



NIGHTLIGHTS

FALL 2024

“I’m Excited to Have a Place of My Own.” Young Adults Transition from Shelter to Apartment Living

It’s 10 a.m. on a beautiful Sunday in September, and residents of The Night Ministry’s Pathways Transitional Living Program for young adults have gathered for a special brunch to mark a momentous occasion. After weeks of planning and anticipation, today, they are making a giant stride on their paths to greater stability: moving into apartments.

“We are embarking on something new,” Pathways Supervisor Henry Merrill tells the group. “You’ll be more independent. There are more responsibilities. But we are here to help you.”

The group’s move comes as The Night Ministry fully transitions Pathways from a shelter to a community-based housing model. Until now, the program has provided housing for up to eight young people in a classic greystone building in Chicago’s North Lawndale neighborhood, with two other program participants living in a nearby apartment.

Now, the organization has rented and furnished apartments in two buildings where program participants will live with roommates. Young people will continue to receive case management support and links to resources while they work toward greater self-sufficiency. The combination of independent living and supportive services has proven successful in launching youth into a stable and thriving future.

Silvono came to Pathways last fall. He first experienced housing instability in his teens and says he is ready for the move.

“I’m excited to have a place of my own. I have a lot of goals I want to set for myself when I move into my new place.”

Throughout the day, Pathways participants join program staff



Silvono and his roommate, Chris, display their apartment keys as they settle into their new home.

in moving belongings from the greystone to a volunteer squad of vehicles and into their new homes. After a hard day’s work, the afternoon is capped with another memorable moment: the tenants opening gift boxes containing their apartment keys.

With the transition, The Night Ministry will no longer occupy the building that housed the shelter, which belonged to Old St. Patrick’s Church in Chicago. The Night

Ministry is grateful to the church for its partnership in serving the North Lawndale community. ◇

“I have a lot of goals I want to set for myself when I move into my new place.”

– Silvono, Pathways Transitional Living Program participant

HUMAN CONNECTION • HOUSING • HEALTH CARE

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The Night Ministry's Mission Is Close to My Heart

By Carol J. Sharp, MPA, President & CEO

As I mark my first anniversary as President & CEO of The Night Ministry, I am proud to be part of a dedicated community of individuals who work tirelessly to empower our unhoused neighbors by providing them with vital resources and support to survive and thrive.

The mission of The Night Ministry is genuinely one that is close to my heart. From my own experiences with housing instability as a child, coupled with my professional experiences in serving under-resourced communities, I understand how important it is for the appropriate resources to be mobilized at the right locations for the individuals we serve to not only stay alive but transform their lives.

As a child, my sister and I would ride the CTA's Red Line north from our foster home in Englewood on Chicago's South Side to visit our mother in Rogers Park. Even at age ten, I recognized that individuals were sheltering on the train because they had nowhere else to go. I recall those formative experiences and am grateful that, today, The Night Ministry is here to serve Chicago's unhoused residents. Our knowledgeable and skillful staff meet our vulnerable community members with critical survival resources, compassionate care, and supportive services at train stations and encampments, in underserved neighborhoods, and in our Youth Housing Programs.

On the front page of this newsletter, you read about a group of our young people who recently transitioned from shelter to apartment living. The community-based housing model,



Carol J. Sharp is now in her second year leading The Night Ministry.

"I understand how important it is for the appropriate resources to be mobilized at the right locations for the individuals we serve to not only stay alive but transform their lives."

in which participants will continue to receive support in developing independent living skills, is designed to set individuals up for long-term success and stability. As I embark on my second year leading this amazing organization, I am excited for us to deepen and broaden our impact by exploring and implementing similar evidence-based models of support while maintaining the continuum of care offered across our programs that meet our clients where they are at.

I am so grateful you are part of this remarkable community. Together, we truly make a difference in Chicago. ♦



DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT ON

GIVING TUESDAY

In celebration of Giving Tuesday, which is December 3 this year, we have a spectacular matching gift opportunity. If you make a gift of \$1,500 or greater between December 1 and December 15, an anonymous private foundation will match your generous donation dollar for dollar.

Please visit www.thenightministry.org/givingtuesday or scan the QR code for more information.

