



## A Journey of Resilience and Renewal



David at the Howard Red Line CTA stop

When David moved from Arizona to Chicago in 2016, he had no idea the twists his journey would take. “I was born and raised in Arizona,” he recalled. “I came to Chicago for a promotion on the railroad. I’ve always been a wanderer, curious about how things work and open to new places.”

5,400 clients, with 46 percent of those clients falling within the 50- to 65-year-old age range.

David found more than assistance. He found compassion. “If I’m being honest,” he said, “I love the fact that they give a damn.” He has bonded with many members of the OHM team, and they look forward to seeing him, smiling and sharing stories about growing up on the West Coast.

**“In a world that’s gotten so divided, The Night Ministry still shows up for people. They don’t just hand you something and move on; they ask, ‘What do you need? How can we help?’ That’s rare.”**

Today, David is employed again and living temporarily in a church parsonage. “They trust me,” he shared. “I treat it like a guest would—respectfully. You do that, and people invest in you.”

Music remains his greatest comfort. A lifelong musician and rock enthusiast, he still finds healing in the songs that shaped him. “Music is my therapy,” he smiled. “It’s not about escape, it’s about joy. It reminds me where I’ve been and keeps me moving forward.”

Now, when he meets others facing hardship, David encourages them to connect with The Night Ministry. “They can’t do everything,” he said, “but they can do something, and sometimes that’s more than what you had before.”

But when the pandemic hit, the life he’d carefully built began to unravel. “COVID was devastating,” David said. “No one was moving—especially not internationally. The company closed, and before I knew it, I couldn’t keep up with the bills. I lost everything.”

For several weeks, he found himself outdoors, navigating a city that was still new to him. That’s when he heard about The Night Ministry. “Someone at a food pantry mentioned a place that offered food, clothing, and help. I showed up, and I was amazed. I’ve been coming ever since.”

David is one of the many people who come to The Night Ministry’s Outreach and Health Team (OHM), which provides resources every week at the CTA Red Line (Howard) and Blue Line (Forest Park) train stations. Last year, across all their services, OHM served more than

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# Champion in Their Corner: How Jessica Turns Possibility into Reality



Jessica Stokes, Case Manager at The Night Ministry

Jessica Stokes, a case manager on the outreach and health care team at The Night Ministry, is full of life, exuding positive energy with a magnetic personality. She brings that same warmth to her work, fiercely advocating for and supporting more than 200 clients.

She sees the possibilities and has absolute confidence that, once you give someone a chance and provide them with the resources—even something many of us take for granted, like an ID card or birth certificate—they can take the next steps themselves toward a stable and productive life.

**“I give my clients the push they need to take the first step,” says Jessica. “They need encouragement, someone to inform them of the things they will need to make it happen, and someone to stay with them through the process,” she said.**

Jessica, who has been with The Night Ministry for almost a year, is quite familiar with the plight and stories of her clients. She grew up on the Westside in the Garfield Park neighborhood (also known as “K-Town”) where many of her clients come from.

“Although I came from a supportive family, I saw many of the same challenges and difficulties that my friends and others in my neighborhood faced and it was heartbreaking.”

It’s emotional for Jessica to describe a recent client’s story—a young mother who had her newborn taken away. Jessica has a photo of the mother smiling in the hospital with her new baby. “She was able to hold her for a brief time, and you can see the joy in her face,” explains Jessica. “But it’s hard to overcome addiction.” With Jessica in her corner, the plan is to get her into treatment and support her recovery to care for herself and her child.

Day in and day out, she collaborates with a multitude of agencies, including the Department of Family and Social Services, the Chicago Housing Authority, All Chicago, Street Samaritans, Above & Beyond, and Renaissance, among others to ensure that her clients get what they need to thrive.

It’s hard to fathom how she keeps track of everything, but she is driven and determined. She can see that her work is making a difference, and the successes have far outweighed the failures. The world can benefit from more individuals like Jessica.

## Wrap Warmth Around Our Community This Winter

Winter on Chicago’s streets is unforgiving. This holiday season, you can give the gift of warmth and hope by filling a drawstring backpack (14” x 16”) with essentials for our clients.

### Each bag should include:

- winter hat
- gloves
- adult socks
- keychain flashlight
- hand/toe warmers
- candy
- deodorant
- lotion
- lip balm
- body wipes
- toothbrush
- toothpaste

All items must be new, and dark-colored items are preferred. Consider adding a \$5-10 Dunkin’ or McDonald’s gift card!

We’ll distribute these backpacks from our Health Outreach Bus, Street Medicine teams, and at CTA stations starting December 15.



Drop off **November 24-December 10**. Scan the QR code to schedule your time or contact Maya Crowl-Kinney: [maya@thenightministry.org](mailto:maya@thenightministry.org)

Your generosity provides dignity, warmth, and hope when it’s needed most.





# Night Lights Shines Bright: Associate Board Raises Nearly \$100K!

The Associate Board's 11th Annual **Night Lights Gala** was a great success, raising nearly **\$100,000** in support of The Night Ministry's vital programs.

