



# NIGHTLIGHTS

SPRING 2023

## The Night Ministry's New Health Outreach Bus Hits the Streets

In the first week of 2023, The Night Ministry debuted its brand-new Health Outreach Bus on Chicago's streets. The Bus program brings free health care, food, and other resources to neighborhoods with high rates of homelessness and poverty.

The new vehicle includes helpful features such as exterior illumination and secure and refrigerated storage for medications. The Bus also has multiple entrances, which help facilitate increased confidentiality for health care patients and case management clients.

The Bus replaces a 2013 model worn out from years of wear and tear. A second new Bus is currently in production and will be ready later this year.

"We really used the old Bus till its last mile, until it finally would not work anymore. The new vehicle is built much more solidly, so it's going to be more durable on the streets of Chicago," said David Wywialowski, Director of Outreach and Health Ministry. "We based the current design on what worked and what didn't in the previous one."

In addition to its special features, the new Bus is shorter in length and height than its predecessor, a response to staff requests.

"The old Bus was not drivable in many areas of Chicago because it was so big," said Lead Outreach Minister Juan Roca. "The new Bus is a little bit smaller. It can be driven anywhere."

And it offers a great experience for clients too. "The medical exam space has its own separate entrance, and it is quiet and free from interruptions, creating a therapeutic environment," explained Nurse Practitioner Summer Kee.



Lead Outreach Minister Juan Roca (left) and Nurse Practitioner Summer Kee showcase The Night Ministry's new Health Outreach Bus.

The new vehicle, funded by generous supporters, allows staff to continue to provide services in a way that demonstrates how much The Night Ministry values those it serves.

*"We are proud to offer clients a mobile health office that is as professional as any brick-and-mortar clinic."*

– David Wywialowski,  
Director of Outreach and Health Ministry

"Offering clients the dignity and respect to be seen in a professional office is very important to us. They might be hesitant for any number of reasons about why they're not going to a clinic on their own, but they trust us and our staff," said Wywialowski. "We are proud to

offer them a mobile health office that is as professional as any brick-and-mortar clinic." ♦

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# Youth Program Clients Give Feedback to Board of Directors

Young people served by The Night Ministry are providing input to the Board of Directors on the agency's services.

Members of Youth 4 Truth, the organization's leadership program for young people, recently met with the Board to discuss their experiences with The Night Ministry and made suggestions for ways to enhance Youth Programs.

Youth Development Specialist Candace Musick said the Youth 4 Truth participants who spoke with the Board were especially interested in affecting change.

"They were looking for ways to get more involved and make an impact for fellow young people accessing The Night Ministry's services," she said.

Together, Youth 4 Truth members decided upon talking points for the discussion and chose who would present each topic.

"We had the ideas planned out weeks beforehand so we just sat down and figured out how we would go about it," said Youth 4 Truth member Marcus, who took on the role of facilitator to keep the meeting on track.

At the meeting, Youth 4 Truth members offered feedback on which aspects of Youth Programs are working well for them and where they saw room for improvement. Among the suggestions were additional options for life skills training and the hiring of more young people as program staff, particularly current and former clients who can relate more directly to the experiences of the youth The Night Ministry serves.

The Board's response to their ideas was positive. "It was wonderful and affirming," shared Musick. "I think cohort



Youth 4 Truth member Marcus stops by The Night Ministry's Bucktown headquarters for a meeting with his cohort.

members were nervous about being in front of the Board, but Board members created an environment where the young people felt comfortable talking and truly sharing."

"Honestly, I felt listened to. The whole team, we all felt listened to," Marcus said. "The meeting was important because they could hear the ideas from us—from people who've been in our position—instead of being relayed by others who've never had that experience."

