

# Howard & Evanston Community Center



metropolitan<sup>™</sup>  
family services

## IMPACT REPORT

JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024



## Howard and Evanston Community Center's IMPACT REPORT

July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

We provide the tools and resources to **m**power individuals, enabling their independence, and offering a better chance for a brighter tomorrow.

### Welcome from Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

It is with immense gratitude that I share the milestones we've achieved this year. Our organization continues to grow and adapt to meet the evolving needs of the community, and this has been a year of innovation, advocacy, and impact. A significant highlight is the launch of our Community Health Worker training program in partnership with Mount Sinai Medical Center. This initiative is equipping individuals with the skills needed to improve healthcare access and outcomes in underserved communities. Additionally, our advocacy efforts saw progress in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *United States v. Rahimi*, which has opened the door for the passage of Karina's Bill here in Illinois. This bill will further protect survivors of domestic violence by empowering law enforcement to swiftly remove firearms during the service of protection orders.

We also continued our commitment to addressing critical community needs. This year, we distributed nearly half a million pounds of food to families experiencing food insecurity, a testament to our ongoing efforts to fight hunger. To further strengthen our early learning program, we increased childcare staff salaries and encouraged educational advancement, ensuring the best care and development for our children. Over the past decade, we have proudly distributed over \$1.5 million in scholarships through our Promise Scholars program. This year, we empowered over 50 youth, many of whom are first-generation college students, to pursue higher education. Lastly, our incredible volunteers, who are the backbone of our organization, contributed 5,897 hours of service this year.

None of this would be possible without your unwavering support. Together, we are building stronger, healthier, and more resilient communities.

With deep appreciation,



Jason Kaiser  
Executive Director

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# Reentry & Workforce Impact

## JORDAN DILLS-WEAVER SUCCESS STORY

Jordan joined the HECC job readiness training program seeking assistance with employment due to his criminal background. Despite the challenges he faced, Jordan demonstrated remarkable dedication by completing the program with perfect attendance. Originally from Las Vegas, he relocated to Chicago after losing his job as a truck driver due to a DUI. This setback could have been a major obstacle, but Jordan refused to let it define his future.

He diligently fulfilled all the requirements for his sobriety and successfully completed the Fresh Start Workshop. His perseverance paid off when he secured a position as a security officer at the Congress Hotel in downtown Chicago. Jordan has now maintained this job for nearly six months, showcasing his commitment and reliability.

In addition to his professional achievements, Jordan has shown a deep desire to give back to the community. He recently approached HECC with a request to use the community center to offer musical therapy sessions. His goal is to help others on their journey to sobriety, using music as a therapeutic tool to support their recovery. Jordan's story is a testament to resilience and the positive impact of community support.



Jordan Dills-Weaver,  
FY24 HECC Fresh Start Program Participant

## ECONOMIC STABILITY

## REENTRY & WORKFORCE DATA

### Enrolled 265 participants

in our Fresh Start Reentry and Job Readiness Program

### 100% of Fresh Start participants

were justice impacted at some point in their lives (detained, arrested, or incarcerated)

### 49 Fresh Start participants

were placed in employment and retained their job for at least 30 days

### 85 Fresh Start participants

were on parole at program enrollment

### Only 15% of the 85 HECC Fresh Start parolees recidivated

after one-year post-release compared to the Illinois recidivism rate of 38.5% and the national recidivism rate of 43% after one year.

# Food Pantry Impact

## PANTRY AND ADULT EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

This year, students in our Adult Education program's new Healthcare Bridge Class became volunteers in our food pantry as a part of their class. Their reliability and commitment have been nothing short of remarkable. By consistently showing up and putting in the effort, they have helped the pantry run more effectively and efficiently. Tasks that once seemed overwhelming are now managed with ease, thanks to their organized and proactive approach.

The impact of their involvement goes beyond just operational improvements. The students have brought a sense of community and teamwork to the pantry, fostering a positive environment for both volunteers and those they serve. Their presence has not only ensured that the pantry operates smoothly but has also uplifted the spirits of everyone involved.

Continuing this model of integrating students from the Healthcare Bridge Class into health and nutrition community service promises even greater success in the future. By empowering students to apply their learning in real-world settings, we can create a sustainable cycle of support and growth. This initiative has proven that when education and community service intersect, the results are truly transformative.



