching out to young people who have been identified as eligible to participate in the Flexible Housing Pool for Youth, The Night Ministry's newest Youth Housing Program.

"A lot of people will ask, 'Is this legit?' which I can understand, as these are people who have had so many things promised to them that haven't come through," said Garvey, Housing Outreach and Engagement Specialist. "But once I explain the program, they're excited."

Garvey is the first point of contact for all participants in the Flexible Housing Pool, The Night Ministry's new partnership with the Center for Housing and Health and four other nonprofits. The program provides subsidies for market-rate rental apartments, along with wrap-around support, and is aimed at a particularly vulnerable segment of young adults struggling with homelessness—those who are chronic users of emergency services for mental and physical health challenges.

Participants are assigned a housing specialist who assists with locating their apartment. They are also connected with a case manager from The Night Ministry or one of the other partner agencies to help them settle into, and stay, in their apartments.

"I let them know we are in this boat together," said Brooke Thomas, The Night Ministry's Flexible Housing Pool Case Manager. "I want them to know that they are not only getting



Through the Flexible Housing Pool for Youth, Monica (left), pictured with her partner and her two children, has an apartment of her own.

the apartment, but they will also be receiving my ongoing support."

That support ranges from Thomas arriving on move-in day with a starter kit of household essentials to helping with life-skills such as learning how to do laundry and taking care of bills.

The program only launched last fall, but Thomas already has 15 clients. The majority are young women with children, including Monica, who recently moved into an apartment with her four-year-old daughter and five-year-old son.

"I'm very grateful but still very much in shock. I was scared that it wasn't the help that I needed," said Monica, who, with her children, had been shuffling back and forth between the homes of a relative and a friend. "My future is brighter." ♦

"I want them to know that they are not only getting the apartment, but they will also be receiving my ongoing support."

– Brooke Thomas, Flexible Housing Pool Case Manager

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The Night Ministry Presents Virtual Events to Engage Supporters and the Community

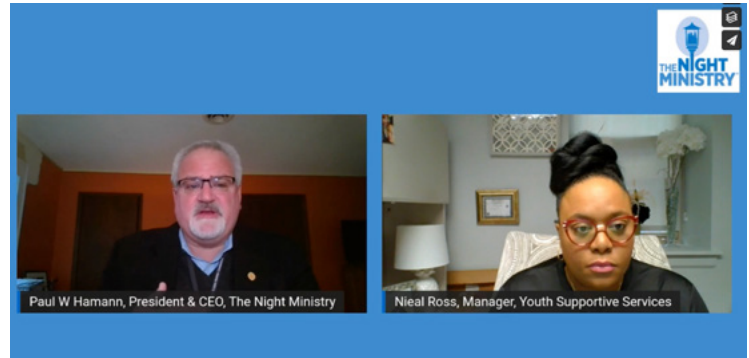
For years, many new supporters have often learned more about The Night Ministry's mission by attending the tours of its programs that have been held monthly on Tuesday nights. Participants would meet at the Open Door Shelter – West Town for an overview of the agency's work, take a tour of the facility, and visit the Health Outreach Bus as it provided services in the community.

That changed when temporary health and safety protocols that The Night Ministry adopted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic curtailed outside visitors to its programs. So, Bethany Collins, Individual Stewardship Coordinator, decided to take the tours online.

Collins has been hosting virtual tours of The Night Ministry's programs for months now, incorporating videos and photos into a discussion on Zoom.

"Tour participants still appreciate learning about the work of The Night Ministry and having a forum to ask questions. The virtual tours are still a good relationship-building tool and, because people can take them from home, they are more accessible," she said.

The online tours are not the only way The Night Ministry has pivoted to remain engaged with its community of supporters. The agency has held a series of live conversations on Facebook and YouTube, with topics ranging from the intersection of homelessness and racial discrimination to deep-dive discussions with program staff and a look at The Night Ministry in 2021 with President & CEO, Paul W. Hamann.



