

Endowment Community Partner Grants for 2024-2025

The Endowment Committee received eight grant applications for fiscal 2024-25 for Community Partners, which support the ongoing work of these organizations. UCE members are active volunteers of all Community Grant recipients. All grant applications were accepted as satisfying at least one purpose of Article 4, section 2 of the UCE Endowment Fund bylaws (unanimous vote of Endowment Trustees). All eight grants were recommended for funding at the full amount requested (unanimous vote of Endowment Trustees) and approved by the UCE Board of Trustees. Each grantee will receive \$2607.

Here are brief summaries of four of these grants. Look in an upcoming newsletter for information about the remaining four grants.

- Community Renewal Society (CRS), a Community Partner with Legislative Action Team
CRS has fought against racism for over 100 years, fighting against laws and policies that discriminate against minorities, and supporting laws and policies that provide better and fairer access to high quality education, jobs and affordable housing for minorities.

UCE has been a member congregation with CRS for over 15 years, and individual UCE members have participated in training sessions, joined CRS committees that investigate and choose what public policies CRS will be fighting for, or what issues we want to discuss with our state legislators. Still others have joined CRS demonstrations and celebrations, especially the MLK Day celebration that CRS hosts each year.

- Connections for the Homeless, a Community Partner with FAST
The work of Connections is carried out in four separate areas: Prevention, Housing, Shelter and Drop-in, and Advocacy. Connections prevents homelessness through financial assistance to households facing eviction, by providing emergency shelter for people in crisis, by securing permanent housing for individuals and families and by organizing our community through advocacy efforts.

UCE has a long history of working with Connections for the Homeless. Many, many UCE members have volunteered in countless ways over the years. Because Connections is here in our community and has been since 1984, when the first temporary basement shelter was opened in the basement of Lake Street Church, their efforts have always been a place for UCE members to volunteer.

- **Faith in Place, a Community Partner with Green Team**

Faith in Place works to empower people of diverse faiths and spiritualities to be leaders in advancing environmental and racial justice, providing resources to educate, connect, and advocate for healthier communities.

Members of UCE's Green team are actively involved with Faith in Place and their area advisor has provided guidance and consulting in the recent efforts of UCE Emissions Reduction Task Force and the rejuvenation of the Green Team. Several UCE members have participated in Faith in Place's annual lobbying day in Springfield, and UCE is a bus pick-up point for this event.

- **Family Focus, a Community Partner with REAL Team**

Family Focus serves the Evanston community and has ten other centers in Chicago and surrounding communities. Services include early childhood home visiting, Family Advocacy Center, after school services, Grandparents raising Grandchildren, and community partnership initiatives such as the Foster Street Urban Agriculture program. They offer innovative, community-based programs that help parents, grandparents, and foster and adoptive parents gain confidence and competence as the primary educators of their children.

UCE has a long history of involvement and support of Family Focus, a true gem in the Evanston community. UCE volunteers provide organization support including restructuring the library and totally reorganizing the classroom storage areas, fabric arts projects with the children, classroom support and other activities. UCE members have made cash donations individually and with in-kind materials.