*Marie, one of the Health Worker Training Interns, volunteers her time in the pantry*

## ECONOMIC STABILITY

## FOOD PANTRY DATA

**TOTAL POUNDS OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED:**

**471,553**

**TOTAL PANTRY VISITS IN FY24:**

**49,868**

# Domestic Violence Prevention and Intervention Impact

As an undocumented immigrant, it can be terrifying to reach out for supports, as there is a fear of being detained, and this fear is compounded for an undocumented immigrant who is experiencing intimate partner violence, who is fearful of retaliation from their abuser. One such survivor used her inner strength to make that call to our hotline and request assistance. She had experienced a serious physical assault at the hands of her husband, and our program assisted her and her children with legal advocacy, filing a petition for an order of protection, safety planning, short term relocation, individual and group counseling, case management, and receiving assistance in applying for immigration relief. Over time, this family has continued to heal and to move forward and feel safe, as well as meet service plan goals. This survivor was notified that her U-Visa Application was accepted and processed. She now has limited legal safeguards including work permits and protection against deportation. She and her children have demonstrated significant growth and resilience since working with our program. They have been able to develop healthy coping skills and are continuing to move forward toward achieving personal goals.



October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The purple ribbon is used in honor of domestic violence victims and survivors and support for growing awareness.

## EMPOWERMENT

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DATA

CLIENTS SERVED:

**154**

NUMBER OF  
OUTREACH EVENTS:

**16**

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS  
REACHED IN OUTREACH:

**563**

TOTAL HOURS OF  
DIRECT SERVICE:

**3,336.75**

TOTAL HOURS OF  
INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING:

**1,484.5**

TOTAL HOURS OF  
GROUP COUNSELING:

**499.5**

NUMBER OF HOURS OF  
HOUSING ADVOCACY:

**44.5**

NUMBER OF HOURS OF  
CASE MANAGEMENT:

**434.5**

NUMBER OF  
HOTLINE CALLS:

**412**

NUMBER OF EMERGENCY  
ORDERS OF PROTECTION  
(EOP) GRANTED:

**47**

NUMBER OF PLENARY  
ORDERS OF PROTECTION  
(POP) GRANTED:

**13**

# Adult Education Impact

## COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER TRAINING PROGRAM SUCCESS

In early 2024, HECC's Adult Education program teamed up with Sinai Urban Health Institute to launch a Community Health Worker Training. The first cohort consisted of 10 students, also dually enrolled in our GED program, representing nine countries and speaking 15 different languages. This program led to the achievement of several industry-recognized credentials, including Behavioral Health, CPR/First Aid, and Substance Abuse Awareness. Out of more than 80 graduates, two HECC students were among the four participants selected to speak at the graduation ceremony.

Five of the ten training participants were selected for a four-month internship in which they provided translation and interpretation services in eight different languages, volunteered in our food pantry, and supported their peers by assisting in resume workshops, helping with medical appointments, and conducting health workshops. Interns also collaborated with a local federally qualified healthcare provider, Tapestry 360 Health, to conduct their Healthcare 101 presentations with lower-level ESL students in six different language groups.

Since January 2024, 21 Peer Leaders were identified and trained along with the Community Health Worker Interns to support lower-level English language learners. Peer Leaders supported 75 English language learners in education, employment, health, and other wrap-around services.



Patrick speaks at the Sinai Community Health Worker Training Graduation



Community Health Worker training Graduates



HECC Community Health Worker training Interns



Peer Leaders meet to discuss supports for lower-level English learners in each of the Peer Leaders' language cohorts.

## ECONOMIC STABILITY

## ADULT EDUCATION DATA

**402 adult learners enrolled**  
in English or High School Diploma classes  
(9% increase from FY23)

**117 of adult learners**  
were receiving refugee resettlement support

**43 languages spoken**

**5 adults**  
earned a State of Illinois  
High School Diploma

**51% of our adult learners**  
made a measurable skills gain  
(14% more than the state target of 37%)

**59 adult education volunteers**  
dedicated **3,628 hours of service** to improve  
our learners' literacy and numeracy skills

**245 adult learners**  
dedicated a total of **5,587 hours**  
learning with our volunteer tutors

# Youth Services Impact

## SURPRISE'S CLUBHOUSE EXPERIENCE

Surprise, age 16, is an entrepreneur at The Clubhouse creating, marketing, and selling amazing plushies! Her plushies have been sold at trade shows, expos, and other events. In a recent interview, Surprise shared that creating a plushie can take up to ten hours, depending on its size, design, and pattern. Her intricate work reflects the passion and dedication she pours into each piece. Surprise draws her inspiration from social media trends, and prefers Pinterest, where she discovers various designs and ideas to recreate. This hobby began for her in 2020 during the pandemic when she was looking for ways to pass the time while being stuck at home. Over the past four years, crocheting has become a loved and ongoing hobby for her. What she loves most about crocheting is its simplicity and the ability to multitask while doing it. As Surprise puts it, "You don't have to be in the moment." This mindless yet fulfilling activity allows her to relax and unwind, making it a perfect pastime. Her passion for crocheting has also influenced others in our community. Goodness, age ten, her younger sister and apprentice, has expressed her admiration for Surprise's dedication and hard work. Goodness enjoys seeing the tangible results of their efforts and finds her mentor's guidance to be incredibly helpful and impactful on her own work. The bond between them is a testament to the positive influence that a passionate hobby can have on others.



