



Impact Spotlight

Spring 2026

HUMAN CONNECTION - HOUSING - HEALTHCARE

Finding Light: Autumn Joy's Path Through Homelessness and Hope

Autumn Joy, 24, is an artist, poet, and youth advocate—and one of many young people navigating homelessness who rely on The Crib, The Night Ministry's emergency shelter for youth ages 18–24. Their journey has never been linear, but shaped by resilience, creativity, and a belief that light exists at the end of the tunnel.

Born in Rostov-on-Don, Russia, they moved to Naperville, Illinois, as a toddler. At 11, they entered residential care in Quincy, Illinois, remaining there through high school, graduating in 2019. The years that followed brought continual transitions through programs in Missouri and Texas, some supportive, others harmful. After returning to Chicago, Autumn Joy secured an apartment in 2023, but by 2025, health needs and financial strain pushed them back into homelessness.

Autumn Joy was seeking more than a bed. They wanted respect, especially as an LGBTQIA+ young person. They discovered The Night Ministry, through the StreetLight Chicago app, a mobile resource for young people ages 14 to 24 experiencing housing instability in Chicago.

The Night Ministry has been a place where they feel heard, supported, and where genuine community moments occur. Last December, they performed poetry at the Jingle Jam, a youth holiday celebration. Creativity remains central to their survival, helping them process trauma and uncover the beauty that often comes from struggle. "Everything is real. I don't write about fake stuff," they stated.

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A member of *Youth 4 Truth*, The Night Ministry's youth advocacy committee, they are candid about their challenges, hoping it will help keep more youth off the streets. "It's about making a difference."

For Autumn Joy, "home" means safety, comfort, and rest. And their outlook is positive.

They are one of hundreds of young people who come to The Crib. Last year alone, The Night Ministry served as a housing resource for 367 youth—a 23 percent increase from the previous year.



Autumn Joy performs poetry during The Night Ministry's youth holiday party last December.

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Creating Change One Tattoo at a Time

Tattoo artist Pablo Holland, owner of The Golden Ghost Tattoo, returned to Chicago with a quiet sense of anticipation. Though he had moved away a few years earlier, the city still felt like a part of him—its streets, its people, and the creative community that had shaped his early career. He and a group of fellow artists decided to host an event where proceeds from sales would benefit The Night Ministry.

Pablo saw it as more than an event. It was a homecoming. “After such a warm welcome, it just felt right to pass something on and help a local organization like The Night Ministry,” he stated.

Located in the Wicker Park neighborhood, the tattoo parlor buzzed with great energy. Paintings lined the walls, machines hummed as tattoos came to life, and visitors drifted through the space knowing their purchases would help others. By the end, the artists had raised \$1,300 and introduced a new audience to the organization’s mission.

“The people who make The Night Ministry their life’s work are special human beings, as it is a stressful and oftentimes thankless endeavor. I wanted to donate not just for the people served by the organization, but also for those working on the front lines. In my view, there is no higher calling in the human experience than service to others, and that is something that should be rewarded.”



Make Memorable Moments While Supporting The Night Ministry!

Want to make a difference and have fun doing it?

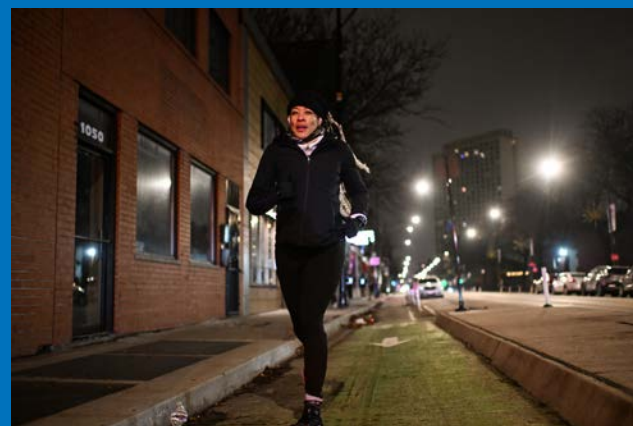
From backyard parties and bake sales to 5Ks, bowling nights, and sports tournaments, there are endless creative ways to raise funds for your unhoused and uninsured neighbors. Best of all, our secure online platform handles the donation collection for you, so you can focus on bringing people together and having a good time!