JT's Supports Our Mission One Delicious Sandwich at a Time

Did you know that grabbing lunch on Tuesdays in Chicago's Irving Park neighborhood can benefit The Night Ministry?

For the past four years, JT's Genuine Sandwich Shop on North Elston has supported our mission with a generous one-dollar donation from every sale of their delicious Breaded Pork Tenderloin sandwich on Tuesdays.

"I appreciate everything The Night Ministry does for our neighbors," said Chris Cunningham, JT's owner.

Chris fulfilled a lifelong dream in 2019 when he opened JT's, which Chicago Magazine recently named one of the 50 best restaurants in the city.

"When we started to think about organizations that we as a restaurant and business could support, The Night Ministry was one of the first ones that I thought of," said Chris. "And the tenderloin is one of our better sellers."

Chris vividly recalls learning about The Night Ministry's mission to assist our unhoused community members when he provided a hot meal with Bethany United Church of Christ alongside the Health Outreach Bus.

"Serving the meal on the streets, having real conversations and connection with the clients, and seeing the services you were providing made a lasting impact on me," he said.

In addition to supporting The Night Ministry's mission, the



JT's Sandwich Shop owner Chris Cunningham supports The Night Ministry through his culinary skills.

"When we started to think about organizations that we as a restaurant and business could support, The Night Ministry was one of the first ones that I thought of."

– Chris Cunningham,
JT's Genuine Sandwich Shop

JT's Tenderloin Tuesday donation also helps expose the restaurant's customers to the agency's work.

"People who are familiar with The Night Ministry appreciate it, and everyone I talk to about what The Night Ministry does is also impressed," Chris said.

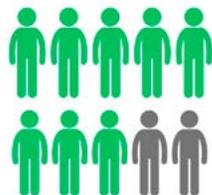
You can get your pork tenderloin sandwich by visiting JT's at 3970 North Elston Avenue, ordering

online at jtsgenuine.com, or calling 773.754.7729. ♦

We served
5,185
individuals

FISCAL YEAR 2025 IMPACT

HUMAN CONNECTION



More than 80% of clients reported making a supportive relationship with staff

HOUSING SUPPORT



260 individuals transitioned to or maintained more safe & stable housing

HEALTH CARE



912 emergency room visits prevented, saving clients and the public health system an estimated \$1.7 million

Passion for Transforming Lives Drives VP of Programs & Services

With a remarkable 17-year tenure at The Night Ministry, Allison McCann-Stevenson recently assumed the role of Vice President of Programs & Services. We asked Allison to share about her new responsibilities, extensive history with the organization, and the driving force behind her unwavering dedication to our mission.

What does your role entail?

I oversee the strategic direction, management, and delivery of The Night Ministry's Health Outreach and Youth Programs. My role also involves fostering external relationships and representing the agency locally and nationally.

Why are you passionate about The Night Ministry's mission?

My passion for meeting the needs of unhoused and unstably housed youth and adults stems from my deep belief in the power of opportunity and support to transform lives. I bring a hope-filled philosophy of care that inspires our approach to meeting our clients' most basic needs and helping them thrive.

What has been your career trajectory?

As excited as I am about my new role, I am very proud of my professional growth and contributions to The Night Ministry in these 17 years. Joining in 2007 as a program manager to launch our first youth transitional living program, I honed my program development, team management, and implementation skills. As I have moved up to positions of greater responsibility,



Allison McCann-Stevenson leads The Night Ministry's Health Outreach and Youth Programs.

I have expanded my strategic oversight, further developing my ability to oversee more complex projects while leading the implementation of new models of services and care for unhoused youth and adults.

What is your "WHY?"

When I started this journey, long before I came to The Night Ministry or became a parent, I always wanted to create opportunities for others to succeed. My "WHY" is knowing we are changing lives and that our programs are making a difference. That is what I've always hoped for.

What are your priorities for The Night Ministry's programs?

My priorities include developing the first statewide youth advisory board, increasing access to mental health and housing support services for our unhoused neighbors, exploring promising practices to improve program operations, and deepening our impact through data learning. ◇

"My 'WHY' is knowing we are changing lives and that our programs are making a difference."

