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NORTHWEST CENTER CULTURE

A letter from the executive director

When leaders of the Northwest Neighborhood Federation and Rev. Christine Schrey founded Northwest Side Housing Center in 2003 their aim was clear, "respond to the needs of the community".

20 years later as my time as the leader of
Northwest Center begins to come to an end and
the theme for our 20th anniverasry is Gaining
Clarity, it is fitting that the mission of Northwest
Side Housing Center, now rebranded as
Northwest Center, continues to remain clear,
"respond to the needs of the community".

20 years after NWC was founded, what responding to the needs of the community has naturally evolved, we not only are responding to predatory lending, challenges around housing affordability and sustainability. We are responding even more holistically and comprehensivelly, thinking about the entire community ecosystem and what it means to respond to all of it's most pressing needs.

With seven different programmatic focus areas; community organizing, health equity, housing counseling, financial opporunities, older adults, youth, and parents, our work looks different, but how we respond, through relational community-led organizing, responsive and innovative programs fueled by data-drive decisions all within a racial equity framework remain our core values. As we continue to seek and gain additional clarity around our work, what's clear is the need for this work remains everpresent.

James Rudyk

Executive Director



ADELANTE

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

CEDA

FORECLOSURE PREVENTION COUNSELING

FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYING

WOMEN FORWARD

INCOME SUPPORTS



participants graduated from Adelante, 2021-2022

graduates placed in jobs through our partner CARA from the Adelante program

Adelante

Adelante is an innovative program designed specifically for Latines that offers workforce development and digital & financial skills to obtain gainful long-term employment.

In October of 2018, NWSCDC Rental Counselor Karina Aguilar came to NWC as a community member seeking help to pay her utilities. During the initial assessment of her needs, Aguilar was offered the opportunity to participate in the first virtual Adelante cohort.

Aguilar enrolled in the Adelante computer literacy program through UnidosUS, where she acquired computer knowledge including Microsoft Excel and PowerPoint. After mastering Adelante, she then enrolled in Women Forward Chicago. Through this program, she learned financial skills like banking, credit, insurance, smart shopping, and how to develop clear financial goals. As a result, Aguilar was offered a position as a caller with Chicago Connected, her first permanent job in six years, and has since accepted a role as our affiliate organization, the Northwest Side Community Development Corporation's, as a Rental Counselor.

NWSCDC RENTAL COUNSELOR KARINA AGUILAR

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Reimbursement and Benefits Enrollment to ensure residents are receiving the support that is available to the community.

\$100,000

NWC's Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) disseminated nearly \$100,000 in light and gas benefits to families who experienced financial hardship throughout 2022

In 2022, our Income Support program for lighting and gas through the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County (CEDA) had a 95.37% success rate, total benefit of \$324,627, and an average benefit per customer of \$1,050

FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYING

Northwest Center offers free group workshops and individual counseling to assist residents in exploring the home-buying process, how to build credit, and how to close the deal.



The NWC Housing Counseling Center's First-Time Homebuying (FTHB) team provided down payment assistance, supported the purchase of 10 homes, helped 10 individuals become mortgage-ready in 90 days, and hosted 21 workshops serving 217 participants.

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DIGITAL LITERACY COACHING

PARENT UNIVERSITY

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

TEEN REACH

Digital Literacy Coaching

Since 2022, Chicago Connected has offered Digital Literacy classes to community residents through an 8-part course focused on teaching computer literacy, how to navigate websites, and how to find online resources. Since the beginning of the classes, 215 individuals successfully graduated the cohort.

of participants report that they were very confident or confident with technology after leaving the program

Steinmetz

The Sustainable Community Schools Initiative (SCS) brings arts, recreation, music, and mentorship activities to Steinmetz College Prep High School. Students are offered an array of after school activities and clubs to pursue their creative interests.

"I help oversee all after-school programs at Steinmetz," SCS Coordinator Jesse Livingston said. "I've seen how it benefits students in a lot of different ways. It's a safe space to be themselves and explore their interests. They also get a break from the regular teacher versus student dynamic.

The Sustainable Community Schools Initiative (SCS) provides a form of education that the school doesn't provide, like a DJ class, or music production."

Activities like the DJ class have allowed students to flex their creativity while learning new skills.

