What began as a drop-in visit to our Food Pantry has led to Onward House securing a spacious new building. When Lyle Allen, Program Officer at The Reva and David Logan Foundation, attended one of our Thursday food distributions, he saw the space constraints of the pantry, but he also saw the potential that adequate capacity could bring to our participants.

In June of 2022, The Reva and David Logan Foundation gave us access to a 21,000 square foot building at 2644 N. Central Avenue, just two blocks from our current buildings in Belmont Cragin.

This space will not only allow us to expand our Food Pantry, but will also provide additional space for our Illinois Welcoming Center for Immigrants and Refugees, our collocated Health Care Clinic run by CommunityHealth, a multipurpose Community Center space, and additional programing for the community.

“We saw how if the opportunity was there, Onward House could do so much more. Anybody who wants fresh produce should have access to it,” said Lyle Allen.

The new space aligns with The Reva and David Logan Foundation’s campaign to expand access in underserved communities to essential goods and services: “This is part of a dream of what The Reva and David Logan Foundation is hoping to launch throughout Chicago neighborhoods on the South and West Sides, where there is serious need for access to healthful foods, in addition to community resource centers. This is a game-changer for Belmont Cragin,” said Allen.
Friends,

This year promises to be one of significant growth for Onward House. The biggest expansion will be adding a new 21,000 square foot building to our space, thanks to our partnership with The Reva and David Logan Foundation. This space, located just two blocks away at 2644 North Central Avenue, will allow us to significantly expand programs and resources for the community.

Our Illinois Welcoming Center has been hard at work supporting migrants who were bussed to Chicago from Texas, those traveling on their own, and those being housed temporarily at police stations. Our Welcoming Center staff were recently recognized with the Everyday Hero Award from the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) for consistently going above and beyond in supporting recent arrivals.

We have been hosting events such as our annual Health Fair in August, Fresh Food Popup and Resource Fair in October, a Healthy Homes workshop and Diabetes Day in April, and CityKey ID distribution in June to provide resources and build community here in Belmont Cragin.

Our relationships with local nonprofit organizations, elected officials, volunteers, and supporters have continued to strengthen and we’ve seen an incredible outpouring of care. We are deeply thankful and inspired to have so much support, and we appreciate everyone who has volunteered, donated, or been an advocate for Onward House by spreading the word about our programs.

Thank you for your support!

Mario F. García
Executive Director
Onward Neighborhood House

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**Special Education Updates**

*From Dr. Kimberly Thier, Director of Special Education & Quality Assurance*

Each year, over a quarter of children in Onward House programs have a diagnosed disability. We work with children and their families to build individualized support plans. The graphs to the left show how children with disabilities in our Head Start program have been progressing in six developmental areas. The majority of these children have been "Meeting" or "Exceeding" developmental expectations by the end of Spring 2023.

Even children who scored in the "Below" developmental expectations category made growth within that category.
- Of children from 0-2 years old, percentage growth ranged from 22% to 340%
- Of children from 3-5 years old, percentage growth ranged from 11% to 200%

"My son Kian began attending Onward House’s Early Childhood Education program in October of 2021. The social worker, Daisy, helped me to coordinate his early intervention programs with CPS, and to enroll him in speech therapy at ONH. Since he began working with Pamela and Dr. Kimberly, he has more interest in participating in activities, is more talkative and interactive, and makes an effort to pronounce words correctly. As a first-time mother, I needed this help in navigating the special education system, and the chance to give Kian four additional hours per day of activities and care makes such a difference.” - Karen
On August 31st, 2022, the Onward House IWC team greeted busses full of migrants at North Park Village Nature Center. Organizations from Texas said that migrants were given the choice of taking the bus to Chicago, or being deported. We knew this was a critical moment for the families who were arriving and they were in serious need of our support.

So, our social workers shifted operations to bus stations and a hotel to greet hundreds of migrants who were arriving in the City’s Northwest Side. We went wherever the migrants went to provide Spanish-English interpretation, intakes, coordinate food, and help them settle into their new city.

By midnight, we were assigned to help about 75 families at a hotel. We provided them with transport, interpreting, childcare, set up medical appointments, and delivered meals. Our staff stayed overnight in the hotel with the families to support them through this transition. An additional 300 families arrived a couple of weeks later and everyone was transferred to a hotel on the Northwest Side where we continued to work with the families.

Healthcare is especially important, to treat the trauma of the long journey, and because some migrants arrived with coronavirus and needed immediate isolation housing. Many had reached the end of a journey from Venezuela, having traveled nearly 5,000 miles, much of it on foot, with incredible, heartbreaking stories to tell.

This May, a new wave of migrants arrived to find homeless shelters in the Chicago at capacity, and were sent to sleep in police stations where Onward House staff have been visiting to provide services. Most of our work continues to take place in our center, but we are also working with migrants who are living in Chicago’s 25th District Police Station.

Since we first brought meals, clothes, and emotional support to the families in May, more and more people have been sleeping on the station floors and in cramped hallways. When I go there, I talk with each of them and hear their frustrations, but I also hear how hopeful they are. I feel lucky that we have an experienced IWC team that loves what they do and care about the people we help. We are making a real impact in the community.

Below is a letter from Roxana Montesdeoca, our first full-time IL Welcoming Center employee and the current IWC Support Services Coordinator:

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Supply drives are a great way to support!

We are seeking the following items to distribute to families both through our Food Pantry and our Welcoming Center:

**Hygiene Products:**
- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Soap
- Deodorant
- Lotion
- Baby Powder
- Wipes
- Toothpaste
- Toothbrush
- Vicks
- Hair Brush
- Disposable Menstrual Products

**School Supplies:**
- Pencils
- Crayons
- Markers
- Paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- Headphones

**Food Items:**
- Shelf-Stable Items
- Toys (Ages 0 - 12)
- Diapers (Size 1 - 5)
- Transit: CTA Bus cards

**Emergency:**
- First Aid Kit

How you can help: volunteer at the Food Pantry every other Wednesday morning, and every Thursday from 2 - 6 PM.
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

$500
One year of supplies for computer classes, including laptop repairs, paper, and 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 (this is our most requested non-food item)

$100
One hour of mental health consulting or speech therapy

Adult Education Graduation Ceremony Toasts Success Stories

Professional development is an important part of Onward House’s mission, and we have seen consistent demand for computer, ESL, citizenship, GED, and business skills courses from our community.

In June, students from our 2022-2023 graduating classes were honored in a colorful graduation ceremony. One student, Shelly, wrote the following thank you note:

My name is Shelly, and I am a current student at the Computer Literacy Program taught by Professor Juan Martin.

I am writing to thank you for providing the free Computer Literacy Program to the community. It helped me finish my Associate’s Degree. I was struggling with a Computer Information System class at a community college, and found myself completely lost.

I had expressed my struggles to one of your staff members Pamela Castro, and she referred me to Professor Juan Martin. The computer class was a huge difference. Not only is it free, but Juan is a dedicated teacher. He makes sure everyone understands every single thing that he is explaining—he must notice the confused look on our faces when we don’t understand and are too embarrassed to admit it, and he goes over it again and again, until he sees that satisfied look on our faces.

Thanks to his dedication, and the support of Onward Neighborhood House, I was able to graduate with my Associate’s Degree in May 2023. Please keep providing these free programs, which are making a huge difference in the community.

Truly Grateful,
Shelly

ONH Auxiliary Board Welcoming New Members

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

- Network with other civic-minded adults
- Help Onward House fundraise, volunteer, and support events
- Be an ambassador for the Onward House mission

If interested, please email Emilio Araujo, Director of Development and Communications at earaujo@onwardhouse.org

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