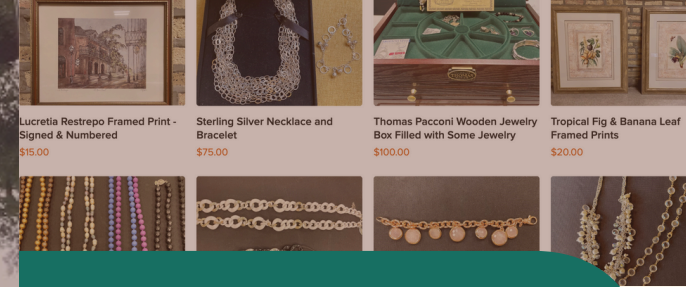


Summer 2024

Newsletter

Read about impactful experiences at day camp and how a community meal brings all kinds of people together!

Check out our online shop!



We have new products on our online shop!

- Jewelry
- Art
- Decore
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This is a fun way to support Family Empowerment Centers and get some nice gifts for yourself and others!



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Online Shop

A Community Meal



Soup Kitchen – Albany Park

Each Sunday afternoon, a team of faithful volunteers from an area church makes their way to the corner of Argyle and Troy, where our Albany Park center is located. As they file out of vans, they bring with them trays of food, bags of paper plates and utensils, and bins of clothing and toiletries. They have come to give what they have.

About thirty minutes later, folks from around our community begin to wander in. Most of them wear unwashed and well-worn clothing, and many of their faces are aged beyond their years. They have come to receive what they need.

As these two groups of people come together over a meal, laughter and conversation echoes. The room is filled with life and connection. For a few moments, there is not the housed and the unhoused. Instead, there is only the hungry, who all sit together, enjoying the reality that there is enough for everyone to eat.

Afterwards, when everyone has had their fill, everyone joins together to clean up. As the volunteers load back into their van, and the folks who've gathered take their plate of leftovers and head down the block to wherever they might sleep tonight, conversations continue as they go, a reminder that this experience did not just provide a few bites of food, but also allowed us to see each other as humans and to alleviate the pain of loneliness.

We are so grateful for the many people who pray, donate, and volunteer in order to make this weekly community meal possible. Our prayer is that our neighbors would know genuine friendship in this space, even as we help them to take steps towards stability.

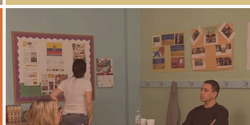
Follow us on social media to stay up to date on what is going on at the center!



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Learning Together

Summer Day Camp

By: Laura Soriano

During the month of June, we initiated our summer camp program for elementary and middle school kids. Since most of the kids recently arrived to Chicago with their families in the past year, day camp was a new environment for many of them, and they did not know me as a leader. However, as the weeks have gone by, I have connected with the kids, and they have felt more comfortable. A unique experience that has been helpful and refreshing is that every Monday we welcome a new group of Envision leaders that come ready to guide and support the kids in multiple aspects. These volunteers come to serve with our organization for a whole week, and during the summer, a major part of their visit is dedicated to helping out with our day camp. They help me create daily activities for the youth, and the kids have fun learning from new people and trying different activities.

An impactful experience I have had so far has been introducing Heroes of the Bible to our campers. I definitely lacked some knowledge on this topic, but along with the kids I have learned new stories about people in the Bible. I can proudly state that I have come closer to God as I have served in camp. It is encouraging to see how much time is dedicated to teaching the kids about God. It brings me joy to be a part of this camp where we prioritize the importance of our Creator, and it is special to be able to share the Word with kids who may not have someone to do this with them. I admire the hard work and engagement that the kids demonstrate when listening to the lessons. It inspires me to learn more so that I can share the word with more people. Overall, the kids at our camp have been able to spend quality time with friends and meet leaders who they create meaningful memories with.



Watching a fun video about a hero of the Bible during day camp

A New Season

Migrant Care

By: Natalie Manke

One of the Envision team leaders and a young man from our neighborhood connected at our center

Over the past 12+ months Family Empowerment Centers has had a unique opportunity to come together with individuals, churches, and organizations both within and outside of our community to serve Chicago's newest neighbors. What was an unexpected surge of individuals and families arriving in the city was also an opportunity to welcome, resource, love, and proclaim the gospel. It has been a labor and a joy to be amid so much change.

As you have heard from past newsletters our initial involvement included more of an emergency networking to resource new neighbors with basics like clothing, suitcases, strollers, toiletries, etc. In that window we have also offered ESL classes, Enrichment classes, and Bible studies. As the months have passed, more families are making their way from the shelters into apartments and are beginning to find work. As a result, we are less active in emergency resourcing, but continue to welcome, build relationship, share what God has given to us, and tell His story.

Several families have found a place within the community of faith and have begun to participate in discipleship classes. Others have moved further away, but continue to visit when they can. Please continue to pray with us, for the seeds that have been planted along the way, and for discernment as we look to hear God's heart for what's next.



Natalie, our Crisis Outreach Coordinator, sharing about Scripture with a neighbor who is eager to know more about God



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