

A photograph of a man with a beard and curly hair, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue shirt, sitting and talking to a young boy. The boy is wearing a light blue t-shirt with 'GREAT WHITE' printed on it, dark pants, and white sneakers with blue accents. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The background is a plain wall. The image is framed by large, overlapping geometric shapes in teal, blue, and yellow. Overlaid on the center of the image is the text 'BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES' in large, bold, white capital letters.

BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES

2024  **Chicago
Lights**
ANNUAL REPORT

OUR MISSION, VISION, AND HISTORY

OUR MISSION AND VISION

Chicago Lights builds brighter futures for Chicago's youth and adults through supportive relationships and life-changing programs.

We believe every person deserves access to the resources they need to overcome systemic barriers and achieve their ambitions.

Chicago Lights provides creative youth development and social services that help people build the skills they need to lead fulfilling lives. We partner with Chicago's youth and adults in mentoring, supportive services, academic enrichment, career development, and arts education.

OUR HISTORY

Chicago Lights grew from the commitment of Fourth Presbyterian Church to social justice and compassionate service. In 1991, that commitment gave rise to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which in 2004 was renamed Chicago Lights and significantly expanded in order to bring together under one banner several programs that continue to partner with nearly 3,000 individuals each year. Today, Fourth Church continues to be a vital source of support for Chicago Lights, including providing volunteers and covering a majority of our overhead costs. Because of this partnership, our team of professional staff and dedicated volunteers can continue to build brighter futures for Chicago's youth and adults.



**Chicago
Lights**



**Thank you to the Fourth Church community
for your commitment to Chicago Lights!**



2024 YEAR IN REVIEW



Amanda Felt
President
Chicago Lights Board of Directors



Stacy Jackson
Executive Director
Chicago Lights

In 2024, Chicago Lights was able to focus and flourish by doing what we do best: offering support and supportive services to those with whom we partner in pursuit of brighter futures.

The Social Service Center connected with nearly 2,000 individuals this past year, providing food, clothing, hygiene items, case management, enrichment opportunities, and more. New in 2024, the Social Service Center's Living Room space, which provides a comfortable afternoon respite for warmth, fellowship, and camaraderie, has led to a 190% increase in enrichment services provided. We also continue to move forward with planning our Affordable Housing Initiative in partnership with the Interfaith Housing Development Corporation. They will develop and own a permanent supportive housing property in Chicago, and Chicago Lights will provide supportive services to those living there.

The Tutoring and Summer Day programs continued their work of providing high-quality, year-round programming to Chicago youth living in historically disinvested communities. Beyond school-year tutoring and summer enrichment opportunities, these programs also provided an 8-month Career Development program, featuring hands-on internship opportunities, for 15 high schoolers, as well as high school and college scholarships for 27 students. All of our Tutoring high school seniors graduated and were accepted into college this past year, and all of our Summer Day students maintained or improved their skills in language arts and math.

The Urban Farm remains a gorgeous, green, three-quarter-acre oasis at Chicago and Hudson. Nearly 5,000 pounds of produce were harvested last year, over 500 bags of which were distributed to individuals and families with low incomes. The Farm also hosted 66 youth for enrichment activities, some in partnership with After School Matters, and it continues to be a place of community and connection for people of all ages living in Cabrini Green.

On behalf of the many thousands of individuals and families impacted by their interactions with Chicago Lights, THANK YOU! We are so grateful that your support of our work with the children, youth, and adults of Chicago continues, and we are proud of all we accomplish together in partnership.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



TUTORING & SUMMER DAY

After decades of systemic disinvestment, many neighborhood schools cannot support their students' full academic potential, which leads to low reading and math scores on standardized tests and may leave many students far behind their nationwide peer cohort in lifetime earnings and achievements. However, research has proven that participation in high-quality, out-of-school-time programs offering a combination of mentoring, academic support, and enrichment activities helps to decrease persistent achievement gaps between children from families with low incomes and their more resourced peers.

In the face of such disparities as poverty and community violence, both Tutoring and Summer Day provide guidance and structure to help young people

become emotionally resilient, learn strong social skills, and recognize life's positive possibilities. In addition, social and emotional learning opportunities are provided during Tutoring and Summer Day through Peace Club, where young people learn mindfulness and meditation techniques as well as intentional exercises in restorative justice. The Tutoring program assists young people with their transition to high school, college, and beyond through 9th grade readiness programming, career development classes, internships with Chicago businesses, and high school and college scholarships.