Every event you host does more than raise money. It helps us share our story, grow our community of supporters, and continue delivering vital services to those who need them most.

Ready to get started? Reach out to Erica Schoppe at ericas@thenightministry.org to learn more.



A fun, backyard barbecue with friends and family turned into a wonderful opportunity to “party with a purpose.”



Fitness enthusiast Carmilla Kupritz organized an incredible running challenge, raising more than \$8,300.

A Golden Milestone Worth Celebrating



For 50 years, The Night Ministry has been a lifeline for Chicagoans facing homelessness and poverty! Join us as we celebrate this momentous occasion at our **50th Anniversary Gala: A Legacy of Care, a Future of Hope** on **Saturday, April 18**, from **6:00 p.m. to midnight** at **The Geraghty, 2520 S. Hoyne Avenue**.

Dress in your finest semi-formal or elegant attire and join fellow changemakers for an unforgettable evening honoring five decades of human connection, housing, and health care that have transformed thousands of lives across Chicago.

Attendees will enjoy a cocktail, silent and live auctions, a plated dinner, inspirational messages from The Night Ministry leadership and former clients, and an after-party. Additionally, the night will feature two remarkable honoree recognitions:

The **Beacon Award** will be given to **Maree Bullock**, whose visionary generosity has left an indelible mark on the organization's mission.

The **Lamplighter Award** will honor **Northern Trust**, a partner of more than 30 years whose support for youth experiencing homelessness has been nothing short of extraordinary.

Moreover, **Dean Richards**, legendary Chicago-based television and radio entertainment reporter, will host the event.

Every ticket purchased, every table reserved, every sponsorship secured helps The Night Ministry continue serving thousands of individuals each year. Sponsorship opportunities are available for individuals, corporations, and community partners.

Secure your spot at this historic evening.

Contact Erica Schoppe at EricaS@thenightministry.org or call 773-506-6029.

This is one night Chicago won't forget.



Scan the QR code to purchase tickets

Why HUD Cuts and New Rules Could Increase Homelessness



The Night Ministry's Tedd Peso, Director of Strategic Partnerships, shares more about the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and what its funding shifts could mean for people experiencing homelessness and the organizations that serve them.

Q: What is HUD, and why does its funding matter?

HUD is the primary federal agency supporting housing stability and homelessness response nationwide. Its investments in outreach, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing help communities move individuals from crisis to stability.

Q: How does HUD distribute funding, nationally and in Chicago?

HUD allocates resources through national programs directed to states and local "continuums of care." Some funds are formula-based, reflecting community needs and capacity, while others are awarded competitively to regions with strong, coordinated plans. At The Night

Ministry, HUD supports youth housing programs and the Outreach and Health Program's street outreach services.

Q: What changes are proposed, and what's the impact?

We're concerned about reductions in permanent housing that could force nearly 3,000 households back into homelessness, along with shifts away from Housing First and other evidence-based practices toward required or forced services. Shrinking funds and restrictive rules mean fewer outreach shifts, fewer beds, slower housing placements, and longer waits for support.

Q: What is The Night Ministry doing?

We're partnering with providers to assess impacts, align messaging, and meet with legislators to protect effective funding and policies.

Q: How can people help?

Use your voice. Watch for HUD's 2027 funding announcement before June, follow our updates, and advocate with elected officials. Support frontline organizations by donating, volunteering, sharing accurate information, and championing housing first solutions.

TNM & Leaders Spotlight Homelessness Crisis at Legislative Breakfasts

The Night Ministry, along with other medical providers from across the city and state, participated in two legislative breakfasts to advocate for the health and housing needs of our most vulnerable neighbors.

