



NIGHTLIGHTS

SUMMER 2023

Youth Leaders Spotlighted in National Art Exhibition

Young people served by The Night Ministry are represented in “Unaccompanied,” an art exhibition and audio installation that captures the faces and voices of unhoused youth through large-scale portrait paintings and sound recordings.

The show’s artists, Kate Capshaw and Joshua-Michéle Ross, collaborated with The Night Ministry and other organizations that serve unhoused youth to invite young people to sit for portraits and talk about their lives. Individuals depicted in the show, including Kiesha and Sharday, two of The Night Ministry’s youth leaders, received a stipend to travel to the exhibition opening at Georgia’s Columbus State University in February.

“We all got to know each other,” said Kiesha, who is a member of the alumni board of Youth 4 Truth, the leadership development program for young people served by The Night Ministry. “We met Kate, we talked to her, we hugged her.”

“The artists did a great job making this a very special time and experience for the people that were involved,” said Candace Musick, Youth Development Specialist at The Night Ministry. “It was a chance to reflect and share a human connection.”

In the painted portraits, visitors saw the young people’s expressive faces set against a simple dark background, and in the audio portion, they listened to their voices, as the young people responded to questions about their hopes, dreams, and more.

“The questions the artist asked didn’t dwell on the experience of homelessness, which allowed the listener to connect with the



Youth leaders Sharday (left) and Kiesha (right) display their copies of the exhibition catalog at the opening of the ‘Unaccompanied’ exhibition.

young people on a more human level,” said Tedd Peso, Director of Strategic Partnerships. “It gave you a sense of who they are as people rather than presenting a preconceived notion about what it is to be unhoused.”

“I loved being able to hear my voice and to have other people tell me what they heard when they listened to me. I felt like my voice mattered.”

– Sharday, Youth 4 Truth Alumni Board Member

The impact of the exhibit on the visiting young people was powerful. “It was amazing, something nobody would ever imagine. Our voices and our pictures are being heard and seen,” said Kiesha.

“I felt famous. I felt like I was a superstar. I loved being able to hear my voice and to have other people tell me what they heard when they listened to me. I felt like my voice mattered,” said Sharday. ◊

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Partnership with Loyola University Medical Center Brings Dentists to CTA Outreach Program

Oral health issues are common among unhoused people and can lead to serious health consequences, such as exacerbating diabetes symptoms or negatively affecting heart health. Unfortunately, with its high cost and frequent need for multiple treatments, accessing dental care is a struggle for many experiencing homelessness.

To help address these concerns, The Night Ministry's CTA Outreach Program, which provides free health care, food, and more to community members who ride public transit for shelter, has been working with dental residents who are receiving their postgraduate training through Loyola University Medical Center.

Since the spring of 2021, residents have joined the agency at the Forest Park Blue Line 'L' station once a month, offering dental evaluations to unhoused individuals, performed under the guidance of professors.

"They do an inspection, document it in our electronic medical record, and then do a referral for further care," said Stephan Koruba, Senior Nurse Practitioner at The Night Ministry.

"We try to get those who need treatment into the hands of someone who can take care of them long term, whether that's with us at the Loyola Oral Health Center or with other clinics in the community," said Dr. Martin Hogan, Assistant Professor of Dental Medicine at the Loyola Oral Health Center, who oversees residents' work.

Because they normally work in more controlled clinical



Dentists Dr. Martin Hogan, Dr. Tommy Scarafone, and Dr. Taimoor Rahman (pictured left to right) join The Night Ministry's CTA Outreach at the Forest Park 'L' station.

"It's not a common thing for dentists to be out on the street doing outreach. They're excited to be learning how to work with patients who have different challenges in a nontraditional environment."

– Stephan Koruba
Senior Nurse Practitioner

settings, conducting exams at the CTA offers the dental residents a unique opportunity to learn best practices for serving patients who are unhoused.

"It's not a common thing for dentists to be out on the street doing outreach. They're excited to be learning how to work with patients who have different challenges in a nontraditional

environment," said Koruba.

"Almost every resident has told me that their conversations with patients at the CTA have impacted their lives. They feel like they're making a difference or like they want to help even more," said Hogan. ◇

THE NIGHT MINISTRY CELEBRATES VOLUNTEERS



Residents of the Interim Housing Program make dinner with volunteer Henrietta Dombrovskaya.

Volunteers have played a vital role at The Night Ministry since the agency's early days, and their impact continues to be powerful.

In celebration of their contributions, we hosted a volunteer appreciation event on April 19. Current volunteers stopped by to meet and chat with staff while enjoying appetizers and refreshments. The following day, our staff made calls to The Night Ministry's volunteers, thanking them for their service and dedication to our mission.

Visit www.thenightministry.org/volunteer to learn more about volunteering with us.