"I feel like DJing is a great way to learn how to read people and play music the whole crowd can listen to," Steinmetz senior Eduardo said. "I feel we've done a good job of merging interests because our school is primarily Latinx and black students."



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Parent University

Parent University brings free resources, programs, and classes to parents and the Belmont Cragin community. Opportunities include ESL classes, GED prep, nutrition and wellness, and CPR.

After seeing a flyer at her son's graduation for an art class hosted by Parent University, community member Luz Granados took a leap and began her journey with parent programming.

"At the time I was dealing with depression and wanted to do something different," Granados said. "Ever since then, I have been here participating in many workshops like Let's Paint, self-care workshops, yoga, Zumba, and computer classes. My favorite workshop is art, you come here and you just paint. Erika puts music on, it's relaxing, like art therapy."

Granados has also participated in Parent University's Digital Literacy Course, which is designed to help individuals learn the basics of navigating a computer.

"I took the course and was given a laptop at the end of it. I'm doing things I've never done before like sending emails and connecting to Zoom for yoga classes," Granados said.

"I want to let people know to not be afraid to try something new. A lot of people are afraid to come out, so focused on housework and kids, but sometimes you need a break and to make time for yourself to explore different things. Just because you take these workshops doesn't mean you're taking time away from your family, you're learning things that you can bring back to them."







Teen REACH

Teen REACH (Responsibility, Education, Achievement, Caring & Hope) provides a safe, positive, consistent space for students grades 8-12 to grow together as students and leaders. Teens receive academic and emotional support, and develop meaningful friendships within the community.

While searching for ways to spend her time during the pandemic, Youth Leadership Council Member Joceline Pinedo discovered Teen REACH.

"I found it to be a good experience," Pinedo said. "It's been a big eye-opener and given me the opportunity to get to know the community, people, and the resources that are offered better."

After participating in Teen REACH, Pinedo found herself applying positive changes to her life, both in and and out of the classroom.

"It's helped me grow as a person and come out of my comfort zone," Pinedo said. "I've made big changes in life that have helped me in school that I learned through Teen REACH, like time-management skills, how to keep myself on track with school work, and how to grow my self-esteem."

Teen REACH is an opportunity for the youth of Belmont Cragin to get more involved with their community.

"Take the chance to come to Teen REACH," Pinedo said. "It will help get you out of your comfort zone, learn how to be comfortable speaking your opinion, and realize what you have to say really does matter, not only to people already around you but to everyone in your community as well."

92%

of students said they have chances to learn things that will be useful when they get older (like cooking, working, and helping others) all or most of the time after completing Teen REACH

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BELMONT CRAGIN YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

HOMEOWNERS UNITED

IMMIGRATION

LADDERS OF OPPORTUNITY

PARENT MENTOR PROGRAM

TRANSPORTATION





Parent Mentors

Parent Mentor Martha Alanis was at a back-to-school party when she met Maricela Mercado, a Parent Mentor Coordinator who first told her about the program and its goal to help teachers in the classrooms.

"At first I was nervous going into the classroom, but now the students are excited to see me and ask for help," Alanis said. "The Parent Mentor Program is great because you can help students who are behind."

Northwest Center programs help residents learn new skills and experience opportunities that further their careers.

"I'm really blessed because the program has helped me to get my teacher's assistant license and also helped me to apply with CPS, and now I have a job at Schubert," Alanis said.

The Parent Mentor Program employs parents to work as mentors within the classrooms of 8 Chicago Public Schools, and invites community members to join the program.

"I'm really glad that I did the Parent Mentor Program, it helped me to be successful in my life and now I'm a better person because of it," Alanis said.

PARENT MENTOR PARTICIPANT MARTHA ALANIS

PlayStreets

Throughout the 7 PlayStreets events during the 2022 summer, we worked alongside community members and churches to offer resources to community youth, families, and residents, including resource tables with essential supplies. In total, we served 1,400 community members.





1,400





Transportation Work

Throughout 2022, our Transportation Team held community bike rides with the goal to bring together residents while surveying ways to create a safer and more accessible Belmont Cragin.

The Transportation team also participated in many panels, with the mission to appeal to government officials and other members of the community.

Community Organizer and former Belmont Cragin Youth Leadership Council member Zair Menjivar took the lead during an American Planning Association panel to discuss the most influential practices that took place during the Northwest Center's transportation campaign to build safer biking infrastructure in Belmont Cragin.

