



November /December
Newsletter
2025



1533 West Devon Ave.
Chicago, IL
60645

KEEP THE FUTURE BRIGHT CAMPAIGN GOAL \$100,000



A brighter future is what we have been presenting to the majority of under resourced children and families for the past 23 years through our programs and services. We have done this with love and often times a "let's care for people and trust God to provide the resources as we respond" approach. You see much of what we do is done in the real crisis situations of those we serve in real time as they wrestle through personal trauma in their lives. Covid, the Migrant Crisis, and the current fear around ICE Deportations are all systemic crises that we met, and continue to meet, head on. They were not and could not be planned for through fund development in advance. I am proud to say that we have seen the provision of God as we have done this through many faithful donors along the way.

As we approach 2026, expenses are not shrinking, cost of living is increasing, and our needs as an organization are also growing despite some restructuring in the organization. In order to continue at our base line of programmatic care for people we need to see our income increase to match the demand for our services and the increased costs related to the rising costs around us. ***Please considering joining us by making a donation and helping to make our future bright along with the future of those we serve. We cannot do it without you!***

Grateful for those that serve on our Board!

Eli Rodriguez has served on the Board of Directors for over 2 years and has been a close friend of the ministry for many years before that. He had this to say regarding why he serves and helps lead the organization.

"I serve on the Board because I've seen firsthand how the Family Empowerment Centers transforms lives in Rogers Park. This community means so much to Scott and I, and being part of a team that actively supports families and builds hope is both humbling and motivating. I believe when we invest in people, we help shape a stronger future, and serving on the Board allows me to be part of that impact!"



Did you ever meet a Good Samaritan? A stranger that notices your needs, sees you, tries to help in some way? Some of us might have friends, family, people who know us and know what we need and are there for us, but what about a time when you needed something and none of "your people" were there and a stranger stepped in to help?

In Luke 10 Jesus breaks down for a lawyer in his community what it looks like to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself" through the story of the Good Samaritan. It's an interesting story because it covers so much. It touches on loving those in our proximity, loving those who are hurting and helpless, loving those who are different than us (in this case faith background, ethnicity, culture). It touches on "going the extra mile" to care. Jesus doesn't just answer the lawyer's question but paints a descriptive image of what it means to love through a compassionate, tender heart. I don't think Jesus came up with this story without his own intimate knowledge of the love of the Father and He is teaching us once again about our own heart posture.

Our ministry at Family Empowerment Centers/Redemption Church has placed us in the exact location to notice and serve those in need who often are overlooked and unseen in our community. Often the people we are serving don't have anyone else. They come to eat, receive support via access to clothing and toiletry needs, winter coats, etc. They also come for prayer, learning about God's heart through His Word, and help connecting to other resources in our neighborhood (addiction services, additional food pantries, shelters, etc.).

One of our guys that comes for the breakfast hour (but doesn't eat the breakfast) said he comes for prayer and to hear the teaching. (We do a ten-minute devotion Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday with our breakfast community) Another gentleman shared that after 20 years his son came looking for him and that he has an opportunity to repair the relationship – ***he said "this is Jesus helping me".*** Another friend came through after we helped him into an addiction program and said ***"I was dead, but now I am alive. I am sober ten months. I know God is with me."*** He expressed his gratefulness for how God helped him through the ministry here. Lastly, I recently heard from one of the guys, ***"I was a complete atheist, but time here has me thinking about God again."***

I know for myself when I get to hear and see how God's goodness is being experienced by those we serve, my heart feels full and grateful to be a part of what He is accomplishing. We see every day that He is faithful, and we are grateful for all of you who help us accomplish His kingdom work.

Thank you for your prayers, your financial gifts, your food drop-offs, the clothing and diaper resources (donuts), and all the other ways you partner with us!





Thanks to the Pineda-Ayala Family who came out to serve! (Maria and Violet [left], Violet [middle], Brian and Pastor Scott [right])

Every year we get to take part in a Thanksgiving basket giveaway hosted by North Suburban Church in Deerfield, IL. We have been blessed to receive this invitation and opportunity to partner in distributing Thanksgiving baskets to our local community for the past 10+ years. This year we received 200 baskets that we were able to give to our program families as well as surrounding neighbors who came through our center looking for these resources. This has always been a meaningful time for our church family and others who come to volunteer a hand. However, it's never just about the baskets but the opportunity to encourage and pray for our neighbors as well. Rogers Park continues to be home to over 80 languages spoken, a plethora of ethnicities, cultures, religions, etc. and we get to tell His story along the way. **Thank you North Suburban Church for your partnership and support!**

Luis, one of the teens, has been actively involved in church, youth group, and after school program. Hard to believe that he has only been in Chicago for just over a year (He and his mom made the long journey from Venezuela in 2024) and is picking up the English language so quickly. Luis likes spending time serving and building relationships with his peers and mentors, Daniel and Danielle. We are grateful for the ways we see Luis growing in his faith and as a young adult!



"This is my favorite place to be. I get help with my homework, get to hang out while volunteering AND learn about God."

Additional shout outs to church partners. **Thank you St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook Parish**, for the monthly food donations.



Thank you Bloomingdale Church for the Christmas gifts for the children we serve.

Thank you Wellspring Alliance for your continued financial support!



You along with our other donors and partners help to make the future bright for those we serve!

Building Hope : Encouraging Stability : Caring for Souls

I write as an immigrant mother seeking to improve the quality of life for my family, willing to get to know and be part of the community we have chosen as our new home. It is true that mothers carry that essence of protection, secrecy, and caution, but that does not exempt fathers from fulfilling that role.

A new country, a new house and school, although everything new sounds attractive, exciting, even enviable, it still carries a certain degree of unease and fear. Leaving everything familiar behind to dare to explore is for the brave or the curious. Whatever the reason that led to taking those new horizons, it does not take away the challenges that must be faced during the adjustment to that life that is about to begin.



As parents, guardians, or caregivers, we must act as guides, or seeking external help is also acceptable. Let's remember that the emotional impact is more significant for children, and for us as adults, we haven't just moved a few meters; we've moved kilometers, in some cases oceans, from our former homes. Nostalgia pervades our being and can trigger various responses, acting as a protective shield against this new experience.

This is where the support of organizations like the Family Empowerment Center is so important to the immigrant community. Knowing we have spaces that promote healthy coexistence allows for better integration into the city. The after-school program gives us the confidence to let our children socialize and participate in activities that benefit their well-being. The food pantry distribution is a great help to parents who can't work full-time. These programs strengthen the quality of life for those who benefit from them. Thank you to everyone who contributes to keeping these programs running. (By Mayra Alejandra Mireles Garcia)



Daniel has truly been coming into his own as one of our community pastors after graduating from our Greenhouse Leadership Developmental Residency this past summer.

Bob has been a long time member of our community and although his struggle with ALS continues to make it challenging to come out as much as he would like, he continues to bring a smile and laughter to our community.

Recently he had the opportunity to share about his experience of facing homelessness as the building he was in was sold and everyone was asked to move out. It was an overwhelming experience for someone who has a fixed income and who has physical limitations due to his ALS.

We listened as he worried, prayed with him as we talked, helped to find resources for housing, and then at what seemed like the last hour, a door opened up to move into an elevator building (necessary for his wheelchair access) and a rent that was subsidized. What felt like an impossible task was met by a God who does what seems impossible!