Two New Grants Allow for Expansion of HIV Testing Services

The Night Ministry’s Health Outreach Bus will expand the HIV testing program thanks to two generous grants from the AIDS Foundation of Chicago and the City of Chicago. The grants, worth $110,000 collectively, will allow us to test in new areas of the city and reach even more individuals who are at high risk of contracting HIV.

The Night Ministry has been providing HIV prevention services on the Bus since 1989. Last year, we tested 722 individuals for HIV and 60 people for Hepatitis C. In addition, our nursing staff screened 77 people for chlamydia and gonorrhea and gave 46 Hepatitis A/B injections. All clients who test positive for HIV or any other sexually transmitted infection (STI) are referred to appropriate health care agencies in the community. The rates of HIV infection are three to 16 times higher among persons who are homeless or unstably housed compared to persons with stable housing.

The City of Chicago’s grant of $70,000 will focus on expanding HIV services to homeless individuals city-wide. In addition to HIV counseling and testing, our staff will provide clients with immunizations for Hepatitis A/B, screening for Hepatitis C and prevention education for STIs.

The AIDS Foundation of Chicago’s grant of $40,000 over two years will be used to expand the Bus’s HIV testing services to reach more Hispanic and African American males aged 13-24 who are at the highest risk of contracting HIV. In order to reach more of these populations, we plan to collaborate with other community organizations and explore potential new testing sites.

David Wywialowski, our HIV Testing Coordinator, said targeting these vulnerable and at-risk populations is crucial. “Funding to serve these populations is critical to helping stop the spread of HIV. In providing services for at-risk men of color and the homeless, we will educate people about safer behaviors, provide testing and counseling, and link people to care.”

Annual Report Now Available Online

If you haven’t yet seen our 2011 Annual Report, we encourage you to check it out on our website, www.thenightministry.org. This year’s annual report focuses on collaboration and features the stories of four partnerships we have built with local organizations to enhance the services we provide to Chicago’s most vulnerable residents.

For 36 years, providing Chicago’s vulnerable & homeless individuals with safety net services such as housing, healthcare, and outreach in an open, affirming, and accepting manner.
**Reflections: Our First Interaction with The Night Ministry**

This reflections piece, written by longtime supporters of The Night Ministry Anne & Bill Goldstein, reflects on the first time Anne & Bill experienced the work of The Night Ministry. This dynamic couple will be receiving the President’s Award at our 2012 Lighting Up the Night Awards Dinner & Auction. Bill is a member and former chair of The Night Ministry’s Board of Directors, and Anne chaired our silent auction at the 2009 Lighting Up the Night Awards Dinner & Auction.

Like so many others, our first introduction to The Night Ministry’s services was a van tour. The tour allowed us to follow The Night Ministry Bus for a night on the streets, serving the homeless people in need. The experience was astounding. Meeting with those we served that night was our first experience meeting and talking with “street people” in a meaningful way. We gained an understanding of their issues and problems and learned just how important The Night Ministry is to them. We always had an idea of their physical needs – food, shelter and medical care – but we had not thought about the loneliness and isolation they feel. It was through our own conversations, and observing the compassion and understanding of the Night Ministry professionals who are on the street every night, that we began to understand the significance of this work.

Following our tour with the Bus, we moved on to visit The Night Ministry’s shelters. These facilities provide a home for Chicago’s youth who would otherwise be resigned to the streets and subject to exploitation. Seeing the smiles of young children playing in a warm, safe environment with their teen mothers is a priceless gift. We are grateful for being able to give our time and support to this important effort.

“We always had an idea of their physical needs – food, shelter and medical care – but we had not thought about the loneliness and isolation they feel.”

Our work at The Night Ministry means so much to us, and it all started with a van tour. We encourage you to contact Christy Prassas, Vice President of Development and External Relations, to schedule a tour and learn about the uplifting work The Night Ministry does. She can be reached at 773-506-6023 or Christy@thenightministry.org.