TUTORING OFFERED:

4,556 HOURS of tutoring and almost
3,037 HOURS of arts and enrichment programming.



135 STUDENTS in grades 1-12 were matched one-to-one with volunteer TUTOR/MENTORS. Pairs meet each week to support the students' social and academic growth. Often these pairings lead to life-long friendships.



15 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS completed the 8-month CAREER DEVELOPMENT program which included an 8-week paid, summer internship with a local business.

106 STUDENTS participated in SUMMER DAY.



100% of HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS graduated and were accepted into post-secondary institutions.

27 TUTORING STUDENTS received high school and college scholarships to support college and career success.

75% OF STUDENTS learned how to meditate and be mindful at PEACE CLUB.

100% OF STUDENTS in SUMMER DAY maintained or increased their skills in language arts and math over the summer.



SOCIAL SERVICE CENTER

The Chicago Lights Social Service Center continues to be an invaluable support for those who find themselves unhoused and without adequate access to resources they need. Through generous donors and a variety of partnerships, the SSC is able to offer meals, snacks, hygiene resources, a food pantry, and a clothing share shop to help meet basic needs.

Beyond this, SSC programming also provides bigger-picture support to help participants move toward brighter futures and sustainable success. Short-term case management services allow individuals to receive important resources like state IDs, birth

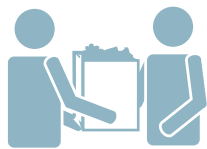
certificates, phones, glasses, and more. Long-term case management is also an option through the Open Doors Project, in which a group of 5 to 8 people meet for individual sessions and a weekly support group as they work toward housing and employment goals.

Through a partnership with Northwestern Medicine, the Social Service Center was able to open the Living Room in October 2024. This communal space is designed to be a safe, warm place where people can experience community, connection, and reprieve from the weather during the coldest months in Chicago.

1,949

INDIVIDUALS participated in SSC programming in 2024. **1,246** of those were **NEW PARTICIPANTS**.

252



INDIVIDUALS were met where they were during **OUTREACH SERVICES** and received **587 SERVICES**, a 29% increase from 2023.

1,715

INDIVIDUALS RECEIVED 12,871 RESOURCES during morning drop-in services.

1,122



INDIVIDUALS WERE NOURISHED through **2,748 FOOD PANTRY APPOINTMENTS**. This was a **28% INCREASE** from 2023.

1,602

CASE MANAGEMENT APPOINTMENTS served **541 INDIVIDUALS**.



The **SOCIAL SERVICE CENTER** extends gratitude to the following groups for their support of our work this year: Egon Zehnder, Kellogg Corporation, Northwestern University, Holy Trinity High School, Linea Energy, Uber, Neenah Wisconsin Youth Group, Morgan Stanley, Honigman Corporation, LaSalle Corporation, Barings Corporation, ELCA Youth Group, The United States Navy, Northwestern Memorial Hospital Medical Float Pool Team, Northwestern Memorial Hospital Medical Billing Team, Northwestern Memorial Hospital Human Resources Team, and C2 Solutions.



URBAN FARM



With so many Chicagoans facing economic insecurity and food instability, our Urban Farm team harvested close to 5,000 pounds of produce. This helped ensure that our neighbors with low incomes in the Cabrini Green/Near North community have access to fresh, healthy food and a beautiful, vibrant oasis where Chicago's youth learn to grow, harvest, and make change in their community—all while gaining skills that will unlock their futures.

A partnership with Near North Health Center allowed us to provide education around diabetes, high blood pressure, and weight management.

The Urban Farm hired a full time Youth Program Manager to run the high school youth programming in

partnership with After School Matters. Programming focused on a culinary program in the summer, which continued into the fall. Students rotated through to cook for their peers and the Farm team once a week.

High school youth also successfully led the Farm's community event, Halloween on Hudson, which included a spooky haunted house for community members and activities including pumpkin painting, face painting, and basketball games—all planned and executed by students.

This fall, after the growing season, participants engaged in hands-on learning by building mini cold frames for future crops and a cat house for the Farm cats.

 **66** **YOUTH** ages 5–24 engaged in **URBAN FARM** programming.

508 **FREE PRODUCE BAGS** were distributed to **81 CABRINI RESIDENTS**

and many patients of the Near North Side-Winfield Moody Health Center. Additionally, **193 SOCIAL SERVICE CENTER PARTICIPANTS** received fresh Farm produce during their food pantry visits.