Racial Disparities in Education Intersect with Homelessness

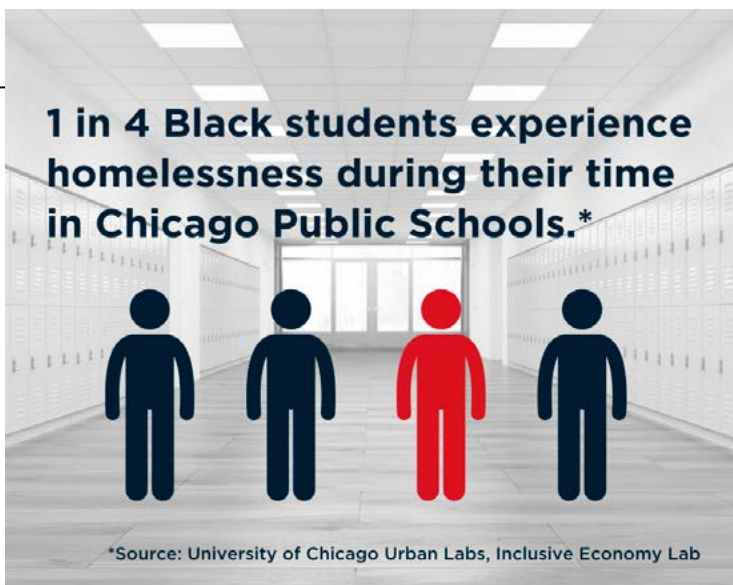
Black students enrolled in Chicago Public Schools are at greater risk of being unhoused than their white and Hispanic classmates, with a one in four chance of experiencing homelessness during their time in the school system. Students who are unhoused and identify as Black face an intersecting web of barriers that make it especially hard to get an education, which increases the risk of remaining or reentering homelessness as an adult.

“Students who are homeless face challenges enrolling in school, attending on a regular basis, and participating fully in school activities,” explained Barbara Duffield, Executive Director of SchoolHouse Connection. “They aren’t getting their basic needs met so it is harder to put energy into their studies or get support.”

As a result, unhoused students grapple with gaps in enrollment, decreases in their GPAs, and, among high school students, a lower likelihood of graduating. Lack of a high school education or a GED has been identified as the single greatest risk factor associated with youth homelessness.

To compound matters, Black students in Chicago are most often already at a disadvantage in public schools. According to the Metropolitan Planning Council, just under 80% of Chicago public schools are majority Black or Latino, and these mainly serve low-income students. Schools in low-income areas receive less funding, and their students have fewer educational resources and larger class sizes, among other disparities.

Whether housed or unhoused, Black students also face higher rates of expulsion or suspension and a lower likelihood of being placed in a gifted program because of racial bias. They also are more likely to face additional challenges that come with poverty.



“Black students move more than most because of housing instability and struggle with catching up, even with lots of support from school staff,” said Allison McCann-Stevenson, Assistant Director of Long-Term Residential Services at The Night Ministry. “Lack of resources, clothing, food, transportation plus housing for the entire family makes for bigger hurdles for Black students to overcome.”

Despite these disparities, experts believe that the role education plays in homelessness is often overlooked.

“Education gets marginalized in conversations about homelessness as a support system and as a key part of

getting out of homelessness,” said Duffield. “We’re not going to solve homelessness in Chicago or the nation unless education is brought into the conversation fully.”

This article is the fifth in our series exploring the intersection between race and homelessness. You can find previous installments at www.thenightministry.org/blog. ◇

“Lack of resources, clothing, food, transportation plus housing for the entire family makes for bigger hurdles for Black students to overcome.”

– Allison McCann-Stevenson
Assistant Director of Long-Term Residential Services

Lighting Up The Night

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Looking Back at 16 Years at The Night Ministry

By Rev. Faith Miller,
Outreach Services Manager

After 16 years of service at The Night Ministry, I am retiring in June. It has been a blessing and an amazing experience.

I was introduced to The Night Ministry in 2003 while in seminary. One night our professors brought us along to shadow the Health Outreach Bus as it visited the South Shore and Woodlawn neighborhoods. It was an eye-opening experience. People were lined up down the street. I had seen individuals experiencing homelessness downtown, but I didn't know the extent to which there were so many people in need in the city's neighborhoods.

Four years later, I joined The Night Ministry as an Outreach Minister. Back then, the Bus visited three locations every night, starting at 7 pm. It was important to me that we came after the end of the workday, when most providers of supportive services were closed. We didn't yet have Case Managers at the Bus, so Outreach Ministers like me made referrals to connect people with housing and other resources. We also had a street fund to purchase clothing or other items for clients who needed them. Today, most of those things are donated to us.

In 2008, I was called up to serve active duty with the military. It was a blessing that I had my job at The Night Ministry to return to following my deployment. A lot had changed at home while I was gone, including the death of my mother. Working at the



Outreach Services Manager Rev. Faith Miller (right) and a Health Outreach Bus visitor in the Humboldt Park neighborhood.

agency kept me focused on serving others, which helped me with the transitions I was experiencing.

