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THE NORTH LAWNDALE COMMUNITY NEWS

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PROVIDING INFORMATION ON RESOURCES AND EVENTS THAT IMPROVE THE LIFESTYLE OF INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IN OUR COMMUNITY

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Montclare Lawndale Supportive Living Community Lawndale Earns National Silver Award for Excellence in Quality



Montclare Lawndale Supportive Living Community Lawndale, Executive Director John Sease



Staff of Montclare Lawndale Bottom left: Venata, Kokenya, John Sease (Executive Director), June, Vicki, Tymika, Top Left: Andrea, Temia, Manetha, Lanettia, and Chanel

Montclare Lawndale Supportive Living Community Lawndale, a fixture in Chicago's West Side senior-care community, has earned a prestigious Silver Award for Quality Excellence from the American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL) — placing the facility among the nation's top performers in long-term and assisted-living care.

Senior Executive Director John Sease proudly shared the accomplishment, describing it as the result of a "journey toward excellence" that began several years ago.

"We received our Bronze Award in 2023," Sease said, "and now the Silver shows we've advanced to the next level — it means we're not just meeting standards, we're developing systems of excellence."

According to Sease, the AHCA/NCAL Quality Award Program recognizes facilities that demonstrate commitment to improving the lives of residents through leadership, strategic planning, and measurable results. Out of thousands of care centers across the country, only 657 earned Bronze awards, 266 achieved Silver, and just three nationwide reached the Gold level this year.

"To be among that group says

a lot about the dedication of our staff," Sease noted. "It's not easy — the Silver application alone was 26 pages long and took months of data, analysis, and reflection."

The application required facilities to document everything from strategic responses and workforce engagement to operational outcomes and measurable results. Montclare's submission included detailed profiles of leadership practices, survey results, and resident satisfaction data.

Each participating organization must show its performance across several categories, including hospitalization rates, occupancy, family and employee satisfaction, and regulatory compliance.

Montclare's results were particularly strong in the area of state regulatory surveys. The facility achieved deficiency-free inspections for three consecutive years — 2023, 2024, and 2025 — an impressive feat in an industry where hundreds of compliance points are reviewed.

"Inspectors look at everything," Sease explained. "They check medication accuracy, food temperatures, activity calendars, emergency plans, and even how quickly staff

respond to call lights. It's a total review of operations."

Montclare also demonstrated improvements in fall reduction, See Montclare page 2

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Silver Award for Quality Excellence from the American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL)

The North Lawndale Community News

The North Lawndale Community News is published weekly by Strategic Human Services. Our purpose is to help inform the communities we serve on resources, events, and issues relevant to them. Our community includes those who live, work, worship in, and/or care about North Lawndale and its neighboring communities. Our focus is on positive, productive solutions, that will improve the lifestyle of community members.

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DCEO through State Rep. Art Turner, The McCormick Tribune Foundation, the National Black Caucus of States Institute, Advocate Bethany Fund, and contributions from our community, advertisers, and readers. The North Lawndale

Community News was started with a grant from the North Lawndale Small Grants Initiative now known as the Small Grants Human Development Corporation, and the Steans Family Foundation.



Circulation Verification Council is a third party agency that audits and verifies our circulation which is currently at 15,000 issues per publication.

Montclare from front page antipsychotic medication use, and employee turnover, while maintaining strong financial and operational margins.

"We've worked hard to improve not just care quality but the stability of our team," Sease said. "Our employee satisfaction scores have gone up, and that translates directly to better care for residents."

Learning Through the Process

The AHCA/NCAL Quality Award program is designed as a progressive journey — Bronze for commitment, Silver for achievement, and Gold for sustained excellence. For Sease and his team, the process was as much about introspection as it was about recognition.

"Writing the application forces you to look in the mirror," Sease said. "It makes you ask: how do we engage our staff? How do we measure results? What can we do better?"

He described the process as both challenging and rewarding.

"Not every metric has to be perfect — the goal is to identify where you can grow," he said. "It's about continuous quality improvement."

A Team Effort from Top to Bottom

Sease credited the award to the dedication of Montclare's entire



Montclare Lawndale staff dressed as Men in Black for their Halloween event.

team, along with support from regional leadership.

"We worked endless hours," he said. "Our regional director of operations, Tasha Williams, played a huge role in helping us organize and refine our submission. It truly was a team effort."

The application process began in August 2024 and required months of internal review, document preparation, and data analysis. "We learned a lot about ourselves along the way," Sease added. "As you explain your systems and processes, you start to see new ways to improve

them."

Recognition on the National Stage

Montclare's leadership attended the AHCA/NCAL National Convention in Las Vegas this fall, where hundreds of honorees gathered to celebrate their achievements.

"There were thousands of people there," Sease recalled. "We sat in the Silver section — it was an incredible experience to see how many others are striving for excellence across the country."

While the physical award will be shipped to the facility, Sease said the real reward comes from seeing residents and families benefit from the team's dedication.

"It's not just about a plaque," he said. "It's about knowing our residents are receiving the best care possible — that's what this recognition truly represents."

Looking Ahead to Gold

With two milestones behind them, Montclare is already looking toward the future. The next step — the Gold Award for Quality Excellence — is an even higher bar, one achieved by only a handful of facilities nationwide.

"Gold is tough," Sease admitted. "You have to demonstrate consistent, outstanding results over time. But we're motivated — it's our next goal."

For now, the team is celebrating their Silver achievement while staying focused on the same mission that started their journey: providing compassionate, high-quality care for Chicago's seniors.

"This award validates the hard work of everyone here," Sease said. "It shows that when you care deeply, measure what matters, and keep improving, excellence becomes part of your culture."

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Apostle Sandie Norman, Chain Breakers leads 24-hour street ministry through city “hot spots” to bring light, love, and hope

Apostle Sandie Norman stood in front of a small crowd gathered near a West Side gas station—one of several violent crime hot spots in Area 4. Her voice carried over gospel music and the hum of passing cars as she introduced her mission: “We’re here to bring light, love, and the presence of God into the streets.”

Norman leads Chain Breakers VIP Ministries, a name that stands for Violence Intervention and Prevention. On this October weekend, she and her team organized “VIP Day Chicago,” a 24-hour prayer and worship outreach across the city’s toughest neighborhoods.

“We serve hundreds of people with home-cooked meals, clothing, and community resources,” Norman said. “We go where the pain is, where people need to see the church show up.”

The Chain Breakers team began their outreach in Little Village, then moved west to Garfield Park and along Madison Street—stopping at intersections where gun violence has taken lives. Their work covers police Districts 10, 11, and 15, areas known for some of the city’s highest rates of shootings.

Norman coordinates directly with Chicago Police Area 4 officers to identify the “hottest spots”—gas stations, liquor stores, and street corners where shootings have occurred. One such site recently saw the killing of a young woman, just two