"Being part of the panel was an excellent experience because it really was the first time both the community and CDOT [Chicago Department of Transportation] were able to reflect together on the crucial steps that were taken to bring this project about, with the hopes of inspiring other future planners," Menjivar said.

Menjivar also spoke on the need for community residents to be engaged during every step of the planning process.

367

Our Transportation Team hosted over 20 community bike rides throughout 2022 with 367 riders designed to facilitate connections, identify community issues, & build power, all while providing free transportation

Immigration Advocacy

Our staff and team of community navigators have been a part of efforts to welcome and support asylum seekers arriving from the border. In October of 2022, the Biden administration announced the expansion of Title 42 and a concurrent parole program for Venezuelans, effectively banning asylum at the border and excluding many from the parole program due to its narrow window of eligibility. NWC staff volunteered each week during November and December to assist in filing information for the asylum seekers and passed out meals, clothing and supplies.

1,331

Our Immigration Team reached 1,331 people with workshops and flyers, referred 64 people to free legal assistance, and trained 11 community navigators on immigration rights and resources.



CRI TRAINING

COMPRANDO RICO Y SANO

COMMUNITY
HEALTH WORKERS

MENTAL HEALTH



CRI Training

The Community Resilience Initiative (CRI) focuses on creating a community conversation about resilience and aims to provide community members with science-based insights to promote and cultivate resilience. Using trauma-informed principles, the course teaches individuals to systematically create the positive environment that is essential for lasting success.

"Working as a data analyst over the past few years, I became hyperaware of how our own perspectives and decisions affect the way we understand and communicate the data," CRI participant Minyoung Do said. "How do we tell a story with data without othering or patronizing the people we serve? How do I approach my work with more empathy and compassion? I have been working on recognizing my own bias in the process of collecting, analyzing, and presenting information. Learning more about the trauma-informed approach will allow me to be more intentional about my decision in data work. Throughout this course, I hope to gain more knowledge to be more sensitive about the impact of trauma on the people and communities we are engaging, ultimately contributing to achieving our equity goals."

CRI PARTICIPANT MINYOUNG DO

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Community Health Workers

Community Health Workers communicate the concepts of health equity to their communities, get feedback on the critical health equity challenges residents face, find out available resources, and assess gaps in programs and services in the community that are needed. They also conduct focus groups with non-profit leaders, block club members, school houses of worship, principals, community residents, youth, seniors, and others to dispel misconceptions about health equity in the community.









Comprando Rico y Sano

Comprando Rico y Sano charlas are informative sessions dedicated to educating community members on how small changes in our food choices and the portions we eat can help us live healthier lifestyles. Topics discussed also include

how to save money by pre-planning your shopping trip, how to achieve balanced nutrition by preparing meals at home, and the process and benefits of grocery shopping online.

184

residents surveyed to better understand our community's health needs and priorities 224

residents participating in charlas, or healthy cooking workshops, led by our community health workers, hosting a total of 14 workshops and averaging 16 residents per charla

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KPSC HEALTH & WELLNESS PROGRAMS

READY, SET, BANK

COMMON GROUND

OLDER ADULT OUTREACH

BRIDGE BUILDERS



Bridge Builders

Kelvyn Park Senior Center's Bridge Builders Program (formerly "Race Matters") launched at the start of 2022 with the theme of "Relationship Skill-Building." With the help of our partners at the Chicago Commission for Human Relations, older adults have come together to during workshops to learn about listening skills, patience, respect, communication, self-awareness, gender equity, and conflict resolution—all to help build bridges of friendship across cultural and racial differences. Bridge Builders meets twice a month at KPSC and includes raffles and prizes

"I'm excited to see this group evolve from Race Matters now to Bridge Builders, to include issues such as personal growth and even gender equity, and especially to see new folks joining and feeling safe to express their feelings," Director of Older Adult Programs Linda Peters said.

DIRECTOR OF OLDER ADULT PROGRAMS LINDA PETERS

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Kelvyn Park Senior Center

The Northwest Center operates out of Kelvyn Park Senior Center (KPSC), offering free box lunches daily, a fitness center, exercise classes, a computer lab, knitting classes, arts and crafts, Bingo, Loteria, Zumba, and chair yoga. KPSC also offers financial support such as SNAP, bus passes, and energy assistance.

Cynthia Gaines (top left) joined the Kelvyn Park Senior Center community in 2022 and has since graduated from Common Ground and become an Older Adult Ambassador.

"The Staff at KPSC are dynamic and go above and beyond to help older adults," Gaines said. "For older adults who may be unsure of coming to KP and scared of the unknown, just come for one day. Introduce yourself, and you will see the warmth of this community. I have made good friends here, and there is always something to look forward to."









Common Ground

Common Ground is a program launched in 2020 that focuses on connecting older adults with their peers to build relationships, reduce isolation, learn computer skills, and receive a free laptop at the end of the program for continued education.

In 2022, Barbara, an older adult who lives alone, gained more than just digital training during her experience with Common Ground. Her Older Adult Outreach (OAO) caller told her about the program and how it addresses social isolation, resilience, digital literacy, youth engagement, health, and finances. Barbara enrolled and attended a workshop on nutrition and told her friend, Brenda, who also enrolled. Their friendship continued to grow as they learned together and our OAO callers were able to connect them to food resources and ongoing computer training after they graduated.

Ready, Set, Bank

Supported by Capital One, Northwest Center provides Ready, Set, Bank, an online banking class, for older adults to gain the digital skills needed to maintain financial independence and protection.

34

laptops were provided to participants from our partner Compudopt, for the 2022 Spring & Fall English and Spanish cohorts of Common Ground, which includes Ready, Set, Bank

80%

With the support from Ready, Set, Bank, 80% of both English and Spanish participants practiced using their computers to do online banking, including setting up autopay, checking balances, paying bills, and making transfers to and from their checking accounts

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Staff outings

Northwest Center strives to create spaces outside of the usual work environment for folks to get together and celebrate holidays, the achievements of coworkers, and take the time to enjoy each others company. In 2022, NWC held outings such as a 2000's themed party packed with nostalgic activities and music, a summer picnic, a Halloween crafting party, and our annual end-of-year holiday dinner.

"As someone who was new to Northwest Center in 2022, it was refreshing to be greeted by such a welcoming and positive work environment full of individuals who are eager to enjoy these types of moments with each other," Marketing and Individual Giving Manager Julia Swibes said.

NWC has also introduced a Party Planning Committee comprised of different staff members and directors who work together to create these outings that allow staff to connect with other coworkers who they may not work with on a regular basis.

Monthly meetings

Each month, NWC meets as an organization to discuss upcoming events, important talking points, and create a space for different teams to give updates on their programs and processes. At times, these meetings are held at NWC affiliated locations to introduce and familiarize the teams to the different work environments throughout NWC.

NWC works with local businesses and often caters Belmont Cragin restaurants to provide diverse food options to staff during meetings.





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Celebrate Home

Celebrate Home is Northwest Center's annual fundraising gala, created to bring together the community and acknowledge the work of those whose mission is to raise the quality of life for youth, parents, older adults, and small business owners in Belmont Cragin.

Each year, NWC works with local vendors to support the event, such as local restaurants, chair and tent rentals, DJs, and breweries to help create an enjoyable atmosphere for attendees.

In 2022, Celebrate Home was held at Riis Park, chosen to be an open, fresh-aired location for community residents to come and enjoy the festivities.





Northwest Side CDC

We continue to build and celebrate with the Northwest Side Community Development Coporation (NWSCDC), our subsidiary organization that was founded in 2019. The NWSCDC provides the Northwest Side and Belmont Cragin with the tools and resources to preserve affordable housing and prevent displacement, and provides business development assistance to local small businesses.

Building Construction

In 2022, NWC and NWSCDC began the process to approve construction updates to the office building, including a new second-floor addition and refreshed modern look. The expansion is underway with an additional \$1.3 million dollar City of Chicago grant to help cover the cost through the Chicago Recovery Grant, which supports workplace improvements, new construction, economic development, and local planning goals. The grant was created to support the City's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and other forms of neighborhood disinvestment.









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CELEBRATE HOME 2023 SPONSORS

\$5,000

BMO Harris Bank Fifth Third Bank Northern Trust First Midwest Bank Community Savings Bank **US Bank**

CIBC

Old National Bank

\$2,500

Associated Bank Wintrust Financial Republic Bank Albany Bank ComEd Hoyne Savings Bank Ocwen

Up to \$1.000

Advocate Aurora Health LISC Chicago **Devon Bank** Marquette Bank SEEK Design

2022 FUNDERS

Associated Bank

BMO Harris Bank

Bright Promises Foundation

Capital One

CEDA

Chicago Cares

Chicago Community Trust

Chicago Connected

Chicago Foundation for Women

Chicago Public Schools

Chicago Department of Public Health

CIBC

City of Chicago Department of Planning & Development:

Community Savings Bank

Cook County Justice Advisory Council

Discover

Field Foundation

Fifth Third Bank

Funders Collaborative for Youth Organizing

Gads Hill Center

Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

Illinois Department of Human Services

Illinois Housing Development Authority

ISBE Parent Mentor Program

Hoyne Bank

Huntington Bank Foundation

Joyce Foundation

JPMorgan Chase

Liberty Bank

LISC

Lurie Children's Hospital

MacArthur Foundation

National Safety Council

National Council on Aging

Ocwen Financial Services

Old National Bank

People for Bikes Foundation

Pierce Family Foundation

Polk Brothers

Republic Bank

The Resurrection Project

Retirement Research Foundation

Richard H. Driehaus Foundation

State Capitol Bill: DCEO

Teen REACH

Together We Heal Illinois

UnidosUS

US Bank

Wells Fargo

West Side United

Wieboldt Foundation

Wintrust Financial

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Raquel Cruz Rebecca Delgado Reshma Dhake

Karen Dizon Angela Fontes

Cliff Gabor Wanda Garcia

Patricia Gill Scott Goldstein

Beatriz Gomez Jose Gomez

Maria Gomez Digna Gonzalez

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Karen Hennessy Cassandra Hernandez Diane Hoskins

Victor Hoskins Terry Iker

Kate Kownacki Charlene Krueger Georgeanne Krueger

Stacey Krueger Joanna Kwiatkowska

Carmen Landecho Allison Leverenz Ana Lorenzana

Lukasik Family Victoria Marquez

Gomez

David McDowell Salvador Mendoza

Robert Miller Sandra Montes Simon Moore

Yuan Moreno Tom Naset

Edna Ongtengco Rachel Patton

Kimberley Pavlock Delia Pena Linda Peters Matt Peters Antonio Pinedo Elizabeth Pollack

Leigh Quinlisk Francisco Ramirez Wilson Ramirez Esteban Rodriguez

Reyna Rodriguez

Jonathan Rogers Migdalia Roldan-Kurtz

Wil Salvador Frances Sanchez Pascual Santiago

Laura Sayen Helen Scanlon

Christine Schrev Jessica Schwartz

Tara Scolire Lauren Shirk

Laura Slabaugh Jacqueline Sotelo Justin Stemler

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Martha Swibes Stephen Swibes

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Jamie Tanen Teska Associates Ryan Thompson

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Roxana Pereira • Financial Coach
Edwin Pinto • Pre-Purchase Counselor
Cecilia Salgado • Income Support Specialist
Migdalia Vazquez • Foreclosure Prevention Counselor
Erica Zepeda • First-Time Homebuyer Program Manager

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING TEAM Jeremy Cuebas • Transportation Organizer

Juvilee Hernandez • Youth Organizer
Kate Kownacki • Immigration Organizer
Ana Lorenzana • Assistant Parent Mentor Organizer
Ernie Lukasik • Community Organizer
Mercy Maceda • Parent Mentor Assistant Organizer
Veronia Tabares • Ladders of Opportunity Organizer

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS & YOUTH TEAM

Erika Amaya • Parent University Manager
Jesse Livingston • Sustainable Community Schools
Manager
Yuan Moreno • Youth Coordinator
Jackie Pinedo • Youth Coordinator
Reyna Rodriguez • Chicago Connected Program Manager
Destiny Rogers • Youth Team Lead

Yeni Pinedo • Director of Community Schools & Youth

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Brian Moro • Health Equity Data Manager
Cindy Santana • Health Equity Resilience Manager

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Marilina Garcia • Older Adult Coordinator

Dave Pfeiffer • Older Adult Outreach Team Manager

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Alejandra Elox

IMMIGRATION PROGRAM CONTRACTOR

Celeste Adame

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Christina Guzman Maricela Mercado M. Isabel Molina Jaime Ponce Erika Rodriguez Angelica Zamarripa

Celeste Adame

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