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— Marcus, Youth 4 Truth participant

Continuing to gather client feedback is an important building block in The Night Ministry's current strategic plan. Moving forward, Youth 4 Truth participants will be invited to attend Board meetings twice a year and

take part in quarterly meetings of the Board committee that ensures the agency's programs make a measurable impact in the community. ♦

## Save the Date!

### LIGHTING UP THE NIGHT: AN EVENING TO BENEFIT THE NIGHT MINISTRY

Wednesday, June 7, 5:30 pm | The Chicago History Museum

Join us in celebration and support of our mission to provide human connection, housing support, and health care to members of our community who are unhoused or experiencing poverty. For information about Lighting Up the Night sponsorship opportunities, please contact Erica Schoppe, Special Events Coordinator, at 773-506-6029 or [ericas@thenightministry.org](mailto:ericas@thenightministry.org).

# Racial Health Disparities Contribute to Housing Loss Among Black Americans

In the U.S., health disparities run along racial lines, with Black Americans continuing to experience poorer health outcomes than white Americans overall. Poor health can negatively affect many areas of life, including by contributing to financial instability that may lead to housing loss. In this article, the fourth in our series exploring the intersection of race and homelessness, we delve into this vital topic.

According to the Office of Minority Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, heart disease, stroke, and cancer are just a few of the illnesses Black Americans are at higher risk for. Young Black individuals are also more likely to have conditions generally associated with older age brackets like high blood pressure and diabetes.

“There are very few diseases where a genetic link for African Americans has been proven or even suggested by the data,” said Bobby Watts, CEO of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council. “The reasons are the same as those that largely drive the health of everyone in this society. It’s what we call the social determinants of health: access to clean water, clean food, good education, good jobs, good housing. African Americans experience all of those at reduced rates.”

Poor health causes many to face challenges maintaining employment. Individuals may need to take time off or lose their ability to work, and therefore could experience job loss. Because Black Americans face major health concerns with greater frequency, they have a higher likelihood of experiencing such complications with employment. Additionally, medical expenses may take up a larger percentage of spending among Black households because they are already more likely to be facing poverty.

“African Americans have about 1/13th of the household wealth

## Health and Health Care for Black Americans Compared to White Americans

Number of health-related measures for which Black Americans fared better, the same, or worse than white Americans



Measures include health coverage, access, and use; health status, outcomes, and behaviors; and social determinants of health. Data Source: Kaiser Family Foundation, Key Facts on Health and Health Care by Race and Ethnicity, 2022.

white Americans do due to numerous systemic factors, so, in that situation, if you fall upon hard times, you won’t be able to maintain your housing because you don’t have a financial buffer,” said Watts.

For those who do become unhoused, health issues are likely to compound.

“The condition of homelessness is hazardous to one’s health and it makes it harder to receive treatment or receive it in an effective way. That’s where health care for the homeless programs

like The Night Ministry and those that the National Health Care for the Homeless Council supports intervene,” said Watts. “That’s the cycle that we are breaking. And hopefully when we do our work best, we’re also helping people get linked to housing, which we know is what they really need.”

For a longer version of this article, please visit [www.thenightministry.org/blog/race-and-health](http://www.thenightministry.org/blog/race-and-health). ♦

*“Access to clean water, clean food, good education, good jobs, good housing. African Americans experience all of those at reduced rates.”*

*- Bobby Watts, CEO of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council*

## LEADERSHIP TRANSITION AT THE NIGHT MINISTRY

Last year, we announced the departure of former President & CEO Paul Hamann to focus on the next chapter in his career and transition the organization to new leadership. The Night Ministry’s Board of Directors is undertaking a thoughtful and deliberate search for the right candidate to step into the role of President & CEO. In the meantime, the members of The Night Ministry’s Executive Team (see page 4) continue to provide leadership for the organization. We look forward to sharing an update with you in the future. Thank you for supporting our mission!

# Street Medicine Survey Sheds Light on Experiences of Unsheltered Chicagoans

A recent survey of clients served by the Street Medicine Program provides insight into how The Night Ministry is serving the needs of Chicago's unsheltered population.

The survey, conducted by the agency's Learning and Impact Department, aims to identify who the program serves, what their needs are, and how successfully Street Medicine is meeting those needs.