4,681 

POUNDS OF PRODUCE was grown on our $\frac{3}{4}$ -acre land, and more than 80% of that produce was distributed to community members with low incomes.

274 **VOLUNTEERS** supported the growth of the Urban Farm through **928 HOURS** of service.

 **104** **WELL-STOCKED BACKPACKS** were distributed to Cabrini youth, and **51 CABRINI RESIDENTS** received Thanksgiving food bags.

20 **COMMUNITY RESIDENTS** grew their own garden on Urban Farm plots.



NURTURING COMMUNITY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NORTHWESTERN MEDICINE



"At Northwestern Medicine, we talk a lot about social determinants of health," explains Ann Hall, Vice President of Administration for NM. "When someone is in treatment, twenty percent of their health outcome is what happens in the hospital, and eighty percent happens outside. So when we think about positive outcomes, partnerships are part of our strategic plan."

And that's where Chicago Lights comes in. "Our partnership with Northwestern has been one of the most delightful surprises of 2024," says Theresa Thornburg, director of the Chicago Lights Social Service Center.

About two years ago, Northwestern Medicine had an onsite warming center at their location near Chicago Lights in the Streeterville neighborhood, and they noticed a significant increase in those utilizing it overnight, as well as seeking respite in the building during the day. In need of additional resources, they began reaching out to other organizations doing work with those experiencing homelessness and were eventually connected to Fourth Church and Theresa at the SSC. "We then began exploring how we could connect and collaborate to provide a better safety net and web of support for those in our community," Ann says.

Working together, the two organizations were able to create "a nice synergy," Ann continues. NM knows healthcare, but are not experts when it comes to other social services needed in this situation, "so partners with expertise are critical to helping us drive health equity," she says.

People who seek respite at NM can now be referred to the Social Service Center, just a few blocks away, for a meal or some clothing or whatever they might need. But even more important than meeting these immediate concerns, and what makes Chicago Lights an excellent partner, "is the whole-person support offered by Chicago Lights and the dignity with which resources are offered," Ann says. With support from NM, the Social Service Center is "not just meeting needs, it's getting people on a path to sustainable housing."

The Living Room, funded by a grant from Northwestern Medicine, is a prime example of the benefits this partnership has created. This new program within the Fourth Church building offers a comfortable spot in the afternoons when

the weather isn't so nice, and also provides an opportunity for friendship and camaraderie among those without another place to go during the day. Through interactions with participants who stop in, Social Service Center staff has been able to increase enrichment services offered—things like housing assistance, healthcare resources, and job support—by 190 percent this year.

"The Living Room has been much more of a needed service than we even anticipated," Theresa says. "So many participants have expressed how meaningful the program has been to them and how grateful they are to have it."

Northwestern Medicine's goal was to expand opportunities for warming, but the Living Room is "so much more than just a warm place," Ann says. "Theresa and the SSC staff are so responsive and thoughtful, and they step up to meet needs. That makes it possible to offer critical connections to people in transition. That's such a vulnerable time, and to have this sort of warm handoff is huge. We're not just handing someone a business card."

Beyond the Living Room as a gathering space and place to connect with resources, funds from NM have also helped the Social Service Center meet practical needs for winter clothing and CTA fares, as well as supporting case management and enrichment programming for participants. "Northwestern has helped by connecting us to partner agencies like Heartland Health, who have been onsite to provide medical services for participants," says Theresa. "Northwestern has also sent us various volunteer groups who have supported our needs all year in the food pantry and clothing shop, led bingo games, and helped us process donations."

NM is "passionate" about employee volunteerism, Ann explains, and partnering with Chicago Lights provides a wonderful opportunity for community service for their staff. In addition, an NM board member runs a clothing company and has been able to provide Chicago Lights with an assortment of winter coats to distribute. There have been lots of opportunities for collaboration and lots of "fun synergies that make a difference," Ann says. "Some groups just mesh from a cultural standpoint, and that's what it's felt like with Chicago Lights."

Because initial results have exceeded everyone's expectations, both Chicago Lights and Northwestern Medicine are excited about the future of this partnership. "We've been talking about opportunities around advocacy in the future," says Ann. "We're trying things, learning what does and doesn't work, and ultimately we hope something will come from this to impact more than just the residents of Streeterville—the larger Chicago community. Our two organizations work well together, so there's continued opportunity for expansion."