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**The Night Ministry Unveils New Mission Statement**

The Night Ministry unveiled our new mission statement in late 2011. While our work on the streets and in our shelters remains the same, the new mission statement is more succinct and better embodies our organization’s work. Our strategic planning process, completed in 2010, identified the need for a new mission statement. A committee of staff and board members worked together to create the following new mission statement for our organization:

*The Night Ministry compassionately provides housing, health care, outreach, spiritual care, and social services to adults and youth who struggle with homelessness, poverty and loneliness. We accept individuals as they are and offer support as they seek to improve their lives. We invite others to join this hope-filled work.*
Sneak Peek Into the 2012 Lighting Up the Night Awards Dinner & Auction

Save the date! The Night Ministry will host our annual Lighting Up the Night Awards Dinner & Auction on Thursday, June 7, 2012, at 5:30 p.m. The event, held at the Four Seasons Hotel in Chicago, will be chaired by Ralph B. Mandell, Chairman Emeritus and co-founder of The PrivateBank.

In addition to benefitting the programs of The Night Ministry, Lighting Up the Night celebrates the contributions of outstanding community partners and volunteers. We are proud to announce that Anne and Bill Goldstein (the authors of this month’s reflections piece in the newsletter) will receive the President’s Award. The Union Church of Hinsdale is this year’s Outstanding Community Partner, and Bonnie Kepplinger has been named as the Outstanding Community Volunteer.

This year’s silent auction will include some stellar items from our sponsors. Don’t miss out on your opportunity to bid on two Southwest Airlines roundtrip tickets, a two night stay at Hotel Felix, dinner for two at NoMI, and more! We’re also rounding up some one-of-a-kind experiences, such as a one week stay at a 3-bed, 3-bath home in New Mexico. Don’t miss your opportunity to bid on Chicago’s finest experiences – mark your calendars today for the 2012 Lighting Up the Night Awards Dinner & Auction!

All proceeds from the event directly support The Night Ministry’s mission of compassionately providing housing, health care, outreach, spiritual care, and social services to adults and youth who struggle with homelessness, poverty and loneliness.

Planned Giving

Why should you consider giving to The Night Ministry through your retirement plan? Because you can leave behind a legacy of caring that will save and improve the lives of countless vulnerable adults and youth in Chicago. Your planned gift through your 401(k) or individual retirement account (IRA) will help us reach a day when Chicago ends homelessness.

Your retirement-plan benefits are very likely a significant portion of your net worth. And because of special tax considerations, they can make an excellent choice for funding a charitable gift. Retirement-plan benefits include assets held in an IRA, 401(k) plans, profit-sharing plans, Keogh plans, and 403(b) plans.

If you would like to explore your options for planned giving, please contact Christy Prassas at Christy@thenightministry.org or 773-506-6023.

Tickets will go on sale in early spring, so please check our Website often for updates. We hope to see you there!

Youth Working Towards Bachelor’s Degree Passes Teaching Certification Exams

Zech, a participant in The Night Ministry’s Transitional Living program (TLP) and a senior at VanderCook College of Music, will be graduating in just a few months with his bachelor’s in music education. But things weren’t always so great for Zech. During his sophomore year in college, Zech hit a rough patch when his living situation crumbled and he found himself without a home. Priding himself on his goal-orientated attitude, Zech found the Interim Program at Open Door Shelter – West Town. He moved into the TLP and got back on his feet. He was able to take advantage of the stable housing situation to get ahead in school and he was connected with the counseling that he needed to succeed on a personal level. In early February, Zech found out that he passed his teaching certification exams – meaning that after graduation, he will be eligible to teach. He is hoping to teach elementary or middle school music and after gaining experience, to pursue his master’s degree in educational psychology. We are so proud of his hard work!
THE NIGHT MINISTRY THANKS YOU FOR YOUR CARING SUPPORT.

We’re happy to recognize gifts received between November 1, 2011 - January 15, 2012 at the $1,000 level or higher for our programs and operations.

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