Meet Surprise, the HECC Clubhouse resident illustrator and crochet artist.

## ABOUT THE HOWARD AREA CLUBHOUSE TEEN ARTS & TECHNOLOGY CENTER

The Howard Area Clubhouse provides hands-on learning opportunities for the young people in the greater Rogers Park community through structured and free exploration of multi-media technology. All programming is free. Since its inception The Clubhouse has provided a creative and safe afterschool learning environment where thousands of young people (ages 9-18) from under-served communities collaborate with adult mentors to explore their own ideas, develop skills, and build confidence in themselves through the use of technology. In The Clubhouse setting, youth develop STEM-rich projects based on their own interests, designing their own animations; building kinetic sculptures and robots; programming their own computer games; developing their own websites; telling stories through music, art, video production; and more.

## EDUCATION

## YOUTH SERVICES DATA

### CLUBHOUSE OUTCOMES

Total number of Clubhouse participants: **163**

**78 Active Members**

**100% of Youth Members**  
completed one or more Simple Projects

**72% of Youth Members**  
completed at least one Complex Project

**94% of Youth Members**  
demonstrated improved homework completion

### PROMISE SCHOLARS OUTCOMES

**\$1.5M+ Total awarded in scholarships since 2012**

**\$200,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS**  
distributed in FY24

**54** Total Howard Area Promise Scholars

**42** First-Generation College Bound

# Youth Services Impact *CONT.*

## HOWARD AREA READING PROGRAM (HARP)

The Howard After School Reading Program (HARP) provides literacy interventions for second and third graders at Oakton Elementary by matching these students with volunteer literacy tutors in the community.

Going on its 43rd year of operation, HARP is the longest continually running after school reading program in the United States.

HARP's program practice is a model for how volunteer-supported literacy programs should run. It is supported by three teachers/program coordinators who all have K-12 teaching experience. The coordinators work with Oakton teachers to identify students who are reading significantly below grade level. Through additional assessments and interviews, student learning is individualized to ensure reading gains. The coordinators structure a weekly lesson and support volunteers to deliver that lesson and report successes and challenges. In addition to strengthening students' literacy skills, HARP gives students and their tutors several opportunities throughout the year to work together on a poem, writing, or play to improve our students' presentation skills and build their public speaking confidence. In February, HARP Instructors Cheryl Balaban and Barbara Kaufman matched second-grade students of similar reading skill level with level-appropriate poems. Students practiced reading and presenting their poems with their volunteer afterschool reading tutors before presenting their poems to the whole group.



*HARP Teacher Cheryl giving students instructions for the presentation.*



*HARP students get instructions for their presentation*

## EDUCATION

## YOUTH SERVICES DATA

### HARP OUTCOMES

### 29 HARP PARTICIPANTS

**24 students** made at least one grade level increase in reading (82.75%)

**17** made more than one grade level increase (58.62%)



# Early Childhood Education Impact

## TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN CELEBRATION AND KINDERGARTEN READINESS

During the summer, families gathered to commemorate the transition to kindergarten. Teachers delivered heartfelt speeches, and the students performed a touching song for their parents. After the event, families had the chance to express their gratitude to the dedicated Howard & Evanston Community Center staff and say a warm farewell. The students were gifted with school supplies and bookbags, which left the families feeling appreciative and grateful.

HECC's Family Support Workers (FSWs) help families enroll their children in the elementary school of their choice. Our FSWs provide valuable guidance, application tips, and crucial emotional support to parents navigating the overwhelming process. We recognize that each family's needs is unique and tailor our support accordingly. Through regular meetings and interactions, FSWs and teachers collaborate with parents to ensure our preschoolers are well-prepared for kindergarten, setting the stage for a celebration of achievements.

This past year, a Family Support Worker (FSW) helped a family that spoke only Portuguese and encountered difficulties in enrolling their child into the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) system. This FSW took the initiative to communicate the enrollment process in their native language, provided invaluable assistance with school research, and stood by them every step of the way to ensure a successful enrollment. This heartwarming story is just one shining example of the numerous families we have supported in similarly impactful ways.



Teachers Danielle and Tierra with two of our preschool graduates.



Parents and family members help us celebrate our program graduates.

## EDUCATION

## EARLY LEARNING DATA

### 97% Enrollment

in Head Start 3-5 year-old program

### 100% Enrollment

in Early Head Start 0-3-year-old program

### 19% Enrollment

of children with disabilities in both programs

Overall attendance: **83%**

### SCHOOL READINESS

(Percentage of children meeting or exceeding in widely held expectations)

**87% Literacy**

**96% Physical**

**84% Math**

**76% Language**

**82% Social/  
Emotional**

**82% Cognitive**

# Thank You to All Our Donors

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