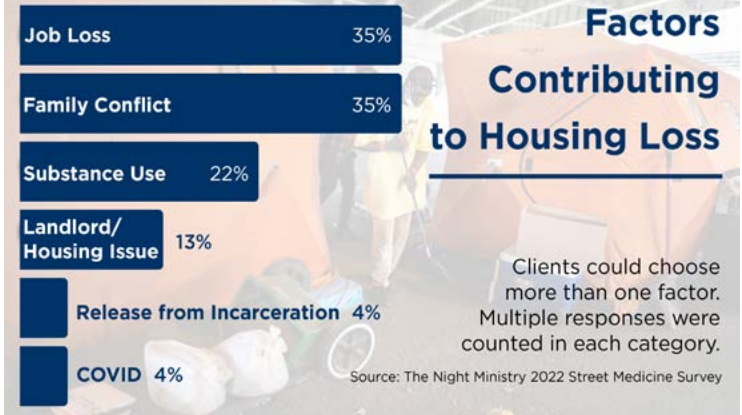
This year's survey found that nearly 9 in 10 of those served were staying outdoors; of these, 20% had no protection from the elements, such as a tent. Other respondents shared they were staying temporarily with others or in shelters. Most of those surveyed had been living outside for more than one year, and a substantial portion shared they had been unsheltered for three years or more.

Job loss and family conflict were the most common reasons cited for losing housing. Other factors included substance use, issues with a landlord or with housing, and release from incarceration.

Survey results showed that Street Medicine is reaching individuals of many backgrounds. 40% of respondents identified as white, 24% as Hispanic or Latino, 16% as Black, 8% as Native American, and the remaining 12% as another race or ethnicity.

"It's good to see that we're reaching the diverse population that I know we're serving among folks living on the street," Lead Street Medicine Outreach Professional Kyanna Johnson explained.

Most respondents were living with at least one health condition. More than half were experiencing depression and/or had dental



issues. Arthritis, high blood pressure, alcohol abuse and asthma were other commonly reported health challenges.

The survey found that Street Medicine is filling the gaps in their care, with 81% sharing that they received care from The Night Ministry's medical professionals. And clients rely on the program for other services too.

The vast majority received food, water, clothes, and hygiene supplies from the Street Medicine Program. Over half also accessed case management services and obtained harm reduction supplies like sterile syringes and Narcan, an anti-overdose medication.

Interestingly, the survey found that more clients were receiving harm reduction supplies than shared that they used drugs.

"They're not taking these items only for themselves," said Learning and Impact Analyst Casey Tkacz, who led the survey. "We know that our clients are offering them to people within their communities." ♦

*"It's good to see that we're reaching the diverse population that I know we're serving among folks living on the street."*

- Kyanna Johnson, Lead Street Medicine Outreach Professional

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# The Human Cost of Encampment Sweeps

By Kyanna Johnson, Lead Street Medicine Outreach Professional, and Yoela Tepper, Substance Use Specialist

As members of The Night Ministry's Street Medicine Team, we see firsthand the damage to human lives caused by encampment sweeps—the removal by municipal authorities of personal property from an outdoor space where unsheltered individuals have gathered to live.

In a typical sweep in Chicago, the City will post notices announcing the date of a sweep. On that date, the Department of Streets and Sanitation will arrive at the encampment and begin removing items. This oftentimes includes property used for shelter, such as a tent, that is not occupied at the exact moment of the sweep, as well as personal items that are not being literally held onto by an individual when the dump trucks arrive.

Sweeps interfere with health care. Life-saving medications for conditions like asthma, diabetes, and depression, treatments for substance use, and harm reduction supplies are lost. So are documents containing dates of medical appointments and directions for getting to clinics and offices. These disruptions to an individual's ability to manage their health conditions can have debilitating and even deadly consequences.

