



## COVID-19 Activity Log

**8/17/20**

- 50 visitors, 13 showers at drop-in today
- 2 participants moved out of the hotel today and into their own apartments!
- Staff settling well into new workspaces
- Hotel will reopen Sept. 2 and staff is figuring out transition plans and next steps. More information will be shared soon!
- Staff finalized emergency procedures and those will be shared this week.
- IAE Job Counselor will start again!
- Swell day at Our House. Took a tour of the new bridge home with the participants who will be moving in. They were very excited!

**8/14/20**

- 40 visitors, 15 showers at drop-in today.
- GCFD delivery with plenty of volunteer helpers. Lots of produce, meat and bread. 5600lbs of food came!
- About 5 participants came in today with keys to their new places! "Best news ever!"
- Everything is going really well at Our House. Working on employment opportunities for some residents and exit plans for others.
- Participants that are potentially moving into our new young adult Bridge Units started to discuss next steps and meet with staff.
- Prevention Specialists will be at Dewey next week to help with the Emergency Rental Funding applications. Here are instructional videos done by the awesome Stephanie!  
IHDA: <https://youtu.be/aeNS8RYRaI8> and Cook County: <https://youtu.be/Kt2N74kAtOk>

**8/12/20**

- Some of our hotel youth are moving into Our House
- Bunch of people went to look at apartments today. Shout out to housing specialists who are getting participants into housing!
- 40 people, 10 showers at drop-in today
- Ayanna is awesome and has been meeting with lots of people today Sam's been rocking the outreach game and helping lots of people out.
- Stephanie and Jori have been stationed at the Dewey main office this week to help people and let them know that they can apply for rental assistance. Shout out to Sue, Nia and Liz for their help getting this off the ground!

Person of the day

- Abigail Ayala Soberanis- Bilingual Housing Case Manager



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- Brand new! She's been here for three weeks
- Came to us from Heartland Alliance with a focus on refugee services
- She wanted to do social work in the city and thought this would be great transition position
- She graduated college in 2018 - started out as a nurse and decided to transition into social work which suits her introvert/extrovert personality
- Since starting at Connections she likes learning about all of the housing assistance and advocacy around housing (thanks Sue!)
- She loves astrology!

## 8/10/20

- Staff have been settling into new work spaces after we started utilizing the office space adjacent to Dewey.
- We are a little short on volunteers this week. Hail is working to recruit more.
- A participant brought a couch in yesterday but otherwise a calm and quiet weekend.
- Smooth operations, with 37 people and 14 showers at drop-in today
- Most everyone has stayed inside the emergency shelter and are currently safe during the storm
- A participant had a second interview today and we're hoping they land the job!
- IAE Hospitality Center shared that a participant had to go to the hospital today. Their CM was notified.
- Hail announced that we've served 83,618 meals since the start of our COVID operations!

## 8/7/20

- 49 visitors, 14 showers
- All was good at Our House. Lots of job seekers, residents are keeping themselves busy.
- Fondest farewell and hopeful see you later to our dear Roxana Villatoro on her last day!
  - o Roxy wants to thank everyone for making her time at Connections so great and that it's been an absolute pleasure to build relationships with her team and her participants (heart)
- Congrats to Jane Syh who will start a permanent full time case manager role next month. We'll welcome 2 more Housing Specialists next week.

## 8/6/2020

- Cleaning day at hotel today
- A very short window of prevention funding will be available for individuals and families to apply for through IHDA. We will be sharing the information to community partners to encourage their clients to apply. More information to come.





**8/5/2020**

- 39 visitors, 11 showers
- Had to offer additional support and care to a few ptps today as there was 1 ambulance transport and an altercation outside.
- We've served more than 80,000 meals since the start of COVID!
- 14 people at IAE Hospitality. They should be able to open the computer room next week. Signs are up for hotel residents to say they are welcome to come but they must wait until community members are served.

**Staff Spotlight:** Hilary Hrusa!

Hilary joined the team about 3 years ago as an intern in Community Programs while working on her MSW at Northeastern. She serves as a Supportive Housing Case Manager for individuals in the program. She has about 15 participants in her case load. There have been unusual amounts of turnover in the program the last 2 years.

She felt right at home when she started and fell in love with her colleagues  Hilary enjoys having the privilege of building relationships with her participants over long periods of time.

She loves cats and is in the process of adopting a hamster. She has had as many as TWELVE  cats at one time! Hilary and her 12 year old son share a love of baseball too.

**8/3/2020**

- We served 365 people in the food pantry in July
- New ptp moved in to emergency shelter today. James had a lot of inquiries about the open spot.
- A couple of ptps viewed potential apartments today and 1 moved out of the hotel today!
- Working hard to keep everyone is wearing their masks across all sites.
- Fingers crossed for Our House resident interviewing for a new job!
- We have served 80,000 meals since the pandemic began! WOW!

**Staff Spotlight:** Shenisha Perkins!

Shenisha started in May 2019 as an Outreach Specialist. We missed Shenisha greatly while she was out on maternity leave. She's a mama to 2 sweet boys.

Shenisha's journey to Connections had a few twists and turns. She worked at Kenneth Young and then was going to school to become a paralegal. In her role, Shenisha goes to suburban areas to engage with individuals experiencing street homelessness. She works to build a relationship with neighbors so that we can support them and connect them with services. Shenisha loves working with our new Outreach Specialist Sam! She loves her coworkers, she has fun and really connects with her colleagues and participants



Shenisha loves hosting people and has a soft spot for cake and ice cream.

We love Shenisha!

**7/31/20**

- 38 people, 7 showers at drop-in today.
- Big donation of clothing from Northwestern. Volunteers helped sort it. There's lots of good items!
- No onsite testing will take place next week. Stay tuned for more updates.
- Dr. Hauser will be at Hilda's Place on Thursday.

**7/29/20**

- 26 people and 5 showers at drop-in today.
- Low on volunteers today so it was extra good that it wasn't as busy as usual.
- A lot of ptps asked questions about the letter that was distributed regarding our remaining time at the hotel.
- Rapid Rehousing funding recipients have been identified.
- Our House is doing well but they received the unfortunate news that one of the recent shootings in Evanston was a participant's relative. Marlena will be doing some general counseling and support for the participant.
- Welcome to Abigail Ayala Soberanis as the Bilingual CM in Supportive Housing!

**Staff Spotlight: Julissa Flores!**

Julissa started with Connections in the middle of May as the Housing Program Manager. In her role she manages the Housing Specialists Team who are working hard to locate housing for hotel residents. Julissa also is responsible for the new RRH program. She is so grateful for the team effort and support she receives from her colleagues.

Julissa came from Heartland Alliance and worked on RRH. Both Tina and our newest addition to the team Abigail also came from Heartland.

She likes that everyday is different - keeps things interesting! Finding housing for people with many barriers is the biggest challenge.

Fun fact! Julissa saved up for a year to backpack through India for nearly a month with a few girlfriends for her 30th birthday. SO COOL!

The way Jeff says her name is in fact the correct way to pronounce it but only Jeff and her family say it that way



7/27/20

- 52 visitors and 13 showers at drop in today. Very busy! People were patient despite the long waits.
- IAE Hospitality had 14 people today
- IAE Soup Kitchen has seen an increase in hotel residents coming for meals. Staff will remind hotel residents that the soup kitchens are for people without access to food.
- Verbal altercation between a participant and non Connections individual took place outside the hotel. Staff helped to deescalate.
- Providing safety reminders to Our House residents following the violent weekend in Evanston
- Thank you to staff who participated in the processing call today to provide a supportive space to discuss the losses we've experienced at the agency and beyond. More opportunities will be provided in the future.

7/24/20

- 45 visitors at drop-in today
- Tele-health partners will do education sessions for shelter residents. The first topic will be on COVID.
- We can utilize the shelter space through the end of August. Staff is looking to reconfigure Hilda's Place to safely shelter additional participants.
- There were 2 hotel exits today.
- On site testing will take place at hotel again in 2 weeks.

**Department Overview:** Finance & Operations!  
Presented by Randal Hamburg

Main responsibilities are money, billing, payroll, facilities, insurance, etc.

Our Fiscal Year begins on July 1 and runs through June 30. We are working on the FY21 budget. This helps us know how many staff members we can afford to hire, how many people we can serve through our programs, and how much money the Dev Team needs to raise.

Connections is a registered non profit and is a 501c3 organization which means donors can make tax deductible donations and we are also tax exempt.