I eventually moved into a new role as Outreach Services Manager in the agency's Health Outreach Program, a position which has given me a wider perspective on how the moving parts of The Night Ministry come together to fulfill our important mission.

There is so much I will miss about The Night Ministry, including the camaraderie with staff and the individuals we serve. I am sure my

eyes won't be dry on my last day, but until then I keep telling people, "I'm here today." ♦

"There is so much I will miss about The Night Ministry, including the camaraderie with staff and the individuals we serve."

– Rev. Faith Miller
Outreach Services Manager

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Job Fair Brings Opportunities Directly to Unhoused Young People

People experiencing homelessness, unhoused youth included, can face significant challenges when it comes to finding employment. To support their ability to obtain work, The Night Ministry hosted a job fair for young people in March.

“We wanted to bring employment opportunities to the young people we serve. We know how hard it is to go online, apply for a job, and wait for an answer,” said Anthony Monterroso, Manager of Youth Engagement Services.

The fair was held at The Crib, the agency’s overnight shelter for young adults, in partnership with Central States SER/SERCO, a Cook County-based workforce education and development organization.

Rush University Medical Center, BMO Bank, Amazon, the Chicago Police Department, and 14 other organizations came to the fair to discuss job opportunities and provide applications. Young people from across The Night Ministry’s Youth Programs attended, including Nicholas, who learned about the fair while staying at The Crib.

“I only worked 8 hours last week and that’s kind of been the trend. Honestly, I was trying to get another job,” he said.

Fellow client Montrevia was looking for a new position too. Though also employed, she was hoping to find a role with greater stability and had prepared for the day’s event with help from The Night Ministry staff, including Monterroso.

“He helped me create my resume. He also told me what documents I would most likely need,” she said. “He just gave



An employer speaks with a young person about career opportunities at The Night Ministry’s job fair.

me ways to be more comfortable and just be myself instead of being nervous or scared to apply.”

Some of the young people attending also took part in a career preparation day, hosted one month prior by The Night Ministry and designed to help clients get ready for the job fair.

During career prep day, clients met with staff, volunteers, and members of The Night Ministry’s Associate Board for resume building tips, mock interviews, and professional headshots.

Because of the career prep day and the job fair, many clients received multiple invitations to interview for positions. A few progressed even further.

“Some of the young people walked away with a job. One person walked away with two jobs,” said Program Specialist Tiffany Moore. ♦

“Some of the young people walked away with a job. One person walked away with two jobs.”
– Tiffany Moore
Program Specialist



PARENTING WITH PURPOSE BABY SHOWER

One of The Night Ministry’s newest programs, Parenting with Purpose, provides long-term supportive housing for young mothers and their children. Program residents recently gathered with staff for a baby shower to celebrate the arrival of newborns. Thank you to the generous donors who provided sleeping gowns, onesies, and receiving blankets!



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Volunteers Once Again Provide Hot Meals Across The Night Ministry's Programs

In early 2023, The Night Ministry resumed a long tradition of having volunteers provide hot meals to the families and individuals served by the agency's programs. The service was paused during the COVID-19 pandemic for safety purposes, although supporters continued to donate food. As restrictions have eased with the pandemic's abatement, volunteers are once again offering hot meals.

Families, corporations, faith communities, community groups, and even individuals make up the roster of meal volunteers. They not only prepare meals, but many also serve them directly to clients at the Health Outreach Bus, alongside the agency's outreach at the CTA, and at The Crib, the agency's emergency overnight shelter for young people.

"Most people that see us haven't eaten all day," said CTA Outreach Professional Lauren Grudzien. "It's really important to have volunteers coming in from The Night Ministry wanting to share their time and show compassion through offering a hot meal."

The volunteers who serve hot meals for The Night Ministry build connections with those served.

"We like doing the meal distributions so we can actually meet those we are helping in some way," said volunteer Kimm Maznaritz, a member of Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church of Saint John, Indiana, a congregation which has served with The



Volunteers serve a hot meal to visitors of the Health Outreach Bus in the New City neighborhood.

Night Ministry for years. "Sometimes just listening to someone can make such a difference."

Meal volunteers also act as a gateway to the agency's other services. As Volunteer Coordinator Andrew Hart explained, "Food is always a great way for us to start conversations with people. From there we can ask them if they need medical support or case management."

The Night Ministry is looking for groups and individuals interested in providing hot meals. Opportunities are available throughout the week at different locations in Chicago to serve between 25 and 175 meals. Find out how you can get involved by visiting www.thenightministry.org/meals or contacting Hart at andrew@thenightministry.org. ♦

Thank you to those who generously gave at the \$500 level or higher between March 16 and June 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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