– Allison McCann-Stevenson, VP of Programs & Services

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Yolanda's Story: "For a Whole Year, They Took Care of Me"

Yolanda has a generous spirit. Even when she was struggling, living under a bridge by the Chicago River, she looked out for those around her, sharing resources like the BBQ meals she grilled.

"You need something to eat? Come around here, and I'm going to feed you," she recalls telling her neighbors she shared an encampment with. "When I was growing up, my mom always said you treat people like you want to be treated."

With help from The Night Ministry, Yolanda moved into her apartment in February. But she endured over two years on the streets before that. She had been employed as a live-in caretaker but lost her housing after her client passed away.

Living outside took a toll on Yolanda's health, as she faced barriers to treating her high blood pressure, asthma, and other chronic conditions. Winter was especially tough.

"I didn't want to get out of my tent because it was so cold. I'd be so warm in my little spot under the sleeping blankets that I'd lay there and miss my appointments. Sometimes, I'd go maybe a month or two without medication," Yolanda says.

Connecting with The Night Ministry's Street Medicine Team proved a turning point. She started working with Case Manager Sylvia Hibbard to find housing, and the team helped her survive in the meantime.



Yolanda outside the encampment where she lived for more than two years. Photo by Lloyd DeGrane for WTTW.

"For a whole year, they took care of me, made sure I was safe, made sure I ate, made sure I had clothes on my back," she says.

Today, Yolanda enjoys having a safe and stable place to live. "I can sleep in the bed, open the refrigerator to get something to eat, soak in the bathtub," she says. "It's so wonderful."

Visit interactive.wttw.com/firsthand/homeless or scan the QR code to watch a WTTW documentary about Yolanda. ◊



CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS WITH US!



Visit www.thenightministry.org/holidays or scan this code to learn more.

Every year, The Night Ministry community celebrates the holiday season with gatherings and gifts for the individuals and families we serve. **Supporters like you are the ones who truly make the season brighter with your generous contributions!** Here's how you can continue to make a difference.

Donate holiday stockings and drawstring backpacks filled with essential items for those served by the Health Outreach Bus, Street Medicine, and CTA Outreach programs. We have a new packing list better suited to our client's needs. Contact Maya Crowl-Kinney at maya@thenightministry.org to get involved.

Donate gifts for young adults and families served by The Night Ministry living in apartments across the city after experiencing homelessness. We'll provide you with a shopping list based on the number of gifts you want to purchase. For more information, contact Jenny Merritt at jennifer@thenightministry.org.



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My Experience with Homelessness Connects Me to Our Clients

By Marcus Morgan, Peer Outreach Worker

Today, I am employed at The Night Ministry as a Peer Outreach Worker, connecting with people living rough on the streets. Just four years ago, I was in the same situation.

I bring my lived experience with homelessness into my work on the Street Medicine Team. As a Peer Outreach Worker, I help our clients feel comfortable enough to share their experiences so that we can provide them with the appropriate support. As I develop connections with individuals and understand their struggles, I share my journey and the challenges I faced and overcame.

I was homeless from the time I was 13. I tried to stay in school while living on the streets, doing my homework under the streetlights. I learned about The Night Ministry four years ago when someone who had stayed at The Crib overnight shelter brought me there. The Night Ministry helped me get an apartment. I'm studying social work now and do my homework in the comfort of my own home.

Seeing the smiles on clients' faces is one of the most rewarding aspects of my work. Apparently, I've become a West Side favorite. I get a lot of smiles and hugs on Tuesdays and Saturdays when we visit spots in that area. That builds me up because I remember being in that position, without



Peer Outreach Worker Marcus Morgan is an integral part of the Street Medicine Team.

a home, and wishing someone would approach me in the way my teammates and I work with our clients today.

"I help our clients feel comfortable enough to share their experiences so that we can provide them with the appropriate support."

The death of clients is the most challenging aspect of my work. Just a few days ago, we lost an 18-year-old man to an overdose. But, since I started working at The Night Ministry nearly 18 months ago, I've seen many

people get stable housing. If we can keep providing that support, we can prevent more deaths. ♦

Thank you to those who generously gave at the \$500 level or higher to support our mission between July 16 and September 30, 2024.



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