“My name is James. I am Colombian and I immigrated to the United States with zero knowledge in computer science. I worked at Pizza Hut as a delivery driver and made a delivery to Onward House at 600 N. Leavitt St. where I learned that this wonderful place would change my life forever.

I had my first contact with a computer from Professor Mauricio Blanco. Mauricio taught me how to use the computer mouse, basic internet, and Microsoft Office. The knowledge that I acquired from then on was very important to apply for and enter university. In 2011 I obtained a degree in AAS-CIS-Computer Hardware Information Systems.

As thanks to Onward House, I volunteered in their computer classes, as I have also been a teacher in that area. I now work at the University of San Agustín in the area of Technical Support of Financial Support. My job is to keep the institution up-to-date with federal and state programs.

Now I also have my BS-CIS-Network Systems Administrator degree. My next project is to start the Master’s degree in Database Security in the spring of 2020.

From the first day at Onward House, I set goals and today I can say they have been fulfilled.

“I am very grateful to my teacher and friend Mauricio, Mr. Mario Garcia, and all the people there who help so much.

Thank you very much.”

James

*With permission, this letter has been edited slightly for publication.*
FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Friends,

Chicago is a world-class city built by immigrants. Since our founding in 1868, Onward Neighborhood House has been refuge and community center for hundreds of thousands of newcomers who left their home county and arrived in Chicago to work, open businesses, educate their children, and become American citizens. Our work continues to make that vision a reality:

• As the city of Chicago moves forward with universal pre-K, we will continue to provide early childhood education and expand our home-based program.
• We recently launched The Bounce in Logan Square - an affordable yet highly-visible space for minority entrepreneurs to grow their businesses in a rapidly changing community. Our entrepreneurship incubator, The Lab, has had nearly 40 students complete business plans with the larger goal of building sustainable wealth and jobs in the community.
• In today’s political climate we have stepped up to fear by partnering with agencies who can provide more in-depth legal guidance for those residents seeking to become citizens.
• Next year we will use our resources to ensure that our community participates in the census so that no barrier – time, technology, or anxiety - will stop them from being counted.

Your support of our mission changes the lives of hundreds of families and individuals each year. From our new American citizen Efrain, to Evelyn, who knows when school is closed her child still has safe place to go, to the hundreds of families who use our food pantry to cover their most basic needs...Because of you we can help make the American dream a reality, not just for immigrants, but anyone who seeks our support to thrive in our community. Thanks to you, we will be here for them.

Thank you for your support,

Mario F. Garcia
Executive Director

PARENT FEEDBACK

“I love this center because they treat my children like family...all of my children have been a part of this program.”

“My son had a problem with his speech and his progress has become so much better for him and for me. This program has helped him to go to school.”

“What I like the most is that my kids are taken out on field trips and to the park and that they are also picked up from school.”
Focused on Social-Emotional Wellness: Selected School-Age program students took part in an 8-week improv-based pilot program with our partner Poverty Alleviation Charities to help students build confidence through meditation and improvisational theater games.

2020 Vision: We’re adding We Thinkers! social-emotional curriculum enhancement to our Early Childhood Education program. This curriculum will give teachers new tools and learning experiences to help children with their behavior.

Support Services & Engagement: Our Food Pantry distributed 66,207 lbs of food from the Greater Chicago Food Depository, plus additional donations of food from volunteers and partners.

Partnerships: We provided workshops on topics related to immigration, immigration rights, and citizenship. We are responsive to community needs through partnerships including Latinos Progresando for immigration workshops, Instituto Del Progresso Latino for Financial Literacy and Credit workshops, CTA for hiring events, City of Chicago for the City Key.

2020 Vision: A partnership with Healthcare Alternative Systems to provide a part time mental health professional on-site for adult education students and parents so they can get the care in a trusted environment.

Workforce & Technology: Approximately 150 walk-ins were served with technology access for specific needs, or connected to referrals for other nonprofit partners. Overall, 1,027 individuals enrolled in our Adult Education classes. Nearly 60 individuals participated in more than one class, most commonly enrolling in English as a Second Language and Computer Training. Data taken during enrollment indicates our students earn an average income of $9,616, with 39% unemployed.

2020 Vision: Continue to partner with organizations who can provide individual workshops and trainings to the community.

Entrepreneurship: Since our launch last year, ninety people have signed up for The Lab, our entrepreneurship class, and 38 have completed their business plan and pitched it to a panel of professionals for feedback, funding, and connections. Many have moved forward with their business plans. In September, we launched the Bounce, a retail accelerator for those ready for a highly visible, affordable retail space.

2020 Vision: Continue to address barriers to entrepreneurship. We will place two additional businesses into The Bounce, and utilize the space for pop-up markets and other related events.
Events & Support

Our biggest of thank yous to our presenting sponsor Inteliquent for hosting The Onward House Golf Tournament at Ravisloe Country Club.

We appreciate the support of DLA Piper as our major sponsor, and our reception sponsors Century Link and Wintrust bank. And we’d like to thank our cart sponsors GTT and Cushman & Wakefield. Thank you to our hole sponsors and all those who also donated individually to our Golf Outing. This event supports our capital campaign which mobilized our move to serve the under-resourced Belmont Cragin community. We look forward to seeing everyone again in 2020.

What will you do with your extra day? Onward House is hosting its annual gala on Leap Day 2020! Join us for music, dancing, food, and refreshments as we celebrate the power of people coming together to open doors to improve lives and uplift communities through our unique bend of services.

Saturday, February 29, 2020
7 PM at Revel Fulton Market
1215 W Fulton Market

Take the stress out of holiday shopping with gala tickets for friends and family while making a lasting impact on Onward House.
Individual tickets - $150
Tables of 8 - $1,200
Tables of 10 - $1,500

nightofbrightfutures.org

The holiday season is the time Onward House receives the most donations for our annual fund, which supports our work throughout the year.

Use Facebook or let us create a personal fundraising page, where friends and family can donate to Onward House.

If you’d like to set up an online fundraiser, please send an email to Nikki Way at nway@onwardhouse.org, or call (773) 622-3215.

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