(Translated) My name is Karla and through this email I would like to thank all of the employees of Onward House and the donors who support this school for the support given to our family in such difficult times. Your calls to know how my husband’s health was going, the word of encouragement, the food pantries, and the financial help with the rent are the things that we will never forget the anguish that we had. God and you made our load lighter now my husband is recovering at home and we wish the same for all who are suffering from this virus and we hope you all are well. - Karla

(Translated) We're very grateful to Onward House for all the support they have given us in these difficult times during the pandemic, despite having no family in this country, we feel in you a helping hand. - Melba

**New Donation Match!**

We’ve been awarded a $20,000 match for new donations by the Paul M. Angell Foundation. Donate today!

Please help us spread the word to new donors.

*Drawing by Diego from the School Age program.*
Dear Friends,

Belmont Cragin, the resilient and diverse community that Onward Neighborhood House calls home, has been impacted greatly in 2020.

Reports and experience have shown that we are at an intersection of inequity, topping the lists in the city of COVID-19 cases, first time unemployment, and lack of access to the technology needed to participate in online learning, request relief resources, remote work, and more. We are seeing a need for increased capacity and resources to address these issues.

Since March, we’ve grown the number of families and individuals served by our food pantry, helped small businesses request and secure Payment Protection Program loans, and increased the amount of time available for childcare to essential worker parents.

As we prepare for the winter, we are adding more resources for the residents of Belmont Cragin. We have established partnerships with CommunityHealth to open a telemedicine micro-site at our center and Lurie Children's Hospital to provide mobile healthcare for children. We are also expanding our offerings for digital literacy classes in an effort to continue chipping away at the digital divide.

We have been able to respond to the needs of our community as a direct result of the support we have received from our donors. We will only get through this pandemic by working together, and we are truly grateful for our funders, partners, participants, volunteers, and neighbors. A special thank you to the foundations who released us from specific program obligations or gave additional funding to support us during this crisis.

Thank you for your support.

Mario F. Garcia
Executive Director
Onward Neighborhood House
(773) 622-3215
mfgarcia@onwardhouse.org

The Food Pantry

The number of people who use our food pantry continues to rise. In the first months of the pandemic, usage went up 316%, with lines wrapping around the block. With new contact-free procedures, increased need, and limited supplies, we relied on friends of Onward House who jumped to action to organize and deliver food to the community.

In partnership with the Greater Chicago Food Depository, in October we broke records, serving 893 households and 3,503 individuals.

Please see our “Get Involved” page in this letter on how you can volunteer for the food pantry!

The Impact on Families

The ripple effects of the pandemic will last the longest for families with few resources. In March, we made hundreds of phone calls to collect data on community needs, childcare arrangements, financial situations, technology needs, and provided referrals where necessary. Our recent survey data shows that:

- 85% of the people we were in contact with were laid off or lost their jobs — they are cleaners, caregivers, food and restaurant workers, spa/salon workers, and factory workers.
- Over half of the people we surveyed reported difficulty paying for their expenses, including rent, utilities, and grocery bills.

We’re grateful to the United Way and Chicago Community Trust Chicago Community COVID-19 Response Fund, Linda Swift, and Dan Grewe for spearheading initiatives that allowed us to provide cash assistance to keep families stabilized in a time of wage loss, illness, and uncertainty.

The Impact on Entrepreneurs

Small businesses need immediate and ongoing support to access financial assistance, learn digital skills, and manage changes to their income. We are working with a graduate of The Lab, JCK Boutique, to help her get back on her feet by reducing her rental costs by 78% through rented space at The Bounce.

- Currently, five businesses have had approved PPP loans through Onward House’s application assistance.
- We have provided over a dozen digital literacy courses to parents, businesses, and job seekers.
Innovative Solutions

Food access + small business support: income for restaurants and a free meal for families is a double win! This summer, two local restaurants, Latin Patio and Americas Grill, were paid through a Lavin Foundation grant to prepare 840 'free' meals for Onward House families.

Healthcare access: a partnership with CommunityHealth will bring a telehealth micro-site to our Onward House campus, where uninsured patients can attend virtual check-ups closer to their home.