More than **200 people** attended the fundraiser, which was held at Marshall's Landing, located in Chicago's historic Merchandise Mart.

A heartfelt thank-you to **Duncan Reilly and Emily Suswanski** for their outstanding leadership, and to **The Night Ministry's Associate Board** for their dedication and hard work in making the evening shine. We're also deeply grateful to **Mary Poliwka**, our inspiring keynote speaker from the **Outreach & Health Bus program**, for sharing her powerful insights and stories from the field.

Special thanks to our **Lighthouse Sponsors—Polsinelli Law, Huron Consulting, 5th Century Partners, and The Halloran Family**—for making this event possible. And finally, we extend our deepest gratitude to all of our generous supporters, including: **Ralitza Todorova & Adam Hoffman, Rachel Smith & Gabriella Andriulli, Amanda Fergusson & Neel Patel, Matthew Arck, Todd & Jean Youngren, Duncan Reilly, Insight Financial Partners, BakerTilly, Calamos, Temitope Ligali, Beverley Halloran, and Sameeta Salvador.**

Since its inception, the Night Lights Gala has raised close to **\$1 million** to advance The Night Ministry's mission.

Thank you to everyone who made Night Lights a celebration of community and compassion.





# Double Your Impact This Giving Tuesday!



**December 2 is Giving Tuesday!** Join us for a global day dedicated to generosity and community spirit! Thanks to the incredible support of the **Alvin H. Baum Family Fund** and the **Schultz Family Foundation**, every gift made between **December 1 and December 15** will be **matched dollar-for-dollar**. That means your donation will go twice as far to support individuals experiencing homelessness, poverty, and hardship this winter.

Last year, our community raised **\$330,000** for Giving Tuesday, providing critical stability for our programs during the coldest months—when our services are needed most.

This year, as we face continued funding cuts and economic uncertainty, your support matters more than ever. Together, we can meet—or even exceed—last year's total and ensure that no one is left out in the cold.



**Make your Giving Tuesday gift and double your impact today!**

Scan the QR Code to make your donation.

## Other Ways to Donate

### Online

Visit [thenightministry.org/give](https://thenightministry.org/give)

### Mail

Checks and money orders can be sent to our P.O. Box address:

The Night Ministry  
P.O. Box 737043  
Chicago, IL 60673-7043

Please send an email to [donations@thenightministry.org](mailto:donations@thenightministry.org) if you have questions about your contribution.



# Filled with Promise and Hope



*Darius, maintenance engineer at Wrigley Field and client at The Night Ministry*

The Cubs' playoff run ended in the National League Division Series this year, but one thing remained constant—Wrigley Field looked pristine throughout, thanks in part to Darius, one of their maintenance engineers and a current client in The Night Ministry's Pathways Program.

Jamaican-born, Darius came to the United States with his family when he was a baby. Not too long after their arrival, his mother was found to be unfit and he was removed from the only home he knew, setting him on a path of foster homes, shelters, and even periods of homelessness.

He was able to connect with The Crib, The Night Ministry's overnight shelter located in the Bucktown neighborhood. He had access to a warm bed, shower, and breakfast daily until he entered the Pathways

Program, a shared housing model at scattered sites across Chicago, supported by skill development to achieve independent living after a two-year stay. Darius is proud of his spacious and well-appointed apartment, which he will ultimately share with a roommate.

**“Now that I have a home, I can look at the future and think about maybe taking some mechanical engineering classes,” he says.**

He also has ambitious plans, such as opening a repair shop. His family is in the area, and he does spend a lot of time with his grandmother and aunt, seeing his mother only during the holidays. It isn't very easy, but given his path, it is understandable. “I love my mom because she's my mom, but our relationship is challenging,” explains Darius.

Darius is a resourceful and dedicated young man. Despite his challenging life journey, he maintains a positive outlook and unwavering determination to do what is best for himself. He is looking forward to his next chapter, and like the Cubs—and his favorite player, Pete Crow-Armstrong—he carries a lot of promise for a great future.

Last year, The Night Ministry served **629 youth** in our flexible housing programs that create pathways to stable housing.



Of those youth, **15%** have improved their housing situation, and **26%** are enrolled in school or employed.

## Books for the Holidays

Our Future Reads has done it again! Their generous holiday book donation will bring joy to young adults in our Interim Housing programs and families in our Parenting with Purpose program, with selections for all ages. Special thanks to Our Future Reads for thinking of us this holiday season.

**Our Future Reads** commitment to expanding access to quality books across Chicago is making a real difference in our community, and we truly value this amazing partnership!







# Save the Date!

## 50th Anniversary Gala: A Legacy of Care, A Future of Hope

Join us as we celebrate five decades of community, care, and service in Chicago. Please contact Erica Schoppe at [ericas@thenightministry.org](mailto:ericas@thenightministry.org) for more information about sponsorship opportunities.



Scan the QR Code to get your \$450 Early Bird Ticket.

**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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