

SERVING OUR COMMUNITIES

LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP: REV. DR. TROY UNDERWOOD



2023 has been an incredible year of opportunity after launching the not-for-profit months before the Covid-19 pandemic. BWS Family Life Center did not waiver from providing food to the community. Our robust team of volunteers, along with high school students,

fraternal organizations, and individuals as far as northern Chicago continued their commitment to providing food to more than 10,000 individuals. We are indebted to grow our relationship with the Greater Chicago Food Depository as we continue to create tables of welcome to those we serve.

Our focus on science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) became a reality with the introduction of our first summer camp. The Youth Enrichment Scholar (Y.E.S.) Program was born with a grant made possible by the Chicago Department of Public Health (CCDPH). Students promoted



into grades 3 through 8 participated in a summer program with a focus on STEAM. From a reptile rendezvous at Sandridge Nature Center to adopting a pig at Fair Oaks Farm in Indiana, student lives were enriched and reading, math, and science skills were reinforced.

We also honored our commitment to advocating for those impacted by the carceral system. On August 12, 2023, Second Chance redoubled its commitment to assist individuals by providing resources for expunging or sealing their criminal records.



The Expungement Information Summit facilitated connections between the community and various stakeholders, including judges, the Criminal Bureau of the Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court, attorneys, legal clinics, law enforcement, and other mutual aid organizations. Notably, the summit marked a milestone with a record of seeing nearly 65 individuals seeking to have their records reviewed.

These achievements are possible because of the hands of those who have a heart for the neighbors in our communities. I am grateful to our Board of Directors who have entrusted me with the mission of the BWS Family Life Center. Together we are seeing dynamic change.

I am reminded of the African proverb that says, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." While there is still much work to do, as a team we can achieve our long-term goals.

All that's best,

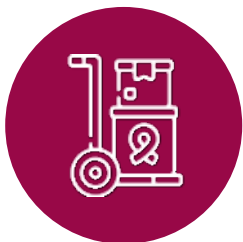
Rev. Dr. Troy C. Underwood



2023 PROGRAM IMPACT: **FOOD PANTRY**



48
VOLUNTEER
EVENTS



3,090
VOLUNTEER
HOURS



\$95,430
VOLUNTEER
ECONOMIC IMPACT



5,430
Number of Annual
Households serviced



10,790
Number of Annual
Individuals serviced



BUILDING COMMUNITY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Over the last three years, the Barbara W. Smith Family Life Center has evolved from an idea into a vital asset for the South Suburbs of Cook County Illinois. When we started in 2020, we had to quickly adapt to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic as we dared to envision a future of individuals and families with programs and resources for human flourishing and well-being. We also dream of having a dedicated space of our own and invite you to share in our mission and journey with us on what has been a transformative journey.

Feeding our neighbors through our food pantry has been a long-term commitment toward building healthy communities, and we've come to realize that providing other resources takes time.



Every third Saturday members of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity volunteer with the food pantry. We are grateful to all of the fraternity and sorority members, as well as youth from Kenwood Academy High School who come to help us each month.

We also have gained some valuable insights along the way, particularly recognizing the inherent value of our architectural assets. The spaces we gather in help to foster an environment that makes the work we are committed to more impactful. Furthermore,

our outreach has engaged more neighboring communities, addressing concerns that impact families and their well-being. Additionally, we have seen the significance of service and how volunteering transforms lives, which allows us to speak confidently about the power of giving back. Of course, the lessons learned meant that we confronted some challenges.

In the West building, where our food pantry operates, we affirm our commitment to the building becoming a beacon of hope as a center for community care. The large, cavernous space has unlimited possibilities. Soon, a section of the building will have its first science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) lab. The STEAM lab will bring emerging technologies to youth, and more is possible as we reimagine old into new.

We know there are still untapped opportunities in an unstable economic climate, we will confront them with resilience and adaptability. So, we are not giving up hope because the walls that were demolished to make room for our first STEAM lab are yet signs of growth. We need your help to grow in 2024!

If you would like to donate to the Barbara W. Smith Family Life Center, you can send a check to:

BWS Family Life Center at Covenant UCC
1130 East 154th Street
South Holland, IL 60473

Or Cashapp:
\$bwslifecenterCUC

or scan the QR code below:

