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Despite turbulence in State and federal funding, local non-profit Connections for the Homeless continues turnaround by adding new positions and developing a bold strategic plan.

What is the biggest barrier that prevents people who are experiencing homelessness from moving off the streets? Answer: A lack of affordable housing. That's why Connections for the Homeless, the Northshore's only organization serving individuals, families, and youth who are experiencing homelessness, is doubling down by expanding its leadership team and focusing its new strategic plan on tackling this seemingly intractable problem.

The organization has created two new positions, Manager of Advocacy and Manager of Community & Shelter Programs to address the issues of housing affordability and housing readiness at the systemic and programmatic levels. Additionally, the organization recruited Nia Tavoularis, formerly Philanthropy Director at WBEZ (Chicago's NPR Station), to accelerate private fundraising for the organization's expansion efforts.

In mid-July, Sue Loellbach, formerly the Director of Development at Connections, will take on the new role of Manager of Advocacy. Betty Bogg, Executive Director of Connections, says, "Without systemic change that creates more affordable housing in Evanston and elsewhere on the Northshore, Connections is working with one hand tied behind its back. We cannot prevent families from becoming homeless or move more people into housing unless more affordable housing becomes available. It is our responsibility and opportunity to tackle this issue head-on. Sue is a proven leader in the advocacy space, and the Board of Directors and I are confident that she will continue to have an impact."

Additionally, Connections recently hired Sallamah Aliah, formerly of Esperanza, into the new position of Manager of Community & Shelter Programs. Ms. Bogg says, "Sallamah will provide leadership for the programs where participants first encounter us, including our street-outreach program, our drop-in center, and our shelter, Hilda's Place. She will ensure that these programs work in coordination to move participants towards housing, while providing supportive services that include onsite healthcare, vocational, and educational support."

The addition of the two new positions and the focus on increasing private philanthropy are part of Connections' developing strategic plan and the turnaround effort that the organization has been undergoing for the past two years. Ms. Bogg says, "Considering the tumultuous State of Illinois budgeting process and leadership at the Federal level, which states that poverty is a 'state of mind,' Connections for the Homeless is forced to take bold steps to help those members of our community who are the most vulnerable and overlooked."

She continues "Without housing, how can we expect people to take care of themselves or their families? How do they get and keep jobs or make doctor appointments? And if there is no affordable housing to be had, then what do we expect people to do? With the support of our philanthropic partners, our organizational partners, and the incredibly engaged and supportive community that is Evanston and the Northshore, we know that Connections can prevent more families and individuals from becoming homeless and house more people who are already on the streets."



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About Connections for the Homeless

Connections is working to end homelessness by preventing people from losing their homes, housing those who are homeless, and helping each client to reach the greatest possible level of self-sufficiency. Programs include re-housing, permanent supportive housing, education and employment, homelessness prevention, and health services for the homeless. Hilda's Place is Connections' transitional shelter. Our House is Connections' residential programs for youth aged 18 to 24. Based in Evanston, Connections serves 31 communities in north suburban Cook County.