

Empowering the next
generation of leaders!

Newsletter

Fall 2024

**Help us raise
\$30,000 for our
community!**

**We have three \$10,000 end of
year special projects & we
need you to support!**

**Feeding Under-Resourced
Urban Families**

**Support At-Risk Youth &
Children**

**Empowering the Next
Generation of Leaders**





Buy leadership resources

\$100

A \$100 donation provides leadership resources such as books, curriculum, and assessments for our interns and residents.

Send an intern to a conference

\$250

A \$250 donation allows us to send an intern or resident to a developmental conference.

Hire a resident

\$500

A \$500 donation helps us employ one resident for a month for on the job training.

Pay for resident housing

\$1,400

A \$1,400 donation helps us pay for 1 month rent for our interns and residents.

Envision Intern Interview

Gus Johnson has been an Envision intern for us since last spring. Here he shares a bit about the work he has helped us with, how he has grown, & what God is doing through him at Family Empowerment Centers.

Why did you want to be an Envision intern this year?

My goal is to do long term overseas service, however I felt led to gain some more experience here in the states first. I first learned about Envision through connections at the Twin Cities Envision site. I ended up in Chicago since I already had some familiarity with the city having studied at Moody.

What type of daily/weekly activities have you done here?

In the summer I mostly worked with the out of town teams that came in to help us. I helped them get food, transportation, bedding and helped them feel welcome and comfortable. We did training sessions, service projects, day camps for kids, and more. I also took the groups to Navy Pier on Wednesdays for a firework show.

Currently, I have been keeping busy with the food pantry and after school program. I am also around sometimes for the community breakfasts in the mornings.

How have you seen God move during your internship here?

I have seen Him work in many people's lives. Many people have come to the center for food or companionship, and they are growing in their faith as well. God is always providing people and resources even when it seems difficult.

What has been your favorite part about this internship?

Probably meeting many people with different backgrounds, cultures, and stories. I especially enjoyed connecting with the short term Envision teams. It was fun to see how God was working through their lives.

What knowledge or skills have you gained from interning here? How have you been stretched?

With the wide variety of tasks and people that are involved, I have learned a few new things. One of the main ways that I have been stretched is in working with kids. It is not something that I had done a lot of previously, and I am slowly learning to relate better with them.

Is there anything else you can share about your time here or a meaningful moment you experienced?

Living in the nearby Little India neighborhood has also given me a unique opportunity to connect with some people of South Asian backgrounds, and experience a small bit of that culture as well.



Scan or click the QR code to give to our "Empowering the Next Generation of Leaders" project and support young people like Gus as they develop their leadership skills.



Community Breakfast Outreach

A year ago, we had the opportunity to connect with and serve, in big and small ways, new migrant families that were trying to adjust and make their way living in the US. We offered breakfast, clothing items, toiletries, sometimes household items for those moving into apartments, but most of all a place to belong. Several of the families have since transitioned from the shelters but remain in touch and their children now attend our after-school program, Wednesday youth outreach, and/or service on Sunday.

We have genuinely been encouraged by God's faithfulness to have provided so much over so long a time for us to offer all that we have, and now, we have a new population benefiting from the same resources and care that we offered initially when we began helping migrant families. Although we continue to offer various support services to new neighbors (helping with things like job applications, or finding work in the community), around March we began to notice more of the population coming for breakfast were those without housing, who are suffering through mental health crises and/or addiction. Since then, our team has enthusiastically thrown their energy into serving them. We offer the same daily breakfast Monday through Thursday, showers, toiletries, clothing (when available) and classes that cover topics like addiction, domestic violence, and learning how to read the Bible.

Something that feels important to us as a ministry is and has been God's heart for the broken, the under-resourced, the lonely, and afflicted. The same compassion that we see Jesus showing in the Gospels, is the same compassion that burns in our own hearts, and we are grateful for the ways God allows us to make His heart for people known through our acts of service, but also through the many conversations we get to tell His story.

One gentleman said on his way out the door, "I've been to a lot of churches, but you guys seem to really care." Another gentleman, continues to say daily and emphatically "I want to change." This is a first step, so if you think of him, please pray for him for the freedom he desires. He has opened his heart to God, but recovery from addiction can look so different from person to person. And another, who is often hesitant to come to the Bible class (it's not mandatory), has so many questions, and keeps coming with more questions. We know his heart is being stirred and that God is present in that.

God's movement is our delight. God's faithfulness is our providence. Your prayers for us, our team, and those we serve are greatly appreciated and we THANK YOU for the many ways you share in what God is doing here.

Finding a Family

Community Member Highlight

Emmalise Emsweller

Have you ever felt like you were drowning? Not physically, not literally, but emotionally. Have you ever felt like you have no idea what's wrong, but you are still barely keeping your head above water? And you wonder, when will my strength finally give out?

That was me, one October in the year of our Lord 2021. A woman in her twenties, coming out of a global pandemic, wondering why she was still chugging along. That is, until I arrived in Chicago on a midnight flight. Exhausted from a day of travel, I exited O'Hare airport with my equally bedraggled companions to find a man standing by an old van, with one of the biggest, most genuine smiles I had ever seen.

Do you know how confusing it is to walk into a setting expecting to serve people, only to be served? For five days, my companions and I were given tasks to complete and jobs to help with, but at every turn we were also being served. From the young lady who got up at six in the morning to make us breakfast, to the pastor who talked to us about caring for our soul, at every turn I felt less like I was in Chicago to serve, and more like I was in Chicago to be served. And at the end of five days, I wasn't ready for it to be over.

So I came back. This time I was meant to be the young lady, waking up at six in the morning to serve others. This time I was to be the caretaker, instead of the one being cared for. So imagine my surprise when I was still being served. Mentors cooked for me when I was short on money. My boss told me to go home and take the day off. People asked me how I was doing, and genuinely wanted to hear me out, even if I was having a very bad day. And at the end of an eight month internship, I knew I wanted to stay.

Having grown up in the church, I have experienced the ease with which people assume that because you are going to church or volunteering in a ministry, you must be okay. Obviously, you must have a strong connection with God and lean on Him, because why else would you be doing what you are doing. And intentionally or not, you end up burned out with no one to support you.

But all of that changed when I came to the Family Empowerment Centers. In my three years of interning, volunteering, and just being a member of the church; I have seen and experienced a love like no other. A community, built upon caring for yourself and each other. A community that isn't afraid to admit when we're struggling. A church that doesn't judge when you can't see a clear path. A church that cares for its members as much as it cares for the lost in the community. A family that constantly encourages me in my painful growth. A family of Christ.



Holiday Season Giving

Feeding Under-Resourced Urban Families

\$10,000



Buy Groceries For 2 Families

A \$150 donation provides 2 families with a week's worth of groceries through our food pantry.

Buy After School Program Snacks

A \$50 donation provides a whole week of snacks for our After School Program kids..

Help Us Hire An Employee

A \$500 donation allows us to hire a part time employee to cook/run our food related activities for our community.

Support At-Risk Youth & Children

\$10,000



Pay for College Student Support

A \$40 donations pays for our portion of a work study college student's paycheck for 1 week.

Send a Child to Spring Camp

A \$250 donation sends one child to our weeklong spring camp.

Pay for After School Program Tuition

A \$400 donation pays for one month of our After School Program tuition for one child.

Empowering the Next Generation of Leaders

\$10,000



Scan or click the three QR codes to give to the special project(s) you would like to support.

Give joyfully this holiday season, and help us continue to lead, serve, & unite those in our city for God's glory!





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