Sweeps set individuals back in getting connected to critical services and resources. Important documents are discarded during sweeps, including identification cards, social security cards, and other papers required to get housed, find work, and secure benefits like food assistance. We often work for weeks or even months to help individuals obtain these documents. After a sweep, we have to start that

*“As members of The Night Ministry's Street Medicine Team, we see firsthand the damage to human lives caused by encampment sweeps.”*



Article authors Yoela Tepper and Kyanna Johnson with the Street Medicine Van.

lengthy process all over again.

Sweeps disrupt the ability of individuals to stay connected with service providers like The Night Ministry. Phones and phone numbers are tossed away, creating barriers to communication. This challenge is compounded if a client is unable to return to

an encampment area following a sweep. The time it takes us to locate them, if we are able, is time we could have otherwise spent directly assisting them on a path to greater stability.

Sweeps are essentially evictions.

Just as eviction from a house or an apartment adversely affects any community member, they extract a heavy toll on our neighbors living in encampments. ♦



## SHOULD I GIVE MONEY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE PANHANDLING?



We are often asked this question. There is no right or wrong answer. The decision to give financial assistance to an individual who asks for it is up to you. Studies show that money earned through panhandling goes directly to food and other necessities, so it is a means of survival. The act of asking for money is not illegal; the City of Chicago repealed its panhandling ordinance in 2018 while a federal court struck down an Illinois state law prohibiting panhandling as unconstitutional in 2021. If you decide not to give, make eye contact, and politely decline.

Learn more at [www.thenightministry.org/goodneighborguide](http://www.thenightministry.org/goodneighborguide).



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to fulfill our mission to serve our  
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## Renovations Create Warm Environment at Parenting with Purpose Program

When you picture a shelter, you likely do not imagine a modern space with an open concept, a view of Chicago's skyline, a spacious kitchen, and plenty of natural light. But, after several months of renovations, The Night Ministry's Parenting with Purpose program, which provides up to 21 months of housing for pregnant and parenting young mothers, has all these features and more.

The renovations to the space, located on the fourth floor of the agency's Open Door Shelter – West Town facility, were supported by generous donors, including contributors to The Campaign for The Night Ministry.

Program staff and residents are pleased with the changes.

"Before it had dim lighting and was very sectioned off. It wasn't open and inviting," said La Donna Peppers, Program Supervisor for Parenting with Purpose. "There were two kitchens. Now there's one. Where the other kitchen was, we opened it up into a seating area and meeting space."

Prior to the renovations, young people did not spend much time in common areas, but that has changed, explained program resident Lameisha. "Now that it's renovated, we're out here more," she said.

Peppers agreed. "It brings us together, working more collaboratively and spending more time on our floor—all of those good things. It's such a warm happy feeling when you go up there,



Parenting with Purpose Program Supervisor La Donna Peppers in the program's newly renovated common area.

to see the clients and the staff from the program congregating."

The main living space now contains features like mobile furniture, built in shelves for children's books and toys, recessed lights, and seating along the windows so residents can enjoy views of the city.

"This beautiful space, it sets the tone, it sets the atmosphere, the presence," said Peppers. "It doesn't feel like you're in a shelter at all, and that's the biggest thing."

The renovations at the West Town facility also include a new conference room and a visitation room for residents to meet with family and friends, both on the building's first floor. ♦

