



NIGHTLIGHTS

SPRING 2020

Fulfilling the Mission during a Pandemic

When the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic and the extensive measures needed to slow its spread became apparent, Paul Hamann, The Night Ministry's President & CEO, was certain of one thing.

"Our mission could not and would not change," Hamann said. "We are called upon to serve our community members struggling with homelessness and poverty, and during these challenging and unprecedented times I knew The Night Ministry would need to continue to answer that call."

"And because the populations we serve are not only particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus but to the impact the pandemic is having on our economy and society as well, fulfilling our mission has become even more important," he said.

David Wywialowski, Director of Outreach & Health Ministry, said the conditions of homelessness make it extremely difficult for those experiencing it to practice steps intended to protect themselves and those around them from the virus. "All of the things that we've been asked to do—washing our hands frequently, using hand sanitizer, sheltering in place—are very hard, if not impossible, to do when you are living on the streets."

"In addition, people experiencing homelessness are more likely to have underlying health concerns such as asthma, diabetes, and heart conditions that could make a virus potentially more dangerous for them," he said.

The changes the pandemic has brought to everyday life have also had further consequences for Chicago's homeless population.

"Because there are fewer pedestrians, people who rely on asking for support on the street are having their income impacted," said Noam Greene, Lead Outreach Worker on the Street Medicine



The Health Outreach Bus has continued to make all of its stops during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Team. "We are also seeing a lot of people who are having problems obtaining food."

To protect the health and safety of staff and clients while continuing to provide services, The Night Ministry has made adjustments following CDC, state, and local guidelines, including temporarily suspending volunteer shifts and reducing on-site staffing to essential levels.

At The Night Ministry's Youth Housing Programs, that has also meant daily health checks of residents, implementing isolation protocols for residents experiencing virus-like symptoms, and changing the use of shared spaces to practice social distancing.

Betsy Carlson, Director of Youth Programs, said staff at The Night Ministry's shelters, which have seen steady demand for services since Illinois' stay-at-home order went into effect, have

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"Our mission could not and would not change."

*- Paul Hamann,
President & CEO*

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Coming Together in a Pandemic

The acts of kindness, compassion, and generosity demonstrated by so many people and organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic have sustained The Night Ministry, its staff, and those whom it serves during challenging times.

“We are fortunate for our longtime friends who have continued to support us through financial and in-kind gifts, and we are grateful for new supporters who have joined us to help us serve Chicagoans in need,” said Christy Prassas, Vice President of External Relations & Development.

Supporters of The Night Ministry responded to calls on social media for supplies such as hospital scrubs worn by new residents at our Youth Housing Program while they wash their clothes.

Amanda Wright and her husband purchased 450 small spray bottles after seeing an Instagram post that The Night Ministry needed the items to dispense hand sanitizer to clients.

“I haven’t been able to volunteer for a few years,” said Wright, whose mother, the late Laurie Neu, had served as Chairman of the agency’s Board of Directors, “so it was the least we could do to help.”

Garry Howell learned about The Night Ministry from his uncle, Senior Nurse Practitioner Stephan Koruba. Howell and his mother organized family and friends to make sandwiches, to collect water bottles and snacks, and to raise funds.

“There was a lot of conversation among us about what could we do to help when the quarantine began,” Howell said. “This was a way we could help individuals even if we aren’t able to be in direct contact with them.”

Other nonprofits, as well as businesses, have stepped up



From left, Phil Howell, Garry Howell Sr., and Alex Raffan make sandwiches for sack suppers distributed by The Night Ministry’s Health Outreach Programs.

“This was a way we could help individuals even if we aren’t able to be in direct contact with them.”

– Garry Howell

to support The Night Ministry’s work. The arts-education organization, Marwen, donated spare N95 masks, nitrile gloves, dust masks, disinfectant wipes, and hand sanitizer to assist staff and clients. And the Wicker Park restaurant, No Bones Beach Club, provided dinners for residents of the Open Door Shelter – West Town.

Musicians have also found ways to support The Night Ministry. Adam

Gogola of the Chicago-based band Blind Adam and the Federal League organized a series of socially distant concerts streamed on social media, with the support of Mystery Street Recording Company, to raise money for The Night Ministry.

“A lot of people who haven’t found their own way to get involved with something now because they’re stuck at home have reached out to us and thanked us for doing this because they enjoy the show and it gives them a way to contribute to the greater good,” said Gogola. ◇

Lighting Up the Night: New Date!

To ensure the health and well-being of our community during the COVID-19 pandemic, we will not be hosting this year’s Lighting Up the Night Awards Dinner & Auction on Thursday, May 28.

We’re happy to announce next year’s event date, Thursday, April 29, 2021, at the Sheraton Grand Chicago Hotel! We will be honoring CIBC and The Security Traders Association of Chicago (STAC) for their support of our mission.

YES, WE ARE MOVING...

We are in process of transitioning into 1735 North Ashland, the new home of The Crib overnight shelter, Health Outreach Program, and Central Administration. Visit www.thenightministry.org/move for the latest updates.

Fulfilling the Mission during a Pandemic

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found creative ways to keep residents engaged while they shelter in place.

“Our staff implemented video conferencing so residents could stay connected to their case managers and therapists and virtual activities to play games, participate in book and movie discussions, and engage with youth in other programs,” she said.

One of the biggest changes was at The Crib. The shelter for young adults, which normally operates overnight, began operating around the clock when the shelter-in-place order commenced. Because it had minimal on-site activities taking place, Lakeview Lutheran Church, where The Crib currently operates, granted The Night Ministry use of additional space in the building, allowing guests to practice social distancing.

Staff with The Night Ministry’s Outreach & Health Ministry Program balanced adjustments in their operations, including providing patient care outside of the Health Outreach Bus and Street Medicine Van, while responding to increased demand for some services.

“Many of the individuals served by Street Medicine, who are already reluctant to seek care at a hospital or emergency room, became more concerned about doing that because of possible

exposure to the coronavirus in those settings,” said Mary Poliwka, Community Health Manager. “In addition, most of the other street-based medicine programs in Chicago suspended operations, so our Street Medicine Program has added shifts to meet the need.”

At the Health Outreach Bus, Nurse Practitioners have encountered more patients with urgent health care needs and many clients coming for primary health care services for the first time, because they had lost their jobs and their insurance due to economic conditions.

Faith Miller, Outreach Services Managers, said social distancing has made the human connection that is essential to The Night Ministry’s mission look different.

“But even if we can’t hug or shake a hand right now, we are still connecting with Bus visitors because we are able to give them something they need, whether it’s a meal, sharing a laugh, or giving the smile you can detect through a mask,” she said.

The world is changing rapidly every day and situations may be different since this article was written. Please visit www.thenightministry.org/covid19 for the latest on The Night Ministry’s response to COVID-19. ♦

DO YOU KNOW ABOUT DONOR-ADVISED FUNDS?

Making a gift to The Night Ministry from your donor-advised fund is convenient and easy for you. More importantly, it can have a remarkable impact on our work, and may have a tax benefit for you.

A FEW THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT DONOR-ADVISED FUNDS (DAFS):

- You can use your DAF to make a one-time gift or set up a recurring donation.
- You will receive an acknowledgment for your gift, but not a charitable receipt for tax purposes. This is because it is your contribution to your donor-advised fund that is tax-deductible, not your distribution to The Night Ministry.
- You may not be able to receive benefits (such as tickets to an event) in exchange for a gift made through your donor-advised fund. Please refer to your donor-advised fund or financial advisor.

You can also designate a nonprofit organization, including The Night Ministry, as the successor on your DAF account. This allows you to continue your legacy of charitable giving.

For more information, please contact **Christy Prassas** at **773-506-6023** or **christy@thenightministry.org** or visit **www.thenightministry.org/annual-fund**.

If you do not have a DAF and are interested in learning more, contact your financial advisor and ask about setting up a charitable giving account.

The Night Ministry Is a Good Neighbor in the Communities It Serves

Human connection is an essential part of The Night Ministry's mission. And while it's often spoken about in terms of how the agency works with those whom it serves, it extends to communities as well. That means building and sustaining relationships with residents, businesses, and leaders in the neighborhoods in which it operates.

Over the past few years, The Night Ministry expanded into the North Lawndale neighborhood with Phoenix Hall, our residence for high school students experiencing housing instability, and brought the Health Outreach Bus to Rogers Park. The agency is currently in the midst of relocating The Crib overnight shelter, Health Outreach Program, and its Central Administration into a rehabbed facility in the Bucktown neighborhood.

According to Community Engagement Manager, Jenny Merritt, the process of connecting to a new community usually begins with elected officials.

"The alderman can provide guidance about which community groups we should speak with to educate about our mission and our plans," she said.

That initial contact with an alderman is followed by attendance at meetings of community groups such as block clubs, sitting down with other nonprofits active in the neighborhood, and door-knocking.

Jeannette Srivastava met Merritt during The Night Ministry's initial outreach in the Bucktown neighborhood, where Srivastava lives. She was impressed by how genuine the agency's approach was.

"It didn't feel like a PR campaign," she said. "In public meetings, Paul Hamann (The Night Ministry's President & CEO) did a



Jenny Merritt (right) speaks with Tracie Worthy, Vice President of I AM ABLE Center for Family Development, during a meeting of TR4IM.

great job answering the questions that he could and writing down those he couldn't and saying, 'We'll get back to you.'"

"People appreciate that we show up consistently."

*- Jenny Merritt,
Community Engagement
Manager*

The relationship with neighbors is sustained and nurtured even after The Night Ministry moves in. In North Lawndale, for example, Merritt attends meetings of TR4IM, a network of community groups and leaders on Chicago's West Side devoted to reducing the effects of childhood trauma and violence. She and her colleagues are regulars at community meetings in other neighborhoods as well.

