

News- letter

We cannot
thank you
enough!

Earlier this year, we were unsure about the programs we would be able to offer our community during the summer due to extreme financial struggles. We are now halfway through the summer, and we have had a full and fruitful season thanks to the generosity of our donors!

We raised over \$42,000
from our match grant!



Sun is out!
Scream & shout!

Summer 2025

Get the FEC Summer Run Down.

If you would like to help
continue the good work
done at our center, scan
the QR code below or
write a check to Family
Empowerment Centers.



Not Alone in the Unknown

By: Mayra Alejandra Mireles Garcia

I learned about Family Empowerment Centers through Rosa, my roommate at the shelter where my family and I were temporarily living since our arrival to the United States. FEC has a very kind and helpful staff. From psycho-emotional counseling to spiritual guidance, they helped us integrate more assertively into the community. Danielle Castro, in particular, is a key supporter. She helped us find an apartment to rent and the necessary furniture and household items to begin our independent life in the United States. She also invited us to participate in various programs that enrich our lives and help us develop in our new home. My family and I have been able to invite others to participate in the various programs offered by FEC. With my experience in education, I volunteer to strengthen and support the children who are part of the center's community.

Feeling that there is a space where you can live, learn, and receive support is very pleasant and important as an immigrant. The fear of the unknown can make us vulnerable, but at the center, we feel we are not alone. A recent event my family experienced, one that we felt very fearful about, was going to immigration court. We are grateful for the spiritual and emotional support that the FEC staff gave us, especially Danielle. It is invaluable for us to have people who care about our well-being and of others. This is admirable.



Here

A poem by the FEC staff

Here poetry is shared. Gospel hope is proclaimed.

Here chairs are stacked, then lined up, then sat on, then moved around, then stacked again. Screams of laughter and stomping feet fill the space.

Here coffee smells and Spanish language sounds.

Here those far from God see his hands scoop out a hot meal and scrub dishes.

Here is rest in a fresh shower and clean clothes. Hope in the faces of those who receive love. The smile of acceptance.

Here is welcome invitation. Socks and soaps and care. Chicken and rice and food from The WORD. Feasts of laughter shared around home-cooked meals.

Here prayer is an anthem, an embrace, an ugly cry, a whisper, a hallelujah, a gasp for air, a moment of silence.

Here nationalities intersect like the streets we walk down, heritage is diverse and celebrated. Flags of our people hang.

Here overwhelm of brokenness is real. Anguish is felt. Deeply. Joys and sorrows meet to bear with one another.

Here is goodness. Hard times are eased. Comfort is given.

Here recovery is traveled together. Long car rides. Long days. Long walks. Long talks. And again.

Here we show up. As we are, we show up. We belong.

Here family is found. A home is discovered. Brothers and sisters live.

Summer Day Camp

The sound of laughter, the smell of sunscreen, and the sparkle of creativity are filling the air at Day Camp, where this year's summer program is has been hailed as a tremendous success by both campers and their families.

Our dedicated counselors and educators are running a full schedule of fun and enriching activities—from arts and crafts to beach trips, sports, STEM workshops, and themed adventure days. Our new camp counselor's goal is simple: "We want every child to feel safe, inspired, and excited to come back each day."

This summer's new additions include a weekly theme where kids team up on different projects and activities according to the topic.

Parents, too, are thrilled with the camp's blend of fun and structure. "It's been a lifesaver," said Ali*, mother of two. "The kids come home happy and tired—and they're learning so much without even realizing it." It's making summer unforgettable.



Summer Run Down

Community Mornings

Every week, at our Homeless Ministry we not only offer food or clothing, but we extend dignity, hope, and the love of Christ to those who often feel forgotten.

What began as a simple outreach with sandwiches and water bottles has grown into a vibrant ministry of presence and transformation. We now offer warm meals, hygiene kits, prayer, and most importantly, friendship. We've seen how a kind word or a shared prayer can restore a sense of identity and remind someone that they matter.

But this ministry goes beyond charity. It's rooted in relationship. We walk alongside individuals on their journey, whether it's connecting them to housing services, celebrating sobriety milestones, or just being someone who listens.

