

OUR neighborhood

Evanston-Northwestern
Community News
Winter 2017

NEWS



Coming In from the Cold

This winter's earlier-than-usual cold temperatures meant more nights that Evanston's emergency overnight shelter would be open. As funding for government services has decreased, the city's nonprofits have seen steady increases in the number of homeless people who need a place to sleep.

Run on behalf of the community by Interfaith Action of Evanston, the shelter began more than 10 years ago at St. Paul's Lutheran Church. It initially operated only in the bitterest cold, when the temperature was zero degrees or less.

"Over time there was a concern that zero was extremely dangerous and we needed to do better," says Rev. Betty Landis, pastor of St. Paul's. Five years ago the threshold was raised to five degrees, which significantly increased the number of nights the shelter operated.

When Illinois's budget troubles forced many agencies that serve homeless populations to reduce services, "there was a real concern for the coming winter," Landis says. Interfaith Action, along with the city, the Evanston Interfaith Clergy and Leaders group, and the Evanston Pastors' Fellowship, started planning for an expansion.

This year, the shelter is triggered at 15 degrees. "We knew that could quadruple the number of nights we are open," Landis says. To help handle the expansion, six faith communities around the city alternate hosting the shelter during various weeks in the winter.

Originally set up for a maximum of 35 people, the shelter regularly meets or exceeds that number. Six to eight volunteers help each night, and the organization has hired a trained staff supervisor. As of early February, the shelter had been open 19 nights this winter.

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WARD PROFILE: FOURTH WARD

Evanston's Fourth Ward is found in the city center.

Completely surrounded by other wards, it's a convening place for city residents.

"The Fourth Ward represents multiple facets of Evanston's diverse populations," says ward alderman Donald Wilson. "We are a vibrant gathering place for the entire city."

Much of the area is a close-knit residential community. Home to police and fire department headquarters, the ward also includes parts of the downtown Evanston and Main Street shopping districts.

Three schools in the ward serve a socioeconomically, ethnically, and linguistically diverse body of students. Many live in other wards, so families form friendships across the city.

The ward is also a center for social services and recreation. The McGaw YMCA offers income-based membership fees for its athletic facilities, provides an array of youth enrichment programs, and offers affordable housing units.

Infrastructure improvements in the ward are a key priority, including the planned redevelopment of the Robert Crown Community Center.

Social Consciousness at ETHS

The morning after November's presidential election, Evanston Township High School students heard a message over the PA.

"I want to remind all of you that ETHS is a safe and welcoming place for you," district superintendent Eric Witherspoon told students. "You attend a school where we not only respect differences, we embrace our diversity."

But that announcement could've been made any day of the year, says ETHS principal Marcus Campbell, "because that's what we practice. As we look to affirm identities throughout the year, we thought this was a prime opportunity to address our students."

In 2014, those efforts to support diversity resulted in the first-ever summit for the school's black male students to discuss issues around identity. That event led to similar programs for black females, Latina and Latino students, South Asian and Middle Eastern students, and students who identify on the LGBTQ+ continuum. "We tell students, 'We support you,'" Campbell says, "and ask what we can do for them."

The school is committed to reinforcing not only the academic success but also the well-being of all students, he says. The events are open to the entire school community—not just those who identify with a certain group—inviting anyone who wants to become more aware.

Because they're held during the school day, the summits spark conversation across the school community—even for those who don't participate. "Students notice how it



feels to be in class when there are no black males present," Campbell says. "It raises a lot of issues and discussions. That's why it's important for us as a learning community."

The Northwestern/ETHS Partnership Office supports the social consciousness series in a variety of ways. Partnership coordinator Kristen Perkins helps organize University students, faculty, and staff who study race and equity issues to get involved with the high school's efforts, whether by leading discussions or sharing knowledge as keynote speakers.

"This is the kind of thing that benefits Northwestern students as well," she says. "Students of color at Northwestern don't always feel engaged, but being part of a summit and being a role model ultimately help them feel like they're part of a community."

Emergency Shelter

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With the expectation each year of being open up to 65 nights, the shelter's budget and volunteer needs have increased accordingly. "Everything is an estimate because we're dealing with Mother Nature, so every little bit helps," Landis says. Northwestern is among the shelter's supporters.

Interfaith Action also runs a hospitality center each weekday morning, offering a warm environment for daytime use at St. Mark's Episcopal Church. The center's services include assistance from a job coordinator and case manager, and guests can sign up to use grooming facilities at fellow nonprofit Connections for the Homeless.

Along with Interfaith Action, Connections provides a broad range of support. Founded in



Evanston's emergency overnight shelter, which opens when the temperature falls below 15 degrees, is supported by volunteers and a full-time staff supervisor.

