Interfaith Action of Evanston
2021 Annual Report
2021: A year of resilience and adaptation

Inspired by diverse faiths and shared values, Interfaith Action of Evanston brings people together to serve hungry and homeless people, pursue interfaith dialogue, and engage in advocacy that promotes social justice for those we serve.

For Interfaith Action of Evanston, 2021 was the year we discovered our organization’s ability to adapt to challenges with resourcefulness and resilience. This adaptability was true of our efforts to continue providing services to people experiencing homelessness and hunger in the face of a pandemic as well as raise the funds necessary to support these activities.

With many places closed to folks seeking escape from the cold, we stepped up to provide a regular Warming Center every afternoon at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church. That center was open all day Saturday and Sunday, providing not just a warm place to be but also meals from our Soup Kitchens and friends—all without a long trek through the cold.

In January, after realizing it wasn’t practical to hold a Walk for Warmth, we pivoted to a car parade, the Walk for Warmth on Wheels. This event, like its predecessor, exceeded expectations in both participation and fundraising. More than 100 cars wound their way from the Evanston Civic Center parking lot, traveling a two-mile circuit past all the Overnight Emergency Shelter host churches, and ending up at the Unitarian Church.

The volunteers needed to pull off such an event safely drew on the expertise developed the previous year by our Producemobile team, when it shifted its food distribution from in-person pickup to putting groceries in cars lined up in the Levy Center parking lot. Fortunately, in 2021, we could return to the Robert Crown Community Center at mid-year and once again are providing in-person distribution.

We expanded the SNAPGap program, thanks to the generosity of our faith communities and volunteers. This community always responded to the call for items, such as toiletries and cleaning supplies, that are life necessities but not covered by SNAP, the federal assistance program. There are now new collections every month with a streamlined donation process that uses the Producemobile as a distribution point.

We continue to do everything we can to meet our mission, whether it is filling the gaps or working toward broader interfaith goals such as racial equity.

One way we pursued this in 2021 was by launching social justice committee groups that continue to expand and offer a way to meet that mission of interfaith dialogue. What has resulted is a growing collaboration among faith communities around topics of common concern, such as reparations and issues of racial equity.

As year’s end, we were also engaging with other organizations in Evanston to seek a permanent shelter solution, and while that work is just beginning, we are determined to bring all we can to that process.

We continue to be grateful for the work of our hundreds of volunteers and donors. In this, our first annual report, we are publicly acknowledging all who have given in the past year, and we thank you for that support.

Mekha Green
President

Susan Murphy
Executive Director
Look What We Did in 2021

Hospitality Center

Open 260 days, IAE’s Hospitality Center hosted 344 individuals with 4763 visits. We had 186 men, 46 women and 109 with no data. Guests took advantage of the Center’s special services as follows:

- **Computer Training**: 133 individuals visited 1,363 times
- **Employment Options**: 243 people visited 107 times

Emergency Overnight Shelter

Open for 140 nights during the cold weather season, November 2020-March 2021, the emergency overnight shelter hosted 120 different individuals (106 men, 17 women). The shelters were hosted by six faith communities in the downtown Evanston area for two-three weeks each: Beth Emet the Free Synagogue, First United Methodist Church, First Congregational Church, St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, and the Unitarian Church of Evanston.

Warming Center

With stores and libraries closed for the pandemic, IAE consolidated and expanded its Warming Center hours in 2021. Held at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, the Warming Center opened for 76 days and served 84 different individuals (78 men, 16 women) between November 2020 and March 2021 and 62 different individuals between January 1 and December 31 of 2021 (50 men, 12 women).

Producemobile

The Producemobile supplied more than 57 tons or 114,951 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to 8,425 people. This activity is made possible by our partnership with the Chicago Food Depository, the City of Evanston, and the 451 volunteers who distribute it each month. Additionally, the new SNAPGap initiative distributed approximately 6,580 cleaning and hygiene items such as laundry soap, hand soap, toilet paper, toothpaste, shampoo, etc., donated primarily by IAE’s faith community members.

Soup Kitchens

Evanston Soup Kitchens worked together to ensure continuity for our homeless and hungry neighbors. Despite the pandemic, Soup Kitchens continued to operate, purchasing meals from local restaurants that were distributed rather than consumed on site due to COVID regulations.
2021 Financials

Broad Financial Support

Interfaith Action of Evanston benefits from broad financial support from individuals, corporations, and foundations throughout the area and its member faith communities – as evidenced by the long list of donors that appears on the following pages. Response in 2021 was especially strong among donors who witnessed the effect COVID-19 was having on those living on the margins and the consequent impact on IAE’s operations.

The pandemic also caused IAE’s fundraising events to pivot: The annual Walk for Warmth event transitioned to Walk for Warmth on Wheels as cars driving through the city replaced walkers, raising $38,055 as well as visibility for the organization. The spring event, which celebrated the 35th anniversary of the Hospitality Center, was conducted virtually, raising $23,205.

Volunteers and In-Kind Donations

In addition to financial assistance, donors showed support for IAE and its mission in the form of thousands of hours of volunteer time and generous in-kind gifts. These non-cash contributions have made it possible for IAE to expand its services while keeping expenses under control. Look no further than:

- The committed cadre of volunteers that welcome guests to the Hospitality Center, distribute fresh fruits and vegetables at the monthly Producemobile, serve meals at the soup kitchens, and set up cots at the emergency overnight shelter.
- The generosity of the faith communities that offer their facilities rent-free.
- Small local businesses and large corporations alike – businesses like Beth’s Little Bake Shoppe, whose baked goods regularly arrive at the Hospitality Center; Bomba’s, which has donated more than a thousand pair of socks to give to guests; and Earth Breeze, whose detergent sheets are being distributed at the Producemobile as part of the SNAPGap program.
Thanks to Our Donors

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In addition to these funds, every year our loyal volunteers provide thousands of dollars worth of in-kind donations particularly food at the Soup Kitchens, and the Hospitality Center and life necessities through our SNAPGap program.

THANK YOU!