For FY20 Connections has received 6.6 million in revenue with 1/2 coming from fundraising and 1/2 coming from government and we've grown to 75 employees. We expect the FY21 budget to be around 8 million - a massive growth! A new Grants Accountant will be joining the team soon. Government Grants and Private Donations are the primary sources of revenue. It's about a 50/50 split. We have about 10 Government Funders and we'll be adding 2 new funders this year. These funds usually go toward participant housing costs but some also support salaries for particular roles. In order to receive our grant money, we have to keep careful records of every transaction. Monthly reports are sent to each funder and each funder has different requirements. Reports include timesheets - that's why it's so important to get them in on time.



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

7/22/20

- 45 visitors and 12 showers at drop-in today
- One of our participants passed away in his hotel room this weekend and another recently passed away at the hospital. We are deeply saddened by this news and we hold each participant and their loved ones in our hearts. Additional resources for support during this difficult time have been distributed over email.
- Some Our House residents did therapy with our partners at the Josselyn Center today.
- A participant recently moved into their own place in Arlington Heights. We expect 2 more moves before this week is out!

**Staff Spotlight:** Mari Horowitz!

Mari joined the team 5 years ago this October. She is a Case Manager in the Permanent Supportive Housing program and works with individual adults. Mari has a case load of 15 participants.

Before joining Connections, Mari worked at another housing agency in Chicago. It was a very different setting, but doing similar work. She loves the vibe here and enjoys our office setting. She's had 3 other jobs in the sector and she loves Connections best ❤️ She loves the team and has been happy here since she started. Case notes are her least favorite part of her job.

Fun Fact: Mari is a Buckeye and went to The Ohio State. Mari is also a cat mom 🐱 she's enamored with her.

7/20/20

- 39 visitors at drop-in today.
- There are a few challenging participants that aren't respecting time limits at drop-in. Staff will determine best way to serve these ptps
- Internet will be wired this morning at the adjacent office space we'll be moving into soon.
- Made space for shelter residents to utilize downstairs where it's air conditioned to beat the heat this weekend
- Prioritizing locating housing for hotel residents. Figuring out best approach and pathways. Still hiring additional staff.
- 10 people at Interfaith Action Hospitality Center today

**Staff Spotlight:** Jarrett Kennedy!

He is a recent graduate of Southern Illinois, started working with Connections last month and is at MacLeish. This is his first job. He likes it so far and likes everyone on the team.

Every day is different! Participants' personalities change throughout the day and you never know what you're going to get! He enjoys getting to know different people and learning new things. That's his favorite part. He's learned a lot from the residents. As a younger member of the team, sometimes the residents don't take him seriously or see him as an authority figure. That's the biggest challenge.



Fun fact: Jarrett really likes ketchup and he puts it on EVERYTHING.

7/17/20

- 37 visitors and 10 showers at drop in today
- Was a stressful day at drop-in. There was 1 altercation and a participant called the police.
- GCFD delivery came and delivered 2,700 lbs of food!
- Small physical altercation at the shelter today that staff were able to diffuse
- Very peaceful day at the hotel
- 40 people were tested on site yesterday.
- We had 2 more people move into their own places yesterday with a couple more preparing to move soon!

**Department Overview:** Development! presented by the wonderful Carolyn Bishop

We want to share Connections story with the community & beyond, partner with individuals, businesses, and organizations to end homelessness, one person at a time.

Our Fiscal Year runs July 1 - June 30 so we just wrapped FY20.

FY20 Giving Estimates:

- Institutional Giving brought in 1.2 million through 76 institutions last year (government, foundations, faith communities, corporate)
- Fundraising Events raised \$688k last year
- Individuals gave 1.8 million last year with about 1500 individual donors

What we do:

- The Development Team cultivates relationships and makes friends of the agency - neighbors, volunteers, Board Members, community leaders, and more. These friends help us make new friends. We share our story and our impact with these friends to help raise funds to continue to do our work. We wouldn't have anything to talk about or any stories to share without the tremendous work the rest of the agency is doing every day. Development staff might ask you about your experiences, highlights, moments you're proud of, big and little wins so that we can share these moments with our community of supporters and so we can keep the lights on, pay everyone, run our programs, and serve our participants!

7/16/20

- Need to reinforce hard stop at 2pm for end of services at drop-in
- Food depository delivery at drop-in tomorrow. Plenty of volunteers scheduled to support.
- Preparing for the hot weekend ahead and planning what to do so people have access to air-conditioned spaces.
- Currently 1 bed for a male-identifying and 1 bed open for female-identifying residents at shelter.



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- 2 hotel residents moved into housing!
- Active volunteers are welcome to sign up for on site testing.
- Issuing final warnings to the participants who have received multiple reminders about the rules to be safe in the space.
- The affinity group restorative justice calls will continue.

7/15/20

- 46 visitors and 11 showers at drop-in today.
- Another food depository delivery will come on Friday.
- Still very hot at Interfaith Hospitality Center.
- On site testing will take place at shelter tomorrow. There are lots of openings.

**Staff Spotlight:** Chante Latimore!

Joined the team at the end of April and serves as Milieu Staff at the hotel. Chante is a Diverse Learning Kindergarten Teacher in CPS. She is currently at Pershing Magnet.

Fun fact! Chante recently got engaged! She met her fiance Michael through a mutual friend



They will wed in August! They will have a low frills wedding that's alllll about their love and union.

Chante loves to help her community and getting to know the participants. In addition to serving the participants makes the role extra special and important. Some of the challenges are getting to know the specific personalities and challenges participants face. You're really, really awesome Chante and we're so glad you're part of the team!

7/13/20

- 45 visitors at drop in today with 8 showers.
- Plans for utilizing adjacent office space at Dewey is in the works.
- We have space for 1 male-identifying resident at the shelter following a discharge. New resident will move in today.
- Many incident reports were filed over the weekend at the hotel. Mostly minor situations.
- Photographer will be on site on Wednesday to take head shots for the website.
- All COVID tests from last week came back negative. WOOT! 1 participant was showing symptoms and they are now in isolation and the city health department was notified.

**Staff Spotlight:** Hail Khalaf!

Hail is the Volunteer Coordinator and he also manages all in-kind donations. He joined the team in May 2019. Prior to coming to Connections he worked for the United Nations as an Emergency Officer in Africa and the Middle East. He met his wife, who is originally from Winnetka, in the South Sudan. He followed his love all the way to the North Shore. He worked in the field for 2.5 years. He focused on building camps and camp management.

After a long search he found the opportunity at Connections! He doesn't see any similarities between his old job and his new except for a serious need for basic needs being met. Hail loves our community, his team and the broader Connections team.





Fun facts: Hail speaks Arabic and he beat Jeff in a very competitive hummus competition. In college he competed in a video game competition and he came in second place out of hundreds of people!

7/10/20

- 48 visitors to drop-in today, 12 showers, 22 pantry visits.
- Food Depository delivery today.
- If a ptp is sleeping in the doorway or on the sidewalk, gently ask them to move to another spot and share drop-in hours with them, offer them a lunch. If available, have Outreach staff - Shenisha and Sam - engage with them.
- Overnight hotel staff did a great job handling a difficult situation last night.
- A new resident from the hotel moved into our Our House and another came from a partner agency. Both are doing great! Don't anticipate additional openings until fall when additional funding comes through.
- Families have been identified for the Evanston Rapid Rehousing funding and staff is working hard to locate housing solutions.
- Lunch was really late to the shelter today.
- Weekly meals menu is posted on Teams Meals Channel and staff is encouraged to print and post in the elevators.
- Interfaith Action Hospitality Center will open the computer room and staff offering job support next month.
- James took a participant to check out their new place that they will hopefully move into next week!
- Alison Albelda's last day will be on Wednesday, but she'll return as a volunteer this fall!

#### **Jeff Ayoub presented on all things-Data!**

- We served 2400 participants in FY20! - 1k of that total comes through drop-in
- Case management makes up the bulk of the thousands of services offered
- 1,054 visits to health clinics in FY20! 464 visits to the psych clinic that takes place on Tuesdays.
- 489 new households connected to housing or supported with prevention funding
- We do 2,000 Internal Referral Forms each year - 55% are for case management , 23% for prevention, 15% for housing
- The Data department (aka Jeff) helps with reporting especially government and for other funders - usually working with Elizabeth (Liz) Novak, and also on reports for managers as well as data review to plan strategically.

Thanks for the fun and informative presentation, Jeff!

7/8/20

- 34 visitors at drop-in today with 17 showers.
- MacKenzie O'Connor will be managing drop-in moving forward. Maddie Aybar was recently promoted to be at the hotel moving forward.
- Greater Chicago Food Depository delivery coming on Friday.



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- 455 visits to the food pantry last month, 644 people served!
- The shelter has a new fridge in the kitchen and the old one will go to drop-in.
- Super hot in the shelter.
- 40 participants and staff were tested on site at the hotel today.
- 4 people at Interfaith Action Hospitality Center today. It's very hot in the space.
- Reminder that if you have any symptoms – especially COVID-like symptoms – to notify your supervisor immediately before coming in or another manager. You must get clearance prior to your shift. If you're not permitted to work due to symptoms or can't return until test results come in, fear not! Your pay is covered by the COVID PTO.
- We've distributed more than 62k meals over the last few months!

**Staff Spotlight: Roxana Villatoro (AKA Roxy)!**

Roxy started at Connections in Oct. 2018 as a Case Manager for Housing Programs. She has 10 families and 2 individuals on her case load. Roxy is stationed at the hotel for case management now.

Right before she completed her degree, she was interested in working in homeless services. She had never heard of Connections but was connected by a contact at the YMCA and she went for it! She enjoys her team and coworkers and that every day is an adventure and something different - "you keep on growing, and keep on learning." Roxy's biggest challenge is remembering to meet participants where they are and not get too attached to them and their goals.

She has a younger brother, she is Mexican and Guatemalan, bilingual. Roxy was in a bachata dance team and loves boxing and hot yoga too. You're the best, Roxy!

7/6/20

- 53 visitors at drop-in today! Tent was set up to provide coverage from the sun.
- There was an altercation yesterday that led to asking a participant to leave the space for the night. Staff will meet with the participant tomorrow to determine if they can remain safe in the space.
- A hotel resident transferred to the Evanston Hospital after being found outside. They were identified because of their Connections name badge and the hospital has been in touch with us.

**Staff Spotlight: Areka Shelley!**

- Areka is a Milieu Assistant and started back in April. Areka is originally from the South Side of Chicago. Areka loves getting to know the participants and listening to some of their stories. Areka pulls from her own lived experience to better understand and connect with current participants. Areka was a Registered Nurse for over 20 years before coming to Connections.

7/1/20

- One person was exited at shelter after not being seen for awhile. The bed was filled today.



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- Hotel was calmer today. The management team is addressing reoccurring behavioral issues with particular hotel residents.
- New Milieu staff starting this week and looking to hire more.
- 58,000 meals have been distributed to ptps across our programs since the beginning of the pandemic! Snaps to Hail for managing this huge undertaking.
- Interviewing for the open Housing Case Manager, Prevention Specialist, and Community Case Manager positions, reviewing candidates for other open positions and posting more new positions soon. New staffing pattern for Dewey with changes within Operations will be implemented this week.
- Getting newly acquired space adjacent to Dewey set up and ready to utilize and figuring out who will go where.
- Our House team is focused on team expansion efforts and is otherwise doing well!
- Housing Team has identified the 21 Evanston families who qualify for new RRH funds.
- Emerson Square wait list opened. Community Case Managers got several ptps on the list. HACC opened up a senior housing wait list too.
- New resident moved in at shelter. Opening was made available because a resident moved into their new place!
- Interfaith Hospitality Center had about 5 visitors today.

## **Staff Spotlight: Alison Albelda!**

- Alison joined the team on May 7 as part of the Milieu Assistant crew. She previously interned with Connections last summer, and most recently returned from studying abroad in Ghana after the trip was cut short because of the pandemic. Alison is a student at Northwestern and is a rising senior - she likes to advocate and encourage a deeper relationship between the University and Connections, yay! She also appreciates this job because she gets to interact with lots of different people, every day brings something new, and she gets to use her skill set to empower others. Alison also described that the work can be challenging, especially navigating boundaries. If you want to learn to touch your tongue to your nose or practice your French, she's your go-to gal. Thanks, Alison!

6/29/20

- New incident reporting system will be implemented soon - similar to what's used at other sites.
- Staff is determining the best way to reinforce safety precautions and ensure everyone is wearing masks/getting temps taken/etc.
- Busy and difficult weekend at hotel this weekend with multiple ambulance calls over the weekend and other altercations took place.
- Construction is on hold at this point for women's shelter. Other plans are being explored.
- We are sad to learn of the loss of Mike Jones. His best friend and roommate, Tim Nolan is keeping us updated about arrangements. Mike was one of the sweetest men you can imagine meeting and we will miss him dearly.

## **Staff Spotlight: Jane Syh**



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- Jane is a Housing Specialist who joined the team 6 weeks ago. She previously worked at Thresholds followed by a ministerial internship before coming to Connections. She has a MSW from the University of Chicago. If you want to talk to Jane about the meaning of life, catch her one-on-one to start the discussion! She enjoys getting to know people as part of her work and it's also what she finds challenging about the job. Fun fact about Jane, her Great Uncle was the President of Taiwan. Welcome Jane!

6/26/20

- Drop-in will be closed next Friday, July 3 in observation of July 4th holiday
- Had one exit at shelter after resident hadn't been seen in awhile. A new participant will move in today.
- There will be a new manager staffing pattern to make sure there's staff on site at hotel to address issues and work through incident reports. Tina, Julissa, James, Andrew, and Jen will rotate.
- A hotel resident moved into their own apartment today!
- Housekeeping went well today
- Security cameras are being installed at Our House next week.
- Dr. Hauser will have clinic this Thursday.
- All IDHS Prevention funding has been spent! Great job, team! We're getting more on July 1.

## Special Presentation on Advocacy - Sue Loellbach

Important work because there are so many barriers and systemic problems related to housing for the people we work with.

- drug use, criminal background domestic violence, poor credit, mental illness, etc. may create additional barriers to housing
- NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) mentality
- lack of affordable housing available (especially in wealthy neighborhoods - but Evanston is ahead of many other municipalities!)
- housing discrimination

To combat that, Joining Forces for Affordable Housing takes the following actions

- community education through workshops, meetings, presentations, etc.
  - do myth busting (affordable housing won't make their property values go down)
  - affordable housing adds value to community
  - half the population pays more than 30% which is what is considered affordable on their housing
  - educating landlords too
- advocacy at state and national level
  - work on changing faulty laws
  - advocate with legislators
  - advocate for new affordable buildings
- community organizing
  - try to engage people with lived experience to become advocates



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- o train people and connect them with actions like rallies or visit with legislators to share their story


Tell Sue about your clients' success stories and connect them with Sue if they'd like to share their story! Staff are welcome to participate in advocacy and it's highly valuable.

6/24/20

- Recruiting more volunteers to help at Dewey drop-in
- Brief fight outside of Dewey today but staff was able to deescalate quickly
- Continue to get requests to stay at emergency shelter but it's at capacity.
- Still hiring more Milieu Staff – [connect2home.org/career](http://connect2home.org/career)
- City of Evanston confirmed \$370k will be given for Rapid Rehousing for 21 Evanston Families. The housing team is wrapping up assessments and will begin looking for apartments.
- Housing team is also actively working on identifying new landlords and building relationships and acquiring testimonials from landlords. Joining Forces for Affordable Housing is looking into creating support groups or programming for landlords too.
- Narcan training is today at 3. City of Evanston Health Dept. also donated 24 doses of Narcan and the doses will be distributed to each site. Will determine how to make them available to participants because they're more likely to utilize them for themselves or their peers.
- Health Clinic at shelter on Tuesday
- Interfaith Hospitality Center has been getting 10-15 people each day.

### Staff Spotlight: Carolyn Bishop!

Carolyn started 2.5 years ago as the Development Operations Specialist. She manages gift acknowledgements, provides a lot of support to the Board of Directors especially with meetings and strategic planning. She's VERY busy all the time and does SO much for this organization. Carolyn has had many careers from the wedding industry to non profits. She used to work at Teen Living Programs with Betty before she joined the team here.

She really loves her Development teammates (we love you too, CB!)  and the entire Connections staff! She really loves our Board too - "they are really amazing people who really care about our work." When COVID began a beautiful thing happened - we've had over 1k gifts and raised 1.7 million in private fundraising since March 1. It's really awesome, but Carolyn is responsible for thanking those people with their acknowledgement letters! She's still catching up!

Fun fact: Carolyn's mom is Colombian so she is 1/2 Latina.

6/22/20

- Pretty busy day with 43 participants visiting and 17 showers.
- A few challenges are being presented at the emergency shelter regarding one participant and unauthorized entry into the kitchen. Staff is addressing.
- Testing will take place on site every 2 weeks at the emergency shelter.



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- Curfew at hotel is still challenging but overall it's going ok.
- Good day at IAE Hospitality. James, Shenisha & Sam came over to say hello. 15 people today with some new folks.
- Our House has 2 new participants starting the program today.
- ALL COVID tests came back negative from the onsite testing last week.
- We're still actively hiring more Milieu Staff. Jobs are listed online at [connect2home.org/careers](https://connect2home.org/careers).

## **Staff Spotlight:** Sam Alden!

Sam joined the team in mid-April. He started as a Milieu Assistant and he recently moved into the Outreach Specialist position. He connects with ptps through recommendations from community members or internal staff.

Sam grew up here in Evanston and has deep roots! Him and Deon played football and lacrosse together at ETHS!

He was previously working with our partners at Curt's Cafe to open their Highland Park restaurant and they recommended Sam to us.

Sam loves talking to people and forming relationships with our participant. "We all want to help people!"

6/19/20

- Today we celebrate Juneteenth, the oldest celebration commemorating the official end of slavery in America. Connections hasn't recognized this holiday before and we're going to do better at that.
- Food Depository delivery today.
- New staff started at hotel today and they're great! New Milieu Staff started today with more starting on Monday.
- 1 hotel exit today due to room damage.
- 8 participants tested at the hotel yesterday.
- 15 people at Interfaith Action Hospitality Center today.
- City Health Manager took a tour of our spaces today.
- Speaking with Advocate Health about ongoing testing and mental health support.
- Staff have identified a new partner who will help more affordable Narcan and a Narcan training for all staff. Training will be this Wednesday at 3. More will be offered. They also have a harm reduction van with a safe needle exchange, lunches, on site blood pressure testing, etc. But would need to fund a trip to Evanston.

## **Friday Feature: Temporary Supports by Jen Feuer-Crystal and Bessie Simmons**

Temporary supports includes: TBRA, Prevention, and Rapid Re-Rehousing. Today's focus will be on Rapid Re-Housing.

Overview: Temporary rental assistance program, generally lasts 3-24 months, so long as funding is available. To be eligible: have to be literally homeless and meet HUD's definition -- literally homelessness for 1 night (shelter, car, inhabitable place). We currently have 4 households in RRH



funded by the City of Evanston, 4 households in RRH funded by Cook County, and 5 households in RRH funded by VOCA.

Process: Participants must do an intake at Dewey and then go through the Alliance's coordinated entry process. Some RRH is specific for Evanston households where they need to be a resident, have kids that go to Evanston schools or work in Evanston. Other RRH is for people who can live anywhere in suburban Cook County (except Evanston), and the other RRH is restricted to survivors of domestic violence and in partnership with the YWCA.

Once people go through the coordinated entry process and are matched to an RRH unit, Bessie completes the intake and then starts looking for apartments (Evanston, Skokie, Des Plaines...etc).

#### Success Stories:

- A family in the housing program had really struggled, and as they got near the end of the program, amazing things came together. Both Mom and Dad got great jobs, they're paying their own rent, and they haven't been back to Connections since graduating from the program.
- Two family members in the program found their own affordable unit in the south suburbs, where they are saving almost \$500 each month on rent payments
- Another family where her and her partner have increased their income and are about to exit the program and maintain their housing

#### Challenges:

- People that are being matched to RRH actually need permanent support, and we are finding out after people move into housing they have disabilities and seeing the full scope of their challenges
- People need longer than a year, 12 months is not enough rental assistance support and most people (90%) are on fixed incomes
- Restrictions on what the funding can pay for, like furniture, but we have new relationships with the Chicago Furniture Bank, allowing us to meet these needs

6/15/20

- Hotel move went well today. Big thanks to Operations Manager Andrew and all the movers and helpers.
- IAE Hospitality had 7 people today. Sue Murphy will be meeting with her staff on Thursday with hopes of reopening the computers soon.
- US Census count going well and will soon reach out to housed participants.

#### **Staff Spotlight:** Maddie Aybar

Started April 22 but is a former volunteer. Maddie serves as the Milieu Assistant who runs drop-in at Dewey M-F.

Maddie found us while trying to make a donation to a local organization and wanted to start volunteering. Before joining the team Maddie was a professional figure skater (for real!). She LOVES her job here and getting to interact with our regular participants. Maddie has already formed so many relationships with participants during her short time here. The emotional labor is



tough and she's learning how to take superb care of herself so she can continue to take great care of our participants

6/12/20

- Greater Chicago Food Depository delivery coming today
- A donated lunch for staff will be delivered today after 11:30 a.m. at Dewey
- Emergency shelter is at capacity
- Women's shelter beds were picked up from Chicago Furniture Bank today
- 14 people were tested on site at the emergency shelter yesterday
- Moving hotel residents into one location on Monday.
- Sam, new Outreach Specialist, has been spending time at the hotel a few evenings a week and outside the hotel to help manage any incidents and it's been very helpful.
- Hotel resident moved into their own apartment yesterday!
- Between March 23 through June 7, we've delivered 44k meals and spent 200k. Average meal cost is \$4.50.
- 10 people at Interfaith Hospitality Center today
- Betty is looking into an external resource for a support group for women of color on staff and has reached out to the YWCA about continuing our equity efforts virtually. Staff have been encouraged to share recommendations, resources, or feedback with their managers.

**Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Special Overview  
presented by Community Program Manager James Barnett**

- Can be for both individuals or families
- Most sustainable solution to end homelessness
- Permanent - no end date, people can stay for the rest of their lives if they choose too.
- Supportive - includes a case management component
- Matched through Coordinated Entry System - HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) Managed by our Continuum of Care, the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County.
- Qualifications include: continuously homeless or 12 months or 4 episodes within the last 3 years that total 12 months, one member of household must have a disability or disabling condition, VISPDAT (vulnerability) Score must be 8+
- Staff completing paperwork can make note if they believe they'd receive a higher score if the participant had answered their questions differently
- When ptps get entered into the system and meet the requirements, then we wait for them to get matched. Must be have a note of service at least once every 30 days on their file to be reviewed.
- Risk is low for landlords. Resident pays 30% of their income (job, SSI, etc.) and agency they work with pays the rest. Even with no income, people can still qualify.
- We have 54 PSH units. The turnover is rare. We had 4 openings this year with 2/4 matches coming from internal participants.





# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

6/10/20:

- 45 people at drop-in today. It was busy!
- Greater Chicago Food Depository delivery on Friday. Recruited additional volunteers to help out.
- New participants moved in yesterday and more today at emergency shelter.
- Nurse & ER Doc coming to emergency shelter for on-site testing tomorrow
- Census efforts continue!
- Letters were given to parents at the hotels about rules and expectations around supervising children.
- Cameras are being installed at hotel to monitor use of emergency exit and door propping.
- Many donations coming in from Feels Like Home Amazon Wish List for people moving from hotels to housing.
- Staff are working on obtaining nasal Narcan and will provide a training. Reminder that there's needle Narcan in the first aid kits. Partner organization is able to provide onsite treatment and staff are looking into it to see if it would be a good fit.
- **Staff Feature:** Maria Ynot  
Position: Case Manager for TBRA  
Started: July 30, 2012 - started as a receptionist, then did prevention, and ESG, and now Case Manager for TBRA!

What brought you to this job? Connections was there to help Maria and her family in the past. She wants to provide support and services to families with similar experiences. Connections showed her there's always light at the end of the tunnel and she strives to show that light for our ptps!

What's most challenging? Finding affordable housing that is sustainable for families in this area!

Maria is a proud mother of 5 and happy grandmother of 4!

Paula gave Maria a shout out for being an amazing Case Manager for her and her fam and Jen FC couldn't make the call and wanted to share some snaps: "Maria has played many roles at Connections from volunteer Receptionist at one point, Prevention Specialist, TBRA and RRH CM. Maria is open to helping in any way at Connections and has worked way too much overtime during the pandemic to keep us afloat! Maria has a great sense of humor and a contagious laugh!"

6/8/20:

- 30 visitors at drop-in today.
- 2 new participants moved into the emergency shelter last night. 3 male-identifying beds are open and the team will work on getting them filled this week.
- In response to safety issues and incidents taking place at the hotel, an 11pm curfew was instituted.
- Staff is hosting a call to get hotel resident feedback and is considering forming a resident council.



- Interfaith Action will be opening the computer room soon.
- Our House had 2 participants move into the transitional program that supports ore independence.
- **Staff Feature:** Aquinetta Pierce!  
Position: Community Case Manager  
Started: January 21, 2020

From the west side of Chicago. Loves to sing. She has a twin brother. Treats herself by getting her nails done. Previously worked as a DSP and Supervisor with adults with disabilities. Moved to the area and applied for a job at Connections. Enjoys supporting participants in their journey and building a relationship with them. Gives snaps to her team for showing her the ropes!

6/5/20:

- 21 visitors at drop-in today. Had an ambulance called for a participant with a gaping wound. He will be ok though!
- Reminder that the food pantry is open to all employees and everyone is welcome to take what they need.
- Kitchen doorbell at Lake Street Church is working now! Volunteers can alert staff upon arrival with food delivery.
- Testing for participants and shelter staff has been rescheduled for 6/11.
- Working on obtaining nasal Narcan and getting staff trained.
- Considering hosting a discussion about the current state of civil unrest with interested participants.
- Staff is going to set up a voicemail box for participants to leave anonymous feedback.
- 1 person at IAE Hospitality Center today
- 145 census forms completed! WOOT!
- Congratulations to Paula Laboy who has been promoted to Housing Specialist!
- Sam Alden has been promoted to Outreach Specialists! Congrats, Sam!
- Jori Kovarsky has been promoted to Prevention Specialist! Way to go, Jori!
- Betty shared the presentation she gave to City Council.
- Betty also shared a response to the current state of civil unrest and a reminder to take PTO as needed, to utilize mental health support available to staff, and to communicate needs and ideas for support and resources with your manager or the leadership team.

6/3/20:

- Slow week so far at drop-in. 23 visitors.
- Need more lunches at drop-in because we have been frequently running out. We will request more on the volunteer sign-up moving forward.
- Volunteer has been secured to set up a "store" at the hotels with the activity kits we've acquired from donors.
- St. Francis is scheduled to come on site to do testing at the emergency shelter.
- Reminder to staff that if someone is on site at the hotel without a name badge and aren't on the census, they aren't permitted in the building.



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- Weekly housing coordination meeting will take place to review what housing options are available and to share critical updates.
- Joining Forces for Affordable Housing Meeting took place. A new committee effort launched to identify landlords.
- Lots of furniture donations have been arriving at Dewey from our Feels Like Home Amazon Wish List for people moving from hotel to housing.
- Restorative Justice Call is today at 2pm and open for everyone.
- Andrew Seibert has officially accepted the Operations Manager for Community Programs position. Over the last several years he has done an AMAZING job growing development and community events. We wish he could do both positions at once!
- We had 460 visits to the food pantry in May!
- Utilize the Manager on Call for after-hours emergencies, facilities emergencies, etc.
- We spotlighted the awesome Jeff Ayoub today! He started with Connections a few years ago and currently serves as the Data Manager. In his role, he reports on statistics and consults with Senior Management about what data is showing us and the direction we should take. He really enjoys getting to work with different people on different parts of the agency!

6/1/20:

- Lots of volunteers and extra staff on site to support at drop-in today.
- 35 visitors at drop-in today.
- Finished deep clean at emergency shelter over the weekend.
- There have been many incidents happening outside the hotel involving our participants.
- Police are providing increased presence in the area.
- Parking restrictions started again today!
- Collected laundry at hotels today.
- Case managers on site at hotels to get documents and forms completed to get them ready to move into housing.
- Census efforts are continuing and going well!
- 10 people at Interfaith Action Hospitality today.
- Housing participants from hotels is the main priority at the moment. Working to lower number of residents over time to streamline operations.
- There are concerns about activity in Downtown Evanston this evening with expecting protests. Staff and hotel management are working together to determine protocol and will notify staff and hotel residents about policies.
- HAPPY BIRTHDAY to the wonderful Brittany Simmons!

5/29/20:

- 49 visitors at drop-in today. Busy day!
- Our Volunteer Coordinator, Hail will try to recruit 3 volunteers for Monday mornings at drop-in because it's often really busy after the weekends.
- Hail began organizing the Conference Room with the items from the Feels Like Home Amazon Wish List items for participants who are moving into their own apartments.
- Female-identifying participants moved into the new space at the emergency shelter last night. There are 19 residents at the moment.



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- Betty is working on scheduling another on-site COVID testing for participants and staff.
- Letter was distributed to hotel residents about consequences of vandalism.
- Happy Work Anniversary to Ayanna Brown and Happy Birthday to Maria Ynot and Liz Novak!

## 5/28/20:

- 38 visitors and 12 showers at drop-in today. Busy case management day.
- Expecting 1 new move in at emergency shelter tonight. 1 is moving out and will be back up at capacity.
- Census efforts continue at all locations.
- 2 hotel residents are pregnant and due in July. They are hopeful the needed furniture and supplies will be purchased soon.
- Laundry delivery and trash pick up went smoothly at hotels today.
- There was more vandalism at the hotel today.
- Printer set up at the hotel for wireless printing, scanning, and copying.
- Alaina confirmed that Erie Family Health Center can do dental care!
- City starts parking violations again on Monday.

## 5/27/20:

- Drop in was busy after the holiday weekend yesterday. Today felt more relaxed with 42 visitors and 8 showers. Clothing orders were delivered to drop-in today.
- 3 new residents moved into emergency shelter yesterday.
- Staff exploring tools, resources, and training to better support staff respond to incidents at all sites.
- Community Nurse, Alaina created a new screening tool for intakes at emergency shelter.
- Space has been made for female-identifying residents at the emergency shelter
- Shelter-in-Times Newsletter was delivered to hotel residents.
- Laundry picked up at hotels today.
- 10 people at Interfaith Hospitality today.
- Working on identifying dental resources amid pandemic.
- 4,698 meals were given out last week!
- Betty spoke with the Police Chief today and they provided literature on how to partner together. When police come on site to do a wellness check, staff can go to the room and check and then report back to the police only. This is only for wellness checks, not warrants. If presented with a warrant, call your manager.
- Snaps to James & Ayanna for leading a training on the intake process for coordinated entry!
- We were awarded funding for the Youth Homeless Demonstration Project! Big time snaps to Seprina, Liz, Betty and Jen FC! It's been a long effort and a big undertaking. Great job everyone!

## 5/26/20:

- Payroll was submitted on time! Nice job to our wonderful Mary Gau!
- 2 new participants moved into the emergency shelter – both are very excited to be there! Another will be moving in soon.



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- Quarantine ended for emergency shelter following positive case.
- There was vandalism at the hotel. Cameras will be installed soon.
- Staff is working on a letter to distribute to hotel residents outlining meal times to help streamline process.
- One hotel resident moved into their own place!
- 7 visitors at Interfaith Hospitality today.
- One Our House resident is preparing to enter transitional program

5/22/20:

- 33 visitors at drop-in today.
- Launched the "Feels like Home" Amazon Wish List to get household needs for people moving from hotels into permanent housing.
- Remind participants to wear their masks.
- Housekeeping at new hotel took a very long time. Will figure out a better way for staff to support on housekeeping days.
- We've hired 27 new staff members in the last 6 weeks!
- Sharing our deepest sympathies with everyone grieving the tragic passing of Hecky Powell.

5/21/20:

- Hotel and shelter residents have been coming to drop-in again. Case managers and staff will remind them that mail will be delivered to their sites and not to visit drop-in to alleviate crowding.
- Mail delivery and laundry at hotel 1 today.
- Housekeeping today at the new hotel. Laundry came too.
- Presentation tomorrow for youth program funding.
- 21 people have been recorded in the census!
- 6 people at Interfaith Action today.

5/20/20:

- 42 visitors at drop-in today.
- Elevators were down and issues with fire alarm at new hotel are related to basement flooding. They were fixed by end of day.
- Laundry day at hotels.
- Staff are continuing to determine best practices for participants with serious mental illness and identifying support from partner agencies.
- Psych clinic is tomorrow at Hilda's.

5/19/20:

- 45 visitors at drop-in today.
- Switching to cold items for hotel breakfast delivery on T, Th, Sat, and Sun.
- Small crowd at Interfaith Action Hospitality.
- Census efforts are going well.

5/18/20:



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- 41 visitor at drop-in today.
- Quarantine mandate was distributed on Friday and is issued through the 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Participant who tested positive went to a hotel at a nearby suburb but was relocated back to Evanston. The Health Dept. discharged him today but the CDC and IDHP recommendation is to not discharge before 10 days since the symptoms began. They will be welcomed back into our programs after the 10 days.
- Basement flooded at one of the hotels and took out the boiler and now there's no hot water. Expected to have it come back tomorrow.
- Bathroom ceiling collapsed at the other hotel possibly due to rain. They moved the participant into another room.
- 6 people came to Interfaith Action Hospitality
- Housing Program Manager, 2 Housing Specialists, and 2 new Milieu Assistants started today!
- A beloved participant in our permanent supportive housing program passed away this weekend.

5/15/20:

- 37 visitors at drop-in today.
- New hotel is almost at capacity. Hotel 1 will be full again by end of day. When space becomes available, street homeless individuals will be prioritized.
- Still hiring for temporary Milieu Assistants.
- Betty is working on arranging for more on site-testing with external partners.
- Library is now available for private meetings with participants at hotel 1.
- 8 visitors at Interfaith Hospitality today.
- 27,405 have been distributed meals across locations!
- Board President, Jim Pepa joined us and shared that he's really impressed and surprised by everyone's great energy on the call! He also informed us that everyone on last night's Board call was incredibly impressed and grateful for the work that we are doing. The Board has faith that we're going to keep up this incredible work and they will do whatever they can to continue to support our efforts ---- Reminder that we'll all get through this together!

5/14/20:

- 25 visitors at drop-in today.
- Greater Chicago Food Depository is coming tomorrow.
- Some emergency shelter residents will be relocating to hotels soon.
- No new residents will be moving into the emergency shelter until the quarantine is lifted.
- Cleaning day at new hotel.
- Laundry was delivered at hotel 1.
- Interfaith Hospitality had 3 people today.
- Staff are working on getting everyone in hotels to complete the census.
- Manager will be on duty starting tomorrow for after-hours needs.
- Board Meeting is tonight and everyone is welcome to join.

5/13/20:



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- 31 visitors at drop-in today.
- An emergency shelter tested positive and staff connected with the local health department. They recommended the participants closest to him should shelter in place at hotels and the others should remain under quarantine.
- Overall residents are managing news well.
- Shelter beds were moved upstairs to Emergency Shelter so they can sleep on real beds rather than cots.
- Informing hotel staff on who to contact to support and help in different situations.
- 3 visitors at Interfaith Hospitality.
- We are temporarily not accepting clothing donations except XXL – 3X adult clothing.
- Board meeting is tomorrow night at 5:30pm. Everyone is welcome!

## 5/12/20:

- 27 visitors at drop-in today. Half a dozen came to complete the mutual aid fund grant app on the computer.
- Deep cleaning took place at Emergency Shelter at Lake Street today.
- Security Guard at new hotel asked if we could have a radio that connects us with the hotel engineer in case of an emergency.
- Interfaith had 3 visitors today.
- Tuesday Psych Clinic took place and some new participants came.
- We had a participant move from the hotel into their own place today! And it was announced that another participant was matched with housing.

## 5/11/20:

- 50 visitors at drop-in today.
- Household items that have been donated were moved into the garage for ptps moving into their new places
- Computers were moved upstairs for emergency shelter residents to use.
- Reusable fabric masks being distributed to all ptps tomorrow
- Many hotel residents seeking support in applying for the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless relief funds.
- Mother's Day floral delivery was really special! A donor arranged for flowers to be delivered to the hotels and staff member Paula bought individual flowers with ribbons for kids to give to their moms too.
- 4k+ meals distributed over the span of a week to hotels, Our House, and MacLeish. Daily 582 meals distributed at hotels.
- 5 people moving into hotel 2 today, more throughout the week with some coming from emergency shelter.
- 1 participant living at the emergency shelter has tested positive. They are showing mild symptoms and have isolated. We are awaiting instructions from the Dept. of Public Health for moving them to isolation to a hotel. Staff who might have come into contact with the participant have been notified and will be isolated as needed. The facility will be cleaned by a biohazard cleaning crew.
- A participant passed away at one of the hotel rooms last night. It is believed they passed from natural causes. Staff are encouraged to reach out to their managers for support in



processing this very difficult time. We are very grateful to have provided him with a safe place to stay, meals, comfort, and support over his last few weeks.

- Welcomed to 4 new staff today!

5/8/20:

- Greater Chicago Food Depository delivery arrived. Lots of milk, eggs, bread, and more!
- We had nearly 300 pantry visits in April and nearly 250 in March.
- Big cleaning at emergency shelter is tomorrow!
- Case management team met yesterday. Decided to move in an additional 10-15 rooms at new hotel.
- We will continue keeping 100% capacity at hotels until the shelter in place order is over.
- We lost a housing program participant last night. Hilary, their case manager was able to go and support the landlord once she was informed of their passing.
- We posted a outreach position on the careers page on the site.
- The alliance has some stipends for people to do census work. Advocacy Manager will explore options.
- 9 people at Interfaith Hospitality today.

5/7/20:

- 30 visitors at drop-in today
- One drop-in participant was matched with housing recently and he's been so happy all week!
- Community living challenges at emergency shelter, but otherwise smooth sailing.
- 17/20 emergency shelter residents were tested on site.
- Deep clean taking place this Saturday.
- Volunteers will work moving remote clothing closet to main downstairs clothing closet next week.
- New hotel cleaning crew is very professional and respectful.
- Weekly meal menu in the works to help streamline the effort.
- 9 people visited Interfaith Hospitality Center today.

## **SPECIAL STATE OF THE AGENCY - FROM BETTY**

### **Our Growth**

- Last May we had 43 staff. Today we have 59!
- We have extended offers to 5 Housing Specialists for a 90-day temp position. We hope we will be able to have some stay on. They will focus on securing housing for hotel residents.
- This is tremendous growth in a short period of time. We will continue to move forward.

### **Operations Moving Forward (in the short-term)**

- We will continue operating these hotel rooms at least through the stay at home order. If the Governor lifts the stay at home order at the end of the month, we will continue to





# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

maintain hotel operations as we can find housing solutions for our hotel residents. Shelter operations may adjust as well.

- While we identify housing solutions, we will continue to be as flexible as possible while also focusing on meeting the clients' needs and following any funding restrictions.
- We will utilize external partners for job training as needed.
- Some temporary positions may become permanent and some new positions may be created in response to changes in operations.

5/6/20:

- All staff are welcome to participate in March 14<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting.
- Difficult day at drop-in, but staff handled it well.
- Lots of in-kind donations arrived and getting stocked up.
- Getting settled and organized into new hotel.

5/5/20:

- 34 visitors at drop-in today
- Emergency shelter residents were extra helpful today. Got everyone to sign up for testing on Thursday.
- Smoking continues to be an issue with hotel residents.

5/4/20:

- 8-hour deep clean scheduled for emergency shelter on Saturday.
- Participants really appreciate the new hotel staff.
- Leadership meeting with security guard hired for hotels to discuss plans moving forward.
- Looking into nasal spray Narcan option and training for new staff on how to use in case of overdose. Instructions available on Teams.
- In-service with emergency shelter staff was held over weekend to discuss policies and procedures.
- 47 visitors at drop-in.
- 6 people at Interfaith Hospitality today.
- Agency update and overview on Wednesday to help keep everyone informed in lieu of staff meetings.
- Advocate will come on site to do COVID testing for staff and emergency shelter participants on Thursday.

4/30/20:

- Shout out to the 13 new staff who started during the pandemic!
- 38 visitors at drop-in today.

4/29/20:

- Participants have been adjusting to new drop-in hours. Tent up to protect people waiting from the rain.
- Emergency shelter residents are getting enrolled with Erie Family Health Center for mental and physical health. Soon we'll enroll hotel residents.
- Surprise McDonalds breakfast donated to emergency shelter today!



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- Many hotel residents have experienced recent loss. Staff have offered mental health resources from partner agencies and resident Mental Health Specialist, Molly – the participants love Molly!
- Hotel move plan sent out!
- Staff helped ease worries, give more details, and answer questions about the move at hotel 2 today. Just a reminder moving can be extremely triggering for people. Be ready to manage difficult emotions, to deescalate, to accommodate, and absorb and affirm worries. Utilize teammates when needing extra support.
- Longtime volunteer, Sally will sort mail a few times each week to be distributed to hotels.
- Reminder that additional PTO rollover hours will be extended this year. Staff are encouraged to take PTO as needed to rest, recoup, and relax!
- Hail reported that 4,180 meals were distributed in just one week
- Housing Program Manager will start 5/18, 5/11 three Housing Specialists will start

4/28/20:

- Informing hotel residents that they will be moving to a new location. Offering support as needed.
- 34 visitors at drop-in.
- Back shower at drop-in has been fixed. 10 people showered today.

4/27/20:

- Security cameras have been installed at emergency shelter.
- New Housing Program Manager will start May 18.
- 48 visitors at drop-in today. Visitor temps will be taken starting tomorrow.
- We had hundreds of fabric masks donated so more will be added to staff bins.
- Alaina, Community Nurse, met with a handful of hotel residents and emergency shelter residents. Helping with coordinate with PCPs and picking up medications.
- Onboarded 2 new Milieu staff.
- 

4/24/20:

- Participants are still adjusting to new hours.
- Homelessness prevention assessments are being done with hotel residents.
- Moved one highly vulnerable emergency shelter participant into a hotel.
- 2 former volunteers have been hired as Milieu staff! 1 new Milieu staff member starting on Monday with more in the pipeline. Interviews starting for Housing Specialist positions.
- Considering preparing a weekly food menu for hotel residents so they know what to expect.
- Reminder to hotel staff to wear masks when together in hotel rooms
- Interfaith Hospitality had 5 people today.
- Alaina, new Community Nurse has been seeing people daily at hotels and doing screenings at emergency shelter
- 

4/23/20:

- Busy, but good day at drop-in! Rockstar team! Bombas sock donation arrived today.



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- School district reps visited hotels to enroll students and brought tools for remote learning.
- Hotel housekeeping staff has asked Connections staff to accompany visits to room.
- Evanston Community Foundation has awarded us an additional 100k for private homelessness prevention funding!
- Implementing mandatory temperature checks when staff arrive on site.
- Advocate Lutheran General is working on getting them out to test the participants in the shelter and to test staff too.

4/22/20:

- Busy, hectic day at drop-in with 32 visitors but felt like more! Many new visitors, most from Chicago.
- Will add additional management staff to Health Clinic moving forward to offer additional support.
- Wifi hotspot brought to hotel 1
- Prevention funding is now more flexible to help more people in need of support.
- We will partner with Erie on health services for emergency shelter residents
- Betty has communicated with Amita and other health partners to get testing for staff and participants
- Fewer lunch bags will be delivered to emergency shelter in the future. Lowered the number to better meet the need.
- Masks being delivered to Our House aftercare participants today

4/21/20:

- 35 visitors at drop-in. Some frustration with shortened hours. Will assess updated format and determine if more staff is needed.
- 13 people at Interfaith Hospitality Center today.
- Almost 600 meals are being delivered daily.
- Adding restorative justice and reflective elements into team check-ins and calls to create more processing space.

4/20/20:

- Adjusting drop-in services to better protect participants, staff, and volunteers. Updating hours to 9:30-2 p.m. Case manager on site serves as a floor manager. Mail will be distributed at hotels. About 30 people visited today.
- Biohazard clean up conducted yesterday to kill any potential trace of viruses on surfaces.
- Phones will be managed remotely by Sue L.
- Betty is staying at hotel 2 this week to support staff and continue to work with management.
- 4 more Milieu staff began today. More in the pipeline.
- 13 at Interfaith Hospitality Center today.
- Betty continues to advocate with Evanston Public Health Department about how to secure testing for staff and participants.

4/17/20:



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- Greater Chicago Food Depository delivery at Dewey today
- Posting Housing Specialist positions on website to recruit staff to help with identifying permanent housing for hotel residents
- New workstation at emergency shelter for staff is very helpful
- 44 visitors at drop-in today! Mostly pantry visits.
- Many people are still seeking shelter with most coming from Chicago.
- Tidiness of hotel rooms still being addressed and managed.
- Tina, Director of Comm. Programs met with Trilogy who will offer remote mental health services with anyone with Medicaid or is eligible for Medicaid.
- Watch Nia, Director of Development on the latest episode of Inside the Skev - <https://youtu.be/MTXUjpiX0YQ>

4/16/20:

- 34 people visited drop-in
- Plumbing fixed at emergency shelter
- Helpful to have staff in lobby at Hotel 2.
- Sue, Advocacy Manager delivered special newsletter to hotel residents.
- Marlena, Youth Services Case Manager met with youth living in hotels.
- 13 people at Interfaith Action Hospitality Center yesterday and 10 today
- Health Clinic at the shelter tonight
- James Barnett accepted the Community Programs Manager position!
- Another article - <https://patch.com/illinois/evanston/hotels-shelter-homeless-during-coronavirus-stay-home-order>

4/15/20:

- Meal shifts opened for volunteers at Hilda's Place for 20 emergency shelter residents
- Hotels and Emergency Shelter are at capacity
- Hotel resident and their daughter moved into their own apartment today!

4/14/20:

- 41 visitors at drop-in
- Kids activity packs completed and delivered to hotels
- Started staffing hotel 2 lobby 24/7 to provide extra support for hotel management
- More Milieu staff starting next week

4/13/20:

- 58 visitors at drop-in
- 2 new Milieu staff started today
- 10 people visited Interfaith Action's hospitality center
- Staff IDs being distributed

4/10/20:

- 31 people visited drop-in today
- Greater Chicago Food Depository delivered at Dewey today



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- Hotel clothing donation orders fulfilled by volunteers and staff
- 10 people visited Interfaith Hospitality Center today
- Community Nurse visited people at hotels and at emergency shelter. Doing daily screening for COVID symptoms.
- Training on trauma-informed care for hotel staff conducted by Director of Housing Programs
- Providing eviction prevention flyer for city to distribute at their new weekly food pantry

4/9/20:

- Continuing to complete Internal Request Forms for unhoused participants and refer to 311 for emergency shelter in Chicago
- 5 visited Interfaith Action's Hospitality Center today
- IAE Soup Kitchen meals delivered to emergency shelter

4/8/20:

- 30 visitors at drop-in today
- New emergency shelter intake procedures finalized and available at check-in desk
- Hotel resident left a thank you note on their door thanking us and the hotel staff
- Interfaith Hospitality Center had 13 people today
- Temp jobs posted on social media, on website, and will be included in upcoming newsletter

4/8/20:

- Storm flooded shelter last night.
- 15 people stayed at emergency shelter last night
- Housing team has taken over managing hotel 2, community programs team managing hotel 1
- We are Mandated Reporters and are required to report concerns of neglect and/or abuse witnessed at hotels.

4/7/20:

- 34 visitors at drop in
- Smoking in rooms continues to be challenge at hotels
- Reminding hotel guests to wear masks when they leave their rooms
- Nametags for staff and guests at hotels have been distributed at hotel 2
- 12 people at emergency shelter + 1 is quarantined in women's section because they came from another agency that had a COVID case. Isn't showing symptoms, just playing it safe.
- Psych clinic happened today.
- Community Case Manager will be at drop-in moving forward starting tomorrow
- HMIS data getting up to date by Jeff today
- Trash pick-up after every meal at hotel moving forward. Getting extra dumpster pick-ups to address influx on trash.
- Hotel 2 is interested in doing meals for us. Will do a proposal to determine if its feasible.



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

4/6/20:

- Community Nurse is working on daily health screens at hotels and emergency shelter and triage phone line is being made.
- Medically complicated cases at hotels – some have had surgeries with no follow up care. Refer people to Primary Care Practitioners first.
- Mental Health Specialist introduced herself to hotel residents during breakfast distribution
- 26 people visited drop-in today
- Case management starting at hotels this week to manage inquiries about mail, bus passes, coordinated entry, etc.
- Food delivery will stop for the time being at Hilda's Place
- Kids meals being arranged for hotels
- PPE distributed. Gloves very limited.
- Restorative justice calls are scheduled to provide space for staff to process and share
  
- 4/3/20: 10 residents at MacLeish emergency shelter last night. Hilda's Place residents will move into hotel on Sunday to support social distancing.
  
- 4/3/20: Mask policy enforced today. More will be distributed next week.
  
- 4/3/20: 31 people visited drop-in today. Mostly pantry visits.
  
- 4/3/20: Checked in 5 people to hotel 2 today. Jen Feuer-Crystal, Director of Housing Programs led hotel staff, Connections staff, and participants in a peace circle to address concerns today.
  
- 4/3/20: 4 people moved into MacLeish emergency shelter today.
  
- 4/3/20: 9 people visited Interfaith's Hospitality Center today. 3 were from hotels. 1 was moving into a hotel. Soup kitchens are still serving. Down to about 62 people each night, more people from the community in need visiting.
  