1984, it offers programs that respond to the rising need for housing and supportive services in 31 North Shore communities.

"We serve the same population," says executive director Betty Bogg. "All the clients from the shelter and hospitality center are our clients, too. We see folks at the warming centers, and we've worked with them this winter."

Connections assists about 1,500 people per year, and close to 1,000 volunteers help provide services. Northwestern students help with holiday gift giving, coat drives, and food drives, and staff from the University have served on the board and volunteered as clinic doctors. "Northwestern's been a supporter of ours for many years," Bogg says.

TO LEARN MORE about how to volunteer or donate, visit interfaithactionofevanston.org and connect2home.org.

CONNECT WITH US

Our email newsletter includes a monthly Northwestern events calendar. Email Carol Chen at carol.chen@northwestern.edu to sign up.

Do you have a business or non-profit in Evanston? We can help increase your visibility, facilitate connections to the Northwestern community, and find student volunteers.

For details, visit northwestern.edu/communityrelations or contact Neighborhood and Community Relations executive director Alan Anderson at alan.anderson@northwestern.edu or 847-467-5762.

Northwestern Eats Local

Evanston restaurants are being featured in Northwestern dining halls as the University finds new ways to partner with the community and increase options for students.

As one example, students can now find barbecue sauce from Evanston's well-known Hecky's Barbecue as a regular condiment on campus.

"I wanted to do this because a lot of students who come to the restaurant really enjoy our sauce," says Hecky Powell (right), founder and owner of the restaurant. "It's good to have this relationship with Northwestern."

The effort to showcase local options began in 2016 with Evanston's Oceanique restaurant. During "seafood week," a chef from the restaurant provided meals in Allison Dining Hall, featuring small portions from the menu to allow students to try new foods.

"We got a really good response from both the restaurant and students," says Ken Field, director of Northwestern Dining. "Students were able to watch some of the chef's cooking techniques while also learning about a local restaurant they may not have tried."



After the successful week, Field sought more opportunities to incorporate local restaurants' fare into the dining halls. "We think students will start to make connections to local businesses," he says. "They get the chance to try something new and will hopefully patronize the business."

"The administration has really reached out into the community," Powell says. "I think it's a great thing."

STAFF PROFILE: KATHIA BENITEZ

Northwestern welcomes Kathia Benitez as director of sustainNU, the University's program aimed at reducing Northwestern's campuswide environmental footprint and becoming more energy efficient.



"We commit to creating a university culture that is ecologically sound, socially just, and economically sustainable," Benitez says. "In doing so, we will set an example of environmental accountability for future generations."

Benitez engages and works with students, faculty, and staff to identify and implement more environmentally friendly practices. These include such initiatives as serving more locally grown food and making it easier to bike to campus.

Benitez looks forward to leading Northwestern toward integrating greener and healthier practices into its day-to-day operations.

TO LEARN MORE about sustainNU, visit northwestern.edu/sustainability or email kathia.benitez@northwestern.edu.

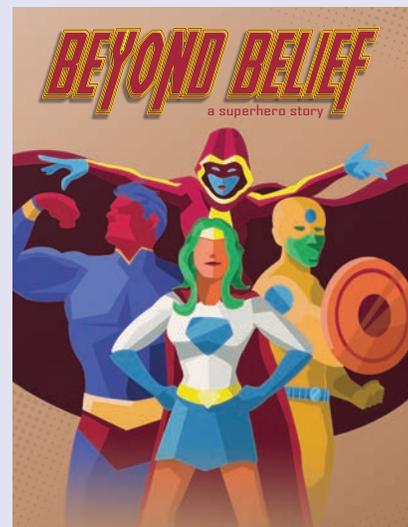
EVENTS

MEN'S BASEBALL NORTHWESTERN VS. AIR FORCE SUNDAY, APRIL 2, 1 P.M.

Rocky and Berenice Miller Park.
Veterans and service members receive discounts on Military Appreciation Weekend. After the game, kids can run the bases and get autographs from favorite players. Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$5 for youth.

86TH ANNUAL WAA-MU SHOW: BEYOND BELIEF FRIDAY, APRIL 28-SUNDAY, MAY 7

Cahn Auditorium.
In a new stage musical written and performed by Northwestern students, two sisters grapple with harsh realities by creating a fantastical world of superheroes. Tickets \$10-\$30.



REBUILDING TOGETHER SATURDAY, APRIL 29

Volunteer with us as we make needed repairs to the homes of some of our Evanston neighbors. RSVP to Carol Chen at carol.chen@northwestern.edu.