On February 10, TNM staff and leadership attended the Illinois Association of Free and Charitable Clinics (IAFCC) legislative breakfast to support their efforts to expand healthcare access for unhoused and uninsured Illinoisans. Their goal is to ask for \$15M in state funding for 2026 — up from \$9M in 2025 — to keep doors open for service providers and to continue meeting people where they are. Free clinics across Illinois saved \$70M in healthcare costs last year alone through prevention and emergency room diversions. State Representatives Theresa Mah (IL-24) and Camille Lilly (IL-78) joined us in person, along with staff from several additional legislative offices.

Our President & CEO, Carol J. Sharp, spoke at the All Chicago Continuum of Care Legislative Breakfast on February 12th. Alongside partner organizations, including Housing Action Illinois, Deborah's Place, and Trilogy, we



Carol J. Sharp, President and CEO of The Night Ministry providing opening remarks at the All Chicago Continuum of Care Legislative Breakfast.

advocated for increased state investment in homeless services and permanent supportive housing to support Chicago's 2026-2030 Five-Year Blueprint on Homelessness. With 1 in 146 Chicagoans experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity and a shortage of over 200,000 affordable units statewide, bold action is urgently needed.

**Healthcare and housing are human rights.
We are proud to advocate for both.**

Volunteers Make Our Mission Possible

Did you know that last year, nearly 1,000 volunteers contributed their time and talents in support of The Night Ministry? Volunteers play an integral role in the work we do every day to support our unhoused neighbors—from preparing meals and distributing essentials to offering warm conversation and support on the streets and in our shelters. Their dedication and compassion not only help meet immediate needs but also foster dignity, hope, and community for those facing some of life's toughest challenges. Volunteers truly make the mission possible. In celebration of National Volunteer Month, we salute you!

To learn more about volunteer opportunities, contact tedd@thenightministry.org



Annual Count Provides a Snapshot of Chicago's Unhoused Neighbors

On the frigid night of January 22, more than 30 volunteers and staff gathered at The Night Ministry's headquarters in Bucktown to participate in the City of Chicago's annual Point in Time (PIT) Count. Federally mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the PIT Count provides a snapshot of the number of individuals experiencing homelessness, specifically those living outside, on a single night. The PIT Count does not record individuals who are couch-surfing, living in abandoned buildings, or in other unstable situations.

The data plays a critical role in shaping federal, state, and local funding decisions for housing and supportive services, making the accuracy of each count essential.

Historically conducted during the coldest week of the year, this year's count lived up to that tradition. Freezing temperatures underscored the urgency of the work ahead as volunteers prepared to head into neighborhoods across Chicago. The Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) led an in-depth training at The Night Ministry's offices, ensuring that every participant understood how to engage safely, respectfully, and productively with unhoused neighbors.

For many volunteers, the night was both eye-opening and deeply meaningful. "It's one thing to read statistics about homelessness," shared one volunteer, "but being out there, meeting people where they are, reminds you that every number represents a real person with a real story."



Haley Hatton (right), health and outreach team member, and volunteers braved the cold to conduct the Point-in-Time Count.

The Night Ministry has supported the PIT Count since its earliest years, reflecting its commitment to illuminating the realities of homelessness in Chicago. As Mary Poliwka, Community Health Manager, expressed, "Each person counted is a story that needs to be told. The data guides funding, but the stories guide our mission."

In 2024, the Chicago PIT Count reported 18,836 individuals experiencing homelessness, representing a significant increase from the previous year and highlighting the ongoing homelessness crisis in the city.

Experience Hope in Action: Tour The Night Ministry



Join us for an eye-opening, inspiring afternoon at The Night Ministry!

We're hosting a special behind-the-scenes tour on Thursday, May 14, from 5-7 p.m. at our headquarters located at 1735 N. Ashland.

On this tour, you'll step into the heart of our mission and see the impact firsthand. You'll visit two of our cornerstone programs — the Outreach and Health Ministry Bus and The Crib — and experience how we support Chicago neighbors facing homelessness and poverty every day.

Ready to join? Simply scan the QR code to register.

Have questions? Reach out to MaCheaux Ransom at macheaux@thenightministry.org



Scan to register

The Night Ministry is a Chicago-based organization whose mission is to provide human connection, housing support, and health care to members of our community who are unhoused or experiencing poverty.

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