This past month, we helped Bob*, a hardship-enduring man, move into his own place and find employment. We continue to enjoy his visits on his days off from work as he always greets with a grateful smile. These stories are what encourage us to continue to invest in this ministry.

Food Donations

Although we are not currently running our regular Food Pantry, we are always finding ways to share food with our community. We have continued to receive weekly Chick-fil-A donations and monthly pantry and baked good donations from other churches and generous donors. These donations are used for our various programs. This summer, our Day Camp families have taken home several extra pantry items each week. We were also able to host a Pop Up Food Pantry earlier this July.

Men's Bible Study

Over the past six months, Men in our church and neighborhood have been meeting on Saturday Mornings from 8 am-9:30 am for breakfast and Bible study. As we have been meeting, we have worked through topics such as C&MA (Christian & Missionary Alliance) distinctives, end-times, and recently, we have been studying the book of Acts alongside our Sunday sermon series. Our Men's Bible Study is a space where men have been able to grow closer to God, while also building brotherhood through sharing life and cooking with one another.

Beckon

Beckon is our discipleship ministry for young men in Albany Park. Through our weekly Bible studies and personal mentorship, we have seen the Lord mold our Beckon men to be more like Him! A highlight of this summer was their day trip to Indiana Dunes.

Kids Club

Kids Club had a few weeks off for the summer and we are starting back up again on Tuesdays from 5-6pm. We walked through the life of Jesus and now we're going to walk through Genesis. A lot of the kids come from homes that have been exposed to Jesus through familial Catholicism. Over the past few months we were able to show them Jesus through many stories. Many of the kids latched on to some of the stories, such as Jesus healing the paralytic who was lowered through the roof and Peter walking on water. We have been emphasizing that Jesus loves them and His death and resurrection are for them, and that Jesus wants a relationship with them, not a casual one from their family. Our Director of Student Ministries in Albany Park, Matt, shared, "I live close to many of the kids and will see them and their families throughout the week. Getting to see them outside of church has been a blessing that strengthens the community we're creating."

CAY Camp

We are eagerly waiting for our Chicago Alive Youth Camp coming up really soon in August! The camp will be at Expeditions Unlimited in the lovely Baraboo, Wisconsin. This year we are expecting to have 100+ children from ages 9 to 17, and the theme will be "I Am the Resurrection and the Life" from John 11. Something new we tried this year was selling Double Good popcorn as a way to fundraise for camp. It was a huge success as we raised over \$2,000, which was far beyond our initial goal! Our hearts are grateful for this support.

**Name changed for privacy and safety reasons.*

Community Member Spotlight

Tom Krakowski is an active member of Family Empowerment Centers & Redemption Church, and he has been a major help for our community throughout the years. We interviewed him to learn a little bit more about his FEC journey.



Tom Krakowski

When and how did you first get connected to Family Empowerment Centers?

I first became connected with the center and the church when I started attending the Food Pantry. People would connect with me there and pray with me. After getting familiar with the pantry I decided to try attending the church on Sunday mornings.

What is your favorite thing about this community and organization?

I am drawn to the way Family Empowerment Centers focuses on community outreach. The people here want to help others in need in a way Christ has shown us. FEC is a place where anyone can get involved, and people are met wherever they are. It is all about bringing people closer to Jesus, and the staff here do what they can along the way.

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How are you involved at the center?

I have volunteered at the center in different areas such as the Food Pantry and Community Mornings. I have helped with cooking, cleaning, and helping other community members move out of their homes.

I am also a part of Redemption Church where I have been able to worship with others and connect through Bible studies and community potlucks.

How have you grown since joining FEC and Redemption Church?

I found that when I try to live a life close to Christ I'm a better person. It helps me stay grounded. Even if I fail, the people here look out for me, and they want the best for me. They help me get back on my feet no matter what. Before I used to only worry about myself. Now I try my best to follow Christ and care for others.

How have you seen God move in this place?

I do see God and his works here in the staff and members trying to help the less fortunate and going the extra mile to make that happen. Now I care about what I do and how I can help others along the way. I see God work when people come to the center and find relief. That happens daily here.



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