The Night Ministry's President & CEO, Paul W. Hamann (left), takes part in a Facebook Live discussion with Neal Marie Ross, Manager of Youth Supportive Services.

Meanwhile, Brittany Caine-Conley, Congregational Engagement Manager, has begun a series of informal lunch-time discussions of important issues with guest experts, held at noon on the third Friday of every month on Zoom.

"We want our community members to understand the complexity of homelessness as well as ways that we can work together to end it and address its underlying issues," Caine-Conley said about the LampLight Lunch series, which has so far addressed such topics as advocacy, tenants' rights, and a proposal to deploy mental health workers and paramedics in response to mental health crisis calls instead of law enforcement.

"The virtual tours are still a good relationship-building tool and, because people can take them from home, they are more accessible."

- Bethany Collins, Individual Stewardship Coordinator

To find out about upcoming virtual events, including tours and LampLight Lunches, visit www.thenightministry.org/events. ◇



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"The Night Ministry's outreach to the homeless population is just amazing. These are people whom society has forgotten. But The Night Ministry goes out to bring them health care, food, and more, with a nonjudgmental approach."

— Bob and Barb Edmunds, Beacons of Hope since 2017

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is helping The Night Ministry adapt to new challenges. Read more inside!



The Crib Fills in the Gaps during COVID

When Illinois experienced a surge in COVID-19 cases late last year, the City of Chicago asked The Night Ministry to temporarily extend the hours of operation at The Crib, the agency's emergency shelter for young adults, from overnight to 24 hours a day.

"Access to other shelters and drop-in centers, which provide housing, food, water, and other resources that are basic needs, has been limited during the pandemic," said Dawnn Pirani Brumfield, Program Supervisor for The Crib. "By extending our hours and adding additional staff, The Crib has been able to fill in those gaps for young people experiencing homelessness."

The Crib moved from its former home in the basement of a church to a much larger facility on the ground floor of The Night Ministry's new headquarters last July. Pirani Brumfield said the additional space has made a huge difference.

"It's been helpful both in terms of social distancing because of COVID-19 and in providing guests more physical and emotional space," she said. "At our old location, everything, from sleeping to eating to recreating, took place in one room."

During this recent period of around-the-clock operations, some guests would leave during the day for work or other activities, but many remained indoors.

"Guests have often been in The Vibe lounge, either job searching or checking their email on the computers. We've also engaged



Dawnn Pirani Brumfield, Program Supervisor at The Crib (right), prepares food for a guest of the shelter, which served three meals a day, plus snacks, during a recent period of around-the-clock operations.

with them through music videos and dancing in the multi-purpose space. And we have helped them work on long-term goals," said Christopher Scott, Program Specialist.

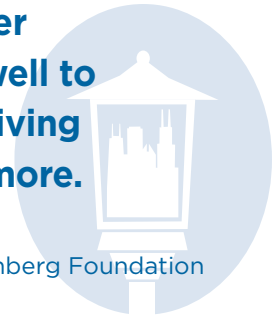
Keisha, who began staying at The Crib in the fall, was grateful the shelter extended its hours.

"It's been a blessing to be able to stay here and get some extra sleep, which I actually needed," she said.

Pirani Brumfield said offering guests the opportunity to recharge has been important.

"Housing instability can really cause exhaustion in the body. Just having the opportunity to rest, whether that is actually sleeping or sitting around talking with peers and staff members, has been a necessary restorative for our guests' bodies," she said. ◇

Thank you to those who generously gave at the \$500 level or higher between December 1, 2020, and February 28, 2021. Thank you as well to everyone who donated during this time period through alternate giving portals, such as Facebook, Amazon Smile, Workplace Giving, and more.



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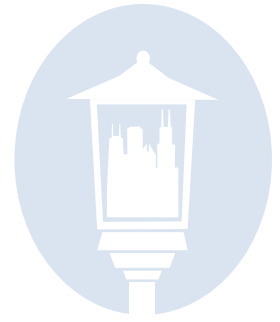
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