Chicago Lights is so grateful for the Northwestern Medicine community, and we look forward to exploring all the ways we can partner into the future for the benefit of all.



THE LIVING ROOM



A GIFT THAT LASTS BEYOND A LIFETIME

"Tracy was always a champion of people in need," her mother, Linda Koogler, explains. "Even as a little girl in school...children were always drawn to her, and she just befriended folks."

In middle school, Tracy was not at all an athlete, but she told the track coach she wanted to be manager of the team. The coach wasn't sure she could do it—there was a lot of heavy equipment to move around, she told Tracy's mother. But Linda urged the coach to let Tracy give it a try, and when she asked Tracy about it, Tracy explained that this was a way for her to interact with the sporty kids, because she didn't overlap with them otherwise. "I want to get to know them," Tracy told her mom.

And so she did. Though Tracy's educational path led to medical school, she worked with athletics all the way through college, making friends everywhere she went. She was someone who wanted to connect with people.

After completing her medical degree, Tracy trained in pediatrics and eventually made her way to Chicago, though she'd grown up in Virginia. She took a job at University of Chicago, working as both a faculty member and a critical care doctor, as well as a medical ethics researcher. During her career she cared for children in the burn unit, as well as the pediatric ICU, and she chose this career path intentionally. "She went into pediatric critical care at a university hospital because she wanted to take care of poor

and underprivileged kids," her mother says. "Not just diaper rashes and feeding schedules."

When Tracy came to Chicago, she also joined Fourth Church and became a staunch supporter of Chicago Lights. "She was drawn to the work of Chicago Lights, though she couldn't really be a tutor because of her schedule," her mother recalls. "But she was so pleased that the church was involved in that ministry."

Tracy shared her time as a deacon and elder with the church, and Chicago Lights Executive Director Stacy Jackson remembers her as "a truly generous and compassionate friend to Chicago Lights. Every time we had a conversation, her love for our mission and genuine care for the wellbeing of our participants came through so clearly—it was impossible not to feel it."

In December 2022, Tracy Koogler passed away at age 56 after a battle with brain cancer. But before her death, she took steps to ensure that her support for the programs of Chicago Lights would remain unwavering. "One of her last meetings with Shannon [Kershner, then pastor of Fourth Church] was to say, 'This is it. I want to make sure,'" her mother says. "She was very definite because she wanted the money to go to this program so the work could continue and expand."

And Tracy's gift has allowed Chicago Lights to do just that. "Tracy's bequest is a profound act of generosity and a powerful statement of belief in the mission of Chicago Lights," says Katy Frey Bever, Senior Director of Development for Fourth Church. "Gifts like hers are transformational—not only in the opportunities they create for the organization, but in the way they remind us that investing in people and in our communities is one of the most meaningful ways to make the world a better place."

Chicago Lights continues to give thanks for Tracy's magnificent life—her kind heart, her brilliant mind, her deeply caring spirit—as well as for her dedication to helping others that lives on through her lasting gift to our work. She is an inspiration, an encouragement, and a constant support as we connect with those in our community to build relationships and brighter futures, just as she intended.



TRACY K. KOOGLER, MD



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University of Missouri-Columbia
University of Wisconsin
USDA Summer Food Service
Program
Walter Payton College Prep
Westside Rising
Women of Fourth
Xavier University
Zeller



2024 FINANCIALS



REVENUE

Individual Contributions	\$1,105,357	45%
Foundations/Corporations	\$440,999	18%
Program Receipts	\$826,789	34%
Draw from Invested Funds	\$92,689	4%

Total: **\$2,465,834**



DISBURSEMENTS

Management and General	\$204,926	8%
Fundraising	\$549,727	22%
Tutoring	\$619,985	25%
Summer Day	\$210,937	8%
Social Service Center	\$567,353	23%
Urban Farm	\$330,386	13%

Total: **\$2,483,314**



Net Surplus/(Deficit): (\$17,481)

Source: the Chicago Lights 2024 unaudited financial statement.
An audited statement is available after July 30, 2025.



SUPPORTERS



THANK YOU!

Chicago Lights is grateful for each and every supporter who made a donation in 2024.

With your generosity, our programs continue to partner with Chicago's youth and adults to build brighter futures.

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Raju Abraham and
Gina Zachariah
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