- 4/2/20: Had 26 visitors at drop-in today. Mostly for food pantry, lunches, and mail.
  
- 4/2/20: 10 people stayed at emergency shelter last night.
  
- 4/2/20: 75 people in 55 rooms at hotel 2. Will move in Hilda's Place residents next week to support social distancing.
  
- 4/2/20: Our House is running smoothly. Our aftercare participants is receiving extra support with food and case management as needed.
  
- 4/2/20: Food from Protein Bar and Hecky's!



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- 4/2/20: Interfaith Action had 6 people at their Hospitality Center today. Interfaith soup kitchens are still serving.
- 4/1/20: Betty identifying mental health support for participants. PPE ordered and on its way.
- 4/1/20: 30 visitors at drop-in today.
- 4/1/20: Signs hung to identify access points and restricted areas around Lake Street Church.
- 4/1/20: Drinks requested by hotel residents and requests put out to our supporters. Hotel 2 moved in 20 more people – ½ are children.
- 4/1/20: Interfaith Action hospitality center had 10 people today, 12 yesterday. Some are our participants.
- 3/31/20: Team is working on capturing data and accurate counts of services and participants across the board.
- 3/31/20: 6 people stayed at emergency shelter last night.
- 3/31/20: Smooth operations at Our House!
- 3/31/20: Began clothing orders for hotel residents today.
- 3/31/20: 17 new people moved into hotel 2. Weekly deep clean and extra disinfectant day for bathrooms will take place moving forward. Hotel 1 is officially full and all 40 rooms are occupied. Meals coming from Protein Bar.
- 3/31/20: 31 visitors at drop-in. Mostly food pantry.
- 3/31/20: Interfaith Hospitality Center had 8 visitors today. Some coming from MacLeish.
- 3/31/20: Creating check-in procedure to check symptoms with new nurse.
- 3/30/20: 34 rooms filled over weekend at hotel 1. 22 rooms and 33 people moved in over week at hotel 2.
- 3/30/20: Reassessing staffing pattern to ensure support in right areas.
- 3/30/20: Working with Interfaith Action to coordinate any hospitality center guests that need shelter/hotel.



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- 3/27/20: 13 men and 2 women stayed overnight at MacLeish emergency shelter. Encouraging everyone to stay during the day to shelter-in-place. General operating procedures have been put together. 9 people staying tonight.
- 3/27/20: 34 rooms filled with about 50 people at 1<sup>st</sup> hotel. 2<sup>nd</sup> hotel has 22 rooms filled with about 35 people. Meals provided by Curt's Café. Much gratitude from hotel residents. Keep up the good work!
- 3/27/20: Creating new clothing room at Lake Street Church as a sorting and organizing space to fulfill clothing orders for hotel residents.
- 3/27/20: 25 people visited drop-in. Mostly for pantry. Many community members dropped off donations!
- 3/26/20: 15 participants moved into MacLeish emergency shelter. 4 checked in during day who didn't return at night. Policies and procedures being put together. Will need more staff and volunteer support. Cleaning company hired for Lake Street Church.
- 3/26/20: 34 people at hotel including 9 hotel residents that moved in today. List for shelter/housing is at about 60 people. Hired local laundry service for biweekly pickups/drops at hotel. Mail delivery starting tomorrow to hotel.
- 3/26/20: Second hotel started with 3 families moving in. Contract will start with 20-30 rooms.
- 3/26/20: 35 visited drop-in today. Dropping because of hotels and new shelter.
- 3/25/20: Curt's Café delivered 60+ meals to housing program participants yesterday
- 3/25/20: 45+ people visited drop-in services at Dewey today
- 3/25/20: MacLeish emergency shelter already full with 5 female-identifying and 15 male-identifying participants
- 3/25/20: Exploring new staff and volunteer patterns at all locations
- 3/25/20: Patch [article](#) published about efforts to support homeless population in Evanston and Connections' work.
- 3/24/20: First 2 people moved into hotel last night with more moving in today and throughout the week. Most vulnerable will be prioritized (street homeless, 60+, underlying health issues, youth, families, etc.) 11 moved in by end of day. Connections Advocacy Manager exploring more hotel partners.
- 3/24/20: Emergency shelter at MacLeish Hall at Lake Street Church being set up tonight with Interfaith Action cots. Will open on 3/25/20.





# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- 3/24/20: 49 people visited drop-in today.
- 3/24/20: Mass volunteer email went out requesting support. City is planning to create coordinated volunteer effort to streamline available options.
- 3/23/20: Lake Street Church has agreed to open MacLeish Hall for emergency shelter as needed. Alderman Simmons' home will also be available for emergency shelter as needed. Hotel operations open tonight. Placements managed in partnership with Interfaith and YWCA.
- 3/23/20: Jennifer's Edibles will be another meal partner.
- 3/23/20: 63 people visited drop-in at Dewey today
- 3/21 – 3/22/20: Agency leadership communicates with Aldermen Sufferdin, Fleming, and Rue-Simmons, City Manager, and Evanston Community Foundation to coordinate accessing block of hotel rooms for community's most vulnerable
- 3/21 – 3/22/20: City of Evanston distributed porta-potties and hand washing stations across the city
- Supplies placed at Rue-Simmons' rental that will be available as an emergency shelter option beginning 3/23
- Request made for additional emergency shelter space to city leadership and faith partners
- 3/20/20: Evanston Community Foundation, reaches out to Betty and offers very strong support and open line to communicate any and all needs. Also, in partnership with Northwestern Dance Marathon, ECF contributes 120+ outreach kits- volunteers pick up and deliver
- 3/20/20: Tour of Simmons property with alderman, made plan for final property preparation, loading in cots and lines, finalized staffing agreed to service times and services provided. Confirmed plan to open on Monday 3/23.
- 3/20/20: Shelter in place in Illinois put in order effective 3/21/20
- 3/20/20: Big screen set upstairs at Lake Street Church so HP residents stay occupied and spend time in a larger space
- 3/20/20: Randal, Connections CFO, researching porta-potty costs so that Connections can order and place them around soup kitchens and other locations where participants usually have access to facilities. And Sue Loellbach is researching local motels options for



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

our most vulnerable participants, will continue to ask City for support on this, but may activate independently

- 3/19/20: Conference Call with Alderman Robin Rue Simmons, Connections staff, community member, and Sue Murphy discussed temporary/short-term women's emergency shelter out of Simmons' newly acquired rental property. Touring space on 3/20/20 and 3/23/20 is expected open date.
- 3/18/20: Opened Hilda's Place during the day to residents only
- 3/18/20: Launched conversation with Curt's Café to fill potential food gap while supporting their business.
- 3/18/20: Staff announcement regarding staff member was in contact with an individual who later tested positive for COVID-19.
- 3/17/20: Consolidated all drop-in services to Dewey only
- 3/17/20: Exploring utilization of Lake Street Church space for emergency shelter and a temporary shelter in a residential space
- 3/17/20: Nia Tavoularis quoted in [Chicago Tribune article](#) regarding homeless shelters and service providers response to COVID-19
- 3/16/20: Began new staffing pattern with most employees working remotely
- 3/16/20: Outlined requests to the city to create solutions for homeless population: handwashing stations, bathroom access, motel vouchers, emergency shelters in shuttered community spaces.
- 3/16/20: Announced location consolidation publicly
- 3/15/20: Evanston declares state of emergency
- 3/15/20: Interfaith Action host last night of Emergency Overnight Shelter. Continue morning hospitality. Do take out containers, provided by Connections, for evening meals.
- 3/15/20: Mayor instituted Evanston COVID-19 Task Force. Betty Bogg serves on task force. Monique Jones (ECF) is non-profit community point person.
- 3/14/20: Updated website with COVID-19 Response and Opportunities to Support page



# connections

FOR THE HOMELESS

- 3/13/20: Evanston Public Libraries close
- 3/11/20: Milestone Celebration postponed. Modified drop-in services with limited length of visit, no laundry, case management by appointment, psych clinic by appointment.
- 3/11/20: Evanston Area COVID-19 Community Support Facebook Page launched and generates support for Connections
- 3/10/20: Added mandatory handwashing stations at both facilities. Asked people to not volunteer if they showed signs of illness, traveled within the last 2 weeks, or fell into the high-risk categories. Updated to meal drop off only.
- 3/9/20: Infectious Disease Teams Channel created in Management Team
- 3/9/20: Discussed moving forward with 3/12/20 Milestone with Pastor Dillard
- 3/2/20: First special senior management team meeting regarding COVID planning