A Hub for Helping: Welcoming New Arrivals

For many years, whoever answered the door at Onward House became a helping hand. Whether it was a receptionist or our Executive Director, we would take the time to translate a letter or make a phone call to another agency. As Belmont Cragin has seen an increase in immigrants settling in the community, we are fortunate to have increased our capacity to serve more people by becoming an official Illinois Immigrant & Refugee Welcoming Center.

The Welcoming Center has quickly grown to become the neighborhood’s one-stop-shop for people seeking guidance in acclimating to life in Chicago. Now we are able to provide a new depth of service, and since June 2021, have resolved 55 crisis cases.

For example, we recently welcomed four families from Colombia, who live together in one basement apartment to save money while the parents look for work. They came to Onward House looking for help. In one meeting, we were able to provide:

- Connections to essential services like our on-site food pantry, where parents could pick out food, clothing, and toiletries.
- Connections to a trusted employment agency to help them find work.
- Assistance applying for children's medical benefits.
- Information on rights as Immigrants & Refugees.
- Toys for the children.

The Welcoming Center serves an average of 180 people each month who are looking for similar help. We received a thank you letter from a mom who arrived from Venezuela with her daughter:

"We recently arrived at the City of Chicago and we would like to appreciate Onward Neighborhood House and its staff members for all the support provided with humanistic effort. They have listened to all our needs and provided guidance. Currently, we receive from them: food, computer classes, medical attention, workshops, and more. I hope they continue with such generous labor. Kind Regards, Daisy"

How you can help: Host a drive for toiletries, diapers, and other household goods for us to distribute.

Funding is provided in part by the Illinois Department of Human Services, Office of Welcoming Centers for Refugee and Immigrant Services.
Friends,

It is incredibly humbling to lead Onward Neighborhood House into what feels like a new era of mission-focused work. It is unfortunate that we are seeing increases in the need for basic needs services and the creation of new services like Mental Health support. But, thanks to supporters like you, we are able to adapt to meet these emerging needs.

Through the process of developing our strategic plan, we’ve been able to hear from supporters, clients, staff, and volunteers about the opportunities and challenges that will guide the future work of Onward House. Just as we support the community, we will focus on looking internally to support our own staff, who have worked courageously throughout the pandemic to support the vulnerable families we serve.

We have recently welcomed adult learners and parents back into our center. We are now offering three in-person technology classes, as well as ESL and GED classes through Wright College. Adult learners who have found that virtual learning works best for them can still access classes virtually. We look forward to hosting more in-person events this summer. We hope you will join us as we announce those opportunities.

We hope that you will continue to support us with your words of encouragement, connections to other organizations, donations, and volunteer time.

Thank you for your support,

Mario F. García
Executive Director
Onward Neighborhood House
(773) 622-3215

Ps. Save the Date! Join us for our Golf Outing on September 15, 2022, at Ravisloe Golf Club. Our scramble starts at 1 pm!

Meet our New Board Members

Emily Ann Taylor
Principal, teenyBIG

Derrick Cabrera
Manager of Strategy and Government Relations, Erie Family Health Centers

Penny Wallingford
Vice President, Special Assets & CRA, Devon Bank

"Onward House is an organization with a truly local mission - helping neighbors in a holistic way. The challenges our neighbors face can't be solved with small bandaids, Onward House knows this and supports people in need with inclusive, wrap-around services."

"I truly want to make a difference and bring new, exciting, and needed programs to Onward Neighborhood House."

“Early Childhood Education and wrap around support to caregivers are programs that are close to my heart. I am impressed by how Onward House was able to pivot and be responsive to changing community needs during COVID by partnering with CommunityHealth to offer a tele-visit clinic.”
Our new Special Education Department is making an impact on the children we serve. Since joining us in the late summer of 2021, Dr. Thier has been hard at work building out support systems that address the gaps in services we see many children in our program face when additional services and outside supports are needed.

Dr. Thier works with teachers to provide a more inclusive classroom through the use of visuals, has helped translate complicated Individualized Education Plan’s (IEP’s) into one-page documents in parents’ native languages, and been a partner in the enrollment process when special needs are suspected.

Parents have been very happy with the support the program provides. One parent cried upon finding out her child would finally have a safe place to learn and grow. Many parents, like Corali, have sent notes.

"I wanted to reach out and thank you for preparing the box of Now, Then practices for Jeamilette. I received them on Friday during the conference. I really, really appreciate the time and dedication you pour into helping my baby girl!" - Corali

Celebrating our New Head Start Partner

We are pleased to add a new partner, McKinney's Early Learning Academy to our Head Start program. Located in the Austin neighborhood, McKinney's is a private childcare center that recently partnered with Onward House to offer a Head Start program to 3-5-year-olds. They also offer child care for children 6 weeks- to 2, and School-Age 5-12 years old.

The Food Pantry has Moved, Again!

The client choice food pantry is back! If you have been following the journey of our food pantry, you’ll remember that we’ve seen a sustained increase in the need for food and other basic essentials. Prior to the pandemic, we were serving up to 60 families weekly. Today, we see up to 250 families coming to the food pantry each week.

After a year of operating the pantry from our Adult Education building, this April we again moved the food pantry to a neighboring building, which has allowed us to reopen an in-person client choice pantry that includes space for displaying donated essentials like household goods and clothing. Response from our customers has been very positive. A return to picking out their own foods ensures that no items go to waste, and bags are filled with only the goods they want to carry home.

How you can help: We need volunteers every other Wednesday morning, every Thursday from 2 - 6 PM.
Stay Involved This Summer

How Your Donation Can Help

$1,000
Quality supplies for a whole year for one classroom, including items that parents can take home to extend the learning experience.

$800
Provides one month of subsidized affordable low-risk space for business owners at The Bounce retail accelerator.

$500
One year of supplies for computer classes. Including: Laptop repairs, paper, printing.

$400
Supports one week of food pantry administration including ordering, deliveries, volunteer coordination, and distribution.

$260
Ten packages of diapers to hand out at the food pantry, our most requested non-food item.

$100
One hour of mental health consulting or speech therapy.

Food Pantry & Basic Needs Support

Supply drives are the easiest way to support Onward House from anywhere. We are always seeking the following items to distribute to families:

- School Supplies - pencils, crayons, markers, paper, scissors, glue, etc.
- Toiletries - shampoo, conditioner, soap, deodorant, lotion
- Food Pantry - shelf-stable items
- Toys (ages 0 - 12)
- Diapers (sizes 3 - 5)

Join the Auxiliary Board

The Auxiliary Board is a service and fundraising organization comprised of dedicated volunteers for the purpose of supporting our work. The Auxiliary Board is an excellent way to help serve the needs of the Belmont Cragin community.

- Network with other civically-minded adults
- Help Onward House raise funds
- Be an ambassador for the Onward House Mission

To inquire, please email Nikki Way at nway@onwardhouse.org.

We've Added an Easy Way to Donate Stock!

Donating stock can be one of the most tax-efficient ways to give. By donating appreciated stock that you’ve held for over a year you can save up to 20% in capital gains taxes and deduct the charitable donation on your federal income taxes. To understand the full tax benefits of giving appreciated stock please consult with your tax professional.

We’ve partnered with Overflow to make donating stock online quick, easy, and secure, so you can make a transaction in less than 5 minutes. Donate today at: app.overflow.co/onwardhouse

To inquire, please email Nikki Way at nway@onwardhouse.org.