"People appreciate that we show up consistently. In the Lakeview neighborhood, for example, people will tell us that we are one of the only nonprofits that is always in attendance at meetings, and they like that we're here not to just respond to a specific issue, but we're here because we are part of the community," she said. ♦

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New Board Chair Values Strong Relationships and Diversity

Kiantae Bowles has played multiple roles on The Night Ministry's Board of Directors, from Secretary to serving on the Finance Committee. Bowles, who is Manager of Informational Technology Procurement with BMO Financial Group, said the varied experience has prepared him for his latest position, that of Board Chair.

"Over the last eight years, I've definitely gotten to know how The Night Ministry works. Having developed relationships with people across the agency, as well as an understanding of the work staff do day in and day out, I realize how decisions made by the Board impact everyone, from staff to those whom we serve."

Bowles said as Chair he is working to ensure the Board continues to be fully integrated into the organization.

"It's important to make sure that what we do at the Board level is known throughout The Night Ministry. It's equally important that Board members are connecting with staff to let them know we support their work and that we communicate with donors about how essential they are to fulfilling our mission."

As The Night Ministry serves a wide range of clients, the organization places high value on diversity. Bowles sees that in action in the Board.

"The great thing about that is we get a range of thought processes and experiences to make sure that we're doing

what's right for the client. So whether that's someone who's had lived experience or someone who may have a close relative that dealt with homelessness or displacement, it's really given us an opportunity to get a different set of views and ideas on the way that we tackle things, ensuring that we are providing the best services we can," he said.



Kiantae Bowles joined The Night Ministry's Board of Directors in 2012.

"I realize how decisions made by the Board impact everyone, from staff to those whom we serve."

*- Kiantae Bowles,
Chair, Board of Directors*

The current uncertainty in the economy is a concern for Bowles, as it may trigger some donors to pull back from charitable giving. But he's confident in the Board's ability to help financially navigate the organization through challenging times.

"We can make sure that we are diversifying our revenue streams even more than we already are, so that if one area does see some

financial impact we have other streams of income and other opportunities that we can explore to be able to fill in gaps that need it," he said. ◊

HOW WILL YOU LEAVE YOUR LEGACY?



"We were very aware of The Night Ministry's outreach because of our being allies to the LGBTQ community. When my husband died three years ago, I knew that I wanted to make a major donation to an organization. The Night Ministry was right at the top of my list. I thought it would be a good way to honor his memory."

— Char Cepek, Legacy Society Member

After securing economic stability and providing for the needs of your loved ones, you may choose to make a lasting charitable impact with a bequest to The Night Ministry. If you have already included The Night Ministry in your will, please let us know — we would like to acknowledge your generosity and welcome you as a member of The Legacy Society.

Contact Christy Prassas Vice President of Development & External Relations
christy@thenightministry.org or (773) 506-6023.



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you for your generosity! Our mission continues through this difficult season. Your support ensures we can continue responding with compassion to the great need we see in our community.



Youth 4 Truth Elevates Youth Voices at The Night Ministry and Beyond

Youth Development Specialist Candace Musick and Youth Outreach Team Case Manager Michelle Thomas have run Youth 4 Truth, The Night Ministry's leadership development program for young people served by the agency, for the past few years. But lately they've been able to step back as program participants have taken charge.

"There used to be a lot of Candace and I talking, and the participants listening," said Thomas. "But now this most recent cohort took things to a place where they wanted them to go."

Youth 4 Truth was created to more formally bring youth experiences and perspectives to bear in The Night Ministry's programming, and members' recommendations have resulted in changes to program policies. Participants apply to join a cohort, which lasts for 10 weeks. At the beginning, cohort members decide which topics, ranging from career goals to advocacy issues, they want to explore during their weekly meetings.

"The last cohort focused on advocacy work, particularly around SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits and food insecurity," Musick said, "as well as making sure that the other young people around them understand why it's important to vote in the upcoming elections."

Julie Campos just finished her third cohort. She said Youth 4 Truth gives her and other young people who have experienced



Members of the most recent Youth 4 Truth cohort devoted discussions to food insecurity and the importance of elections.

homelessness a place to be heard.

"What I like about Youth 4 Truth is that we get to be open about things that are important to us but that other people might not think are important. We know that it is a space where what we say is going to be welcomed and not be judged," she said.

In February, Julie and fellow Youth 4 Truth member, Kota Vaughn, testified before a hearing of the Illinois House Progressive Caucus, relaying their cohort's concerns to state legislators about the challenges homeless youth face finding a living-wage job, the crippling effects of a prior eviction, and the lack of trauma-informed mobile mental health services for young people experiencing homelessness. ◇

Thank you to those who generously gave at the \$500 level or higher between October 16, 2019, through May 15, 2020. Thank you as well to everyone who donated during this time period through alternate giving portals, such as Facebook, Amazon Smile, Workplace Giving, and more.



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