**Thank you to those who generously gave at the \$500 level or higher between November 1, 2022, and March 15, 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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Debra & Donald Roseen	Special People in Need	The Lawlor Foundation
Linda & John Rossi	Speh Family Foundation	The Leonard Family Charitable Foundation
Anthony & Jane Rothschild	Kate Speiser	The Lions Club of Long Grove, Inc.
Daniel Rothschild	Faith H. Spencer & Mark Parts	The M.J. O'Brien Family Foundation
Meredith Rountree	Deborah Spitz & Tamar Westphal	The Madden Family Fund
Mary & James Ruff	St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wilmette	The Maplewood Foundation
Bernard M. Rupe	St. Nicolai United Church of Christ, Chicago	The Negaunee Foundation
Elizabeth Ruppe	Gerald Moose Stacy	The Pierce Family Charitable Foundation
Jill & Allan Ruter	Moir & Mitchell Staggs	The Potter's Clay Foundation
Libby & Jay Rutherford	Matthew Staman & Marin Quezada	The Power Family Foundation
Erin Ryan & Ryan Spangler	Adam Stein	The Reichert Foundation
Sacred Heart Church	Linda L. Steiner	The Sondheimer Family Charitable Foundation
Peter D. Sagal	Kirstin & Timothy Stellfox	The Standard Insurance Company
Christina & Brandon Salesberry	Kristin & Stan Stevens	The William R. Johnson Family Foundation
Deborah & Chris Santiago	Gary Strassel	The Wunderkinder Foundation
Sargent Family Foundation	Harriet K. Stratis	Theodore Eckert Foundation
Sauganash Community Church, Chicago	Austin Lee Strouse	Therese Foundation
Andrew J. Scheman	Rachel Sturges	Thomas Family Foundation
Ben & Marianne Schenker	Lisa Sullivan	Alison & Larry L. Thomas
Steven M. Scherschel	Margaret Sullivan & Chuck Elliott	Thrivent Financial
Mary Theresa Schmich	Timothy J. Sullivan	Nancy & Michael Timmers
Beth & Richard Schowalter	Ethan Swan	Christine Tiseo
Schubas Tavern/Lincoln Hall	Sven & Julie Sykes	Tokio Marine Management, Inc.
Tom & Maryellen Scott	Takiff Family Foundation	Linda Torcivia
Wesley E. Scroggins	Tan Family	JoAnn & Clairdon Torrence
Jenny & Nick Semaca	Tod Tappert & John Gallagher	Toyota Financial Savings Bank
Sonesh & Sheetal Shah	A. Robert Taylor	Marianne Tralewski & Harry Dennis
Hope & Jeffrey Sheffield	Scott & Lauren Taylor	Jon Trowbridge & Kathryn Sarah Devine
Brian Sheppard	Sean Taylor & Sian Sutcliffe	John & Bernice Tulloch
Linda Sienkiewicz	Telligen Community Initiative	George & Karen Tzanetopoulos
Joanne & Gregg Silver	Robin Terry	U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Aimee & Mark Skinner	Milap Thakker/Spaulding Ridge	U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development
Dyhan I. Slaughter	The Albertsons Companies Foundation/Jewel-Osco	Susan Uchida
Laurence Sloma & Lauralyn Persson	The Bank of America Foundation	Janet Underwood
Suzanne T. Smart	The Christopher L. & M. Susan Gust Foundation	Union Church of Hinsdale
Mary Ann Smith	The Dancing Skies Foundation	
Matthew D. Smith	The Fama Family Charitable Fund	
Teresa Soppet		
Michael & Antje Spade		

United GMG	Dick & Liz Wilmes
United Methodist Church of Libertyville	Woman's Society of First Congregational Church of Western Springs
Scott J. Vachon	Women's Association of Glenview Community Church
Vinay Vallabh	Delphina Worsley
Victoria Karen Van Meter	Jane Stroud Wright
Carol R. Vieth	Yorkfield Presbyterian Church, Elmhurst
John & Annette Vincent	Athanasios & Jordana Zavos
Vistex	Shelley Ziatic
Sharon & Michael Vitali	Christine A. Zielinski
Sandra Vitantonio & Tilden Cummings, Jr.	Dr. Lawrence & Judith Zimmerman
Erika Vogel	Zuckerman Family Foundation
Matthew Volmerding	
W.P. & H.B. White Foundation	
The Catherine M. and Frederick H. Waddell Family Fund at The Chicago Community Foundation	
Walgreens	
Louise Wallace	
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Pete Wentz	
Emily Werth	
Emily West	
Suzanne K. Westerhold	
Whispering Bells Charitable Trust	
Bob & Kathy Wiesemann	
Lance Wilkening	
Carol & Jeffrey Wilkens	
Willens Family Foundation	
William and Wilma Dooley Foundation	
Eddie & Pamela Williams	
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