



THE CHICAGO
HELP
INITIATIVE

Spring 2023 Newsletter

Dear Friends,

It's about the *relationships*.

Making the human connection is what we do best. From our meals to our group activities to our one-on-one assistance, **we provide a dignified and safe setting that allows our guests to feel welcome and at ease**, and helps those who are struggling with isolation and alienation create new and positive relationships.

As an organization, it is our relationships with individuals and businesses in our neighborhoods that **build the volunteer base we depend on to function**. Those relationships were instrumental in enabling us not only to weather a global pandemic, but also to greatly expand our programs and our reach.

Like everyone, the pandemic tested us and challenged the model we had built over two decades. When the city shut down, and our dining room at Catholic Charities closed for 18 months, **we had to find new ways to continue providing meals to people in need**, including the thousands more who were suddenly facing economic hardships and food insecurity and needed our help.

And so we forged new relationships, with **food truck purveyors** and **generous people across the city** who rose to the burgeoning need. We launched our **bag meal program**, **enabling us to provide as many as 5,000 meals a week to hungry people throughout the city**. This in turn led to a number of terrific and mutually dependent relationships with other food providers.

Those relationships were instrumental in the creation of our **[New Foundations program](#)**, where we train volunteers at other organizations to **assist people with housing applications, transportation assistance and other basic services**.

In the last 16 months, we've grown from one site to seven, and aim to add several more

locations before the end of this year. [View our locations on our New Foundations map.](#) (Want to become a New Foundations program volunteer this summer? See more details below.)

In this season of renewal and new growth, we are grateful for **the relationships we have built with each other through acts of service** both large and small. And we approach every day seeking to deepen those human connections.

Please read on for how we are doing just that.

With much gratitude,



Doug Fraser
Executive Director

Delivering Easter Joy to Families Seeking Asylum

Earlier this year, the City of Chicago began housing **families from Latin and South America who are seeking asylum in the U.S.** at the Inn of Chicago, a (formerly) vacant hotel at 162 E Ohio. Presently, **more than 1,000 people are housed in that building—nearly half of whom are children—without proper resources or oversight.**

(Learn more about this growing crisis in this recent [Q&A with CHI's Doug Fraser by former Chicago Tribune columnist Eric Zorn](#)).

Many of these families have been attending our weekly Wednesday meals, and **because of our generous meal sponsors we've been able to accommodate an extra 150+ people (mostly women and young children) at our tables or with hot to-go meals.**

When we learned there were no provisions for Easter for these families, we got to work. We sent out two email requests to our supporters asking if they would assemble **Easter baskets for the children.** We thought we might be able to marshal 250 baskets in time for the holiday.



The response was overwhelming: In less than three weeks, **we collected over 1,000 baskets**, all from volunteers who created them with their own hands and ingenuity.

On Easter day, all 400 kids in the shelter got to enjoy their own Easter basket. We were also able to distribute the other 600



baskets to needy kids through our partner organizations.

It was a beautiful way to celebrate one of the year's most meaningful holidays. And it proved, once again, that **our supporters have the biggest hearts in our city!**

Want to know how you can help asylum seekers in our city? Please read on.



Help Us Provide Meals to Asylum Seekers

As the national and local media are turning their attention to the burgeoning number of asylum seekers coming to Chicago—and the city's struggles to accommodate them—CHI and others have welcomed many of them to our meals.

In recent weeks, in fact, **we have been doubling the amount of food we would normally serve at our Wednesday meals.** And it's not just CHI doing this – so are several other meal providers.

Longtime CHI supporter, Chicago advertising agency DHD, recently created a brief video of our weekly Wednesday meal that demonstrates the increase in the number of people, including these newest arrivals to our city, who are coming to our meals.

[Watch the video.](#)

We are all teaming up to cook more food together – and we are asking for your help.

We need SIX VOLUNTEERS, every day of the week except Sunday, who can pitch in to cook. We need you from 1-4:30 pm Monday-Friday and from 9-11:30 am on Saturday.

You can volunteer once a week or once a month. All the kitchens are in Near North churches and meals are planned and supervised by a professional chef!

Let us know what day(s) and how often you can commit, along with any relevant experience. (Yes, that part-time job in high school washing dishes counts!)

Does this sound like you? If so, please email CHI Board member Dale Ginsberg at

Help Us Build Our Housing Referral Network

Over the next six months, we have a big goal: **to build the best housing referral network in the City of Chicago.**



With our partner organizations in our New Foundations program, we are **preparing a volunteer network** to help people who are experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity **find safe, affordable places to live**. While we won't be doing the actual placement of people, we will **connect them with the best options available**. We'll also be able to answer questions such as:

- Where is the best low-cost market housing?
- How do you apply for Section 8 and how do you find a landlord who accepts it?
- How do you apply for subsidized set-aside units? CHA? HUD? Catholic Charities? Lutheran Social Services? Mercy Housing? The Pines?
- How to find housing for a disabled person? Housing for people who are ill or recovering?
- PSH? RRH? TH? (We'll even be able to explain what those acronyms mean!)

We and our New Foundations partners are seeking a few motivated volunteers who can help do the research, build out our housing database and help us meet our goal. Does that sound like you?

Then we want to hear from you! Please send us an email and let us know your interests and availability at info@chicagohelpinitiative.org.



RUN Mag Mile is Back!

Run Mag Mile®, the ONLY race that shuts down downtown Chicago's Magnificent Mile, triumphantly returns on **Saturday, September 9, 2023**.

Registration is now open for the 5K and 10K. **Run for CHI!** We're **recruiting our team now**, so drop us a line and let us know you'll be running with us.



You can also help our runners make it to the finish line! We're also **seeking volunteers for our booth** to support our runners pre- and post-event.

Interested? Email dfraser@chicagohelpinitiative.org.

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL!



[DONATE NOW](#)

The Chicago Help Initiative | 440 N. Wells St., Suite 440, Chicago, IL 60654

[Unsubscribe dfraser@chicagohelpinitiative.org](mailto:dfraser@chicagohelpinitiative.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by dfraser@chicagohelpinitiative.org powered by



Try email marketing for free today!