



NIGHTLIGHTS

HOLIDAY 2023

New Client Advisory Board Gives Platform to Those Served by Health Outreach Program

This summer, The Night Ministry launched a Client Advisory Board for those served by its Outreach and Health Ministry Program, which brings health care, supportive services, and resources directly to people who are unhoused. Client Advisory Board members are recipients of the program's services who wish to provide feedback and gather information on helpful local resources to share with their peers and the agency.

The group meets weekly with Client Leadership Development Specialist Candace Musick, who also co-runs Youth 4 Truth, the agency's leadership program for Youth Programs participants.

"When there are projects going on or program expansions that impact our clients, they should have a voice at the table. That's why we established the Client Advisory Board: to make sure those served by our Outreach and Health Ministry Program are feeling heard and that our services are translating in the way that we want them to," explained Musick.

Each member adds value through their individual insight and perspective. "They come from such different backgrounds and bring such a variety of life experiences that each participant is coming at the problem of homelessness from a unique angle. When they share the knowledge they've gained from lived experience, it will have a vital impact on how we serve Chicago's unhoused citizens," said Case Manager Stephannie Schreiber, who helped refer many of the group's members.

Members determine the types of projects they would like to take on. And they are paid an hourly rate for their time, expertise, leadership, and service to the agency. The Night Ministry also



Outreach and Health Ministry Program Client Advisory Board members attend a meeting at The Night Ministry's headquarters.

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– Client Leadership Development Specialist
Candace Musick

provides them with referrals to other paid opportunities and helps them build job skills.

"We're trying to get something done. We've got a bunch of ideas: big, small, and everything in between," said Marshall, a member of the Advisory Board and a client of The Night Ministry's CTA program, which

serves individuals who ride the city's public transit for shelter.

"They feel a commitment and a sense of responsibility to getting their ideas off the ground. They're drawing upon their own experiences, good and bad, to help other people that are in situations like what they've been through so that they don't have to figure things out on their own," Musick shared. ◇

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Health Outreach Bus Survey Shows Clients Face Housing and Income Instability

Finding a stable place to live, getting enough to eat, and receiving health care when they need it – these are the everyday concerns of many of the community members who visit The Night Ministry’s Health Outreach Bus, according to a recent survey from the agency’s Learning and Impact department.

The Bus travels to Chicago neighborhoods with disproportionate rates of homelessness and poverty, providing health care, food, and supportive services. By checking in with those served by the program each year, Learning and Impact gathers vital data that helps The Night Ministry ensure that the Bus continues to fulfill the agency’s mission.

“The survey helps us find out from the clients themselves which of the services we offer that they access and if they’re being utilized ideally at the different stops,” said Lead Case Manager Mirella Rodriguez. “We can spot trends that help us adjust services.”

While the majority of Bus visitors have some form of housing, over 40% of respondents shared that their housing situation is not stable, meaning they may be close to falling into homelessness. Most have at least one precarious housing factor such as not having a lease. Rodriguez helps eligible individuals apply for more permanent housing.

The Bus also offers full meals at each of its stops. Hunger is a concern for 70% of Bus visitors, and all visitors report accessing food when they visit the Bus.

Though most are on Medicaid or Medicare, approximately 20% shared they have no health insurance. The Bus’s medical

Housing Situation of Health Outreach Bus Clients



Source: The Night Ministry 2023 Health Outreach Bus Survey

professionals step in to fill in the gaps in their care, offering basic medical treatment at no cost.

The survey indicates that Bus visitors face income challenges. The vast majority were either unemployed or only worked part time.

“There are so many barriers our clients face when it comes to employment,” Rodriguez said. “A lot of our clients don’t have access to transportation, which makes it very hard to travel to areas with better job prospects.”

Because the Bus brings services directly to neighborhoods, most visitors only needed to travel 10 minutes or less to receive its care and resources.

“We want to make our services as accessible as possible. Many of our clients, for various reasons, would not be able to get to us if we were not close by,” explained Damian Nelson, Director of Learning and Impact.

Most clients visit the Bus multiple times a month, and 91% shared they trust the staff. Nearly all said they are satisfied or very satisfied with The Night Ministry’s services.

For a longer version of this article, please visit thenightministry.org/blog/health-outreach-bus-survey. ♦

“The survey helps us find out from the clients themselves which of the services we offer that they access and if they’re being utilized ideally at the different stops.”

– Mirella Rodriguez, Lead Case Manager

Food and Health Outreach Bus Clients

100% of clients surveyed shared they receive food at the Bus.



The majority of Bus clients are food insecure, meaning they do not have sufficient and regular access to food.

Source: The Night Ministry 2023 Health Outreach Bus Survey

The Night Ministry Offers New Volunteer Opportunities

For decades, volunteers have played a vital role at The Night Ministry. To integrate them even more deeply into its mission, the agency is expanding its volunteer opportunities.

Here are some of the ways that you can get involved as a volunteer, including new ways to serve:

Preparing & Serving Hot Meals: Volunteers cook or purchase hot meals, and if they wish, serve them at program sites, including at The Night Ministry's Youth Programs and Health Outreach Bus stops. At its shelters, volunteers may also cook on site and enjoy the prepared meal with residents.

Babysitting: The agency is seeking volunteers interested in providing childcare for the young mothers in its Open Door—West Town shelter while they participate in group activities and life-skills trainings. Program staff will provide on-site support for babysitting volunteers.

Life Skills Training: The Night Ministry provides regular enrichment opportunities for participants of its Youth Programs, including weekly life skills training workshops at its Bucktown headquarters. These sessions center on themes such as budgeting, apartment living, and navigating the insurance landscape. Volunteers with expertise in these or similar areas are asked to lead discussions and facilitate training.

Assisting on the Health Outreach Bus: Volunteers at the Health Outreach Bus help fulfill a core component of the agency's mission—human connection. They join staff at the Bus stops to chat with community members and serve refreshments and food, helping to build a comfortable and welcoming environment for visitors.



A Health Outreach Bus visitor accepts a cup of coffee from a volunteer in the Humboldt Park neighborhood.

Building Connections with Young People: The agency is seeking volunteers to share their time with the residents of its Open Door—West Town shelter, home to several of its Youth Programs. This is a great opportunity for those with experience working with young adults and teens.

Tutoring: Many of the young people served by Youth Programs are pursuing educational goals. The Night Ministry is looking for tutors to help them learn, study, and prepare for examinations, including for those seeking to earn a GED.

All the roles above also require participation in the agency's volunteer core training program. If you would like to sign up or learn more about these or other volunteer opportunities at The Night Ministry, contact Volunteer Coordinator Andrew Hart at andrew@thenightministry.org or 773-506-6033. ♦

The Night Ministry offers meaningful volunteering opportunities across its programs, ranging from cooking and serving meals to tutoring young people.

Help Us Prepare Holiday Stockings!



IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR!

Every year, The Night Ministry distributes over a thousand holiday stockings filled with essentials like thermal socks, personal care items, winter hats and gloves, and candy. Stockings are donated by individuals, congregations, organizations, and businesses from Chicagoland and beyond.

Would you like to help prepare them? Contact Resource Coordinator Luke Aylward at luke@thenightministry.org or 773-506-6022 to find out more or to sign up to help!

Alternative High School and Daycare Program Meets Needs of Young Mothers of Parenting with Purpose

The residents of Parenting with Purpose, The Night Ministry's housing program for young mothers and their kids, have long benefited from the agency's partnership with the Association House High School, a free, non-traditional education program based in Humboldt Park. The school provides a path to graduation for 16- to 21-year-olds facing educational barriers.

The program's young mothers face competing needs to care for their children, study, and make an income while also experiencing challenges like the high cost of childcare and often mismatched schedules between school, work, and day care. Association House High School has designed their Family Literacy Program to meet these complexities head on while also meeting the social and developmental needs of their children.

"The goal of the Family Literacy Program was to address barriers that our students have," said Jemina Lyle, School Culture & Climate Coordinator at Association House. "The program helps our young parents understand the reality of parenting but also gives them support and it prepares them for the future."

Parenting students can enroll their children aged 6 weeks to 5 years old in on-site childcare and early childhood education while they work towards their degree and even pursue paid internships.

"It's all in the same building, so when they go to school, their kids go with them," said Case Manager LaChania Conwell. "It eliminates the systemic barriers that many young mothers



Parenting with Purpose Alum Constance and her daughter celebrate their graduation from the Association House program.

face and helps them not get discouraged when pursuing their education."

Classes are small and the mothers are able to interact with their kids throughout the day. This approach allows them to strengthen their academic learning and parenting skills simultaneously.

"I was able to make money through an internship there, go to class, get credits, and do activities with my child. If that's not a helping hand, I don't know what is."

— Constance, Parenting with Purpose Alum and Association House Graduate

"During most of the activities for the kids, the moms are involved. When I was there, they had many reading sessions for us together at the library. Now my daughter actually loves books," said Constance, a former Parenting with Purpose resident who graduated from Association House this year.

Now a college student, she found numerous benefits from her time in the program. "They offer you plenty of resources. I was able to make money through an internship there, go to class, get credits, and do activities with my child. If that's not a helping hand, I don't know what is." ♦

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Youth Leader Adalina Finds Empowerment Through a Stable Home and Advocacy Work

Adalina now has a home of her own. But the 20-year-old knows what it is like to experience housing instability.

In recent months, she has stayed temporarily with family and friends and in shelters and housing programs, including at The Crib, The Night Ministry's emergency overnight shelter for young people, as well as its short-term youth housing program, Interim.

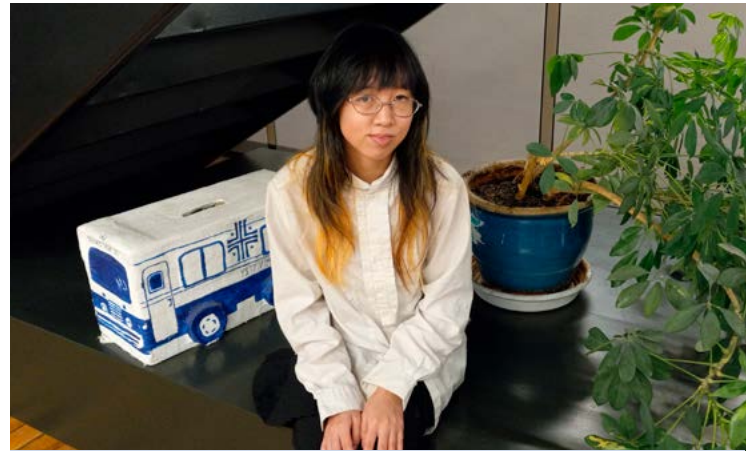
"The transition between all these situations was challenging. It was an eye-opening experience," she said.

Adalina now lives in a studio apartment in the South Side, which she gained through her participation in a Rapid Rehousing event, an intervention designed to quickly move individuals out of homelessness, hosted and co-organized by The Night Ministry and social services organization All Chicago.

Despite the challenges of living on her own, she has found it rewarding.

"Being housed alone gives me more opportunity to be self-reliant. I'm finding that I can handle adult responsibilities," she said.

During her time with The Night Ministry, Adalina found a sense of stability in the staff members she relied on, and that helped her grow into greater independence. "What's most important to me are the connections I made here and the self-discovery that I had. I gained so much knowledge from speaking to all these people, and it makes me feel privileged. They make me feel optimistic about being of service to others."



Recently housed Youth 4 Truth Member Adalina stops by The Night Ministry's Bucktown headquarters.

And that optimism has inspired her continued service in Youth 4 Truth, The Night Ministry's leadership program for young people. Now participating in her second session, Adalina has

presented in meetings with the Board of Directors, helping provide youth feedback at the highest levels of the agency.

Her experience of housing instability has stressed upon her the importance of speaking out. "It drives me to do stuff like Youth 4 Truth and community

organizing, even though the experience is hard to talk about. It challenges me to do things that I wouldn't expect myself to do, and I think that's a challenge that I like taking on," she said. ◊

"What's most important to me are the connections I made here and the self-discovery that I had. I gained so much knowledge from speaking to all these people, and it makes me feel privileged."

– Adalina, Youth 4 Truth Member

FLEXIBLE HOUSING POOL FOR YOUTH STAFF RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR SERVICE



The Flexible Housing Pool for Youth is a collaboration between the Center for Housing and Health and other Chicago nonprofits to help unhoused young adults access permanent housing through rent subsidies and supportive services. The Night Ministry's role is to offer ongoing case management to nearly a third of the youth participants.

This fall, Flexible Housing Pool partners met to honor remarkable achievements within the program. The Night Ministry's own Brianna Bueltmann, Housing Case Manager, received an Outstanding Youth Case Manager Award and Steven Dougherty, Youth Flexible Housing Pool Manager, was honored with an Outstanding Flexible Housing Program Supervisor Award.

Steven Dougherty, Youth Flexible Housing Pool Manager (left), and Brianna Bueltmann, Housing Case Manager (right), pictured here with their supervisor, Allison McCann-Stevenson, Director of Youth Programs, Community Housing, were honored last month for their outstanding service to unhoused young people.



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Happy Holidays!

*The Night Ministry wishes you
peace and joy this season.*



One Decision Can Change a Life

By Carol J. Sharp, President & CEO

One decision. One decision has the power to shift the trajectory of your life.

When I was two years old, I experienced housing insecurity. For approximately five years, my sister and I navigated Chicago, traveling from a foster home located on the South Side in the Englewood neighborhood to visit my biological mother on the city's North Side.

One decision.

We were fortunate to have been placed with a family who utilized resources — like those The Night Ministry provides — to support our journey and our ability to reunite with our mother. My one decision to be the first in my family to earn a college degree and commit to a career in support of communities who face similar challenges, is how I arrived here at this impactful agency.

Each day, across Chicago, over 65,000 people are seeking support as they navigate homelessness. Fortunately, The Night Ministry is here to deliver that assistance. Our mission to provide human connection, housing support, and health care to those who are unhoused or experiencing poverty is achieved as we work alongside our clients to advocate for their immediate physical, emotional, and social needs while affirming our shared humanity.

Last year, The Night Ministry served approximately 4,500 people



President & CEO Carol J. Sharp speaks to guests at The Night Ministry's Associate Board's 2023 Night Lights benefit event.

through our Outreach and Health Ministry Program and over 600 people across our Youth Programs. We made over 40,000 outreach connections with unhoused, precariously housed, and medically vulnerable individuals.

As we look to the future, we will continue to deepen our impact, by expanding our mental health services and transitional housing options and by investing in innovative practices to support our most vulnerable communities.

I am honored to serve as The Night Ministry's President & CEO. However, I would not be here if it were not for committed and caring community members like you. Your one decision to support our work, whether through giving, volunteering, or both, is vital. I hope you will continue to support our efforts — because your contribution can change a life. ◇

Thank you to those who generously gave at the \$500 level or higher between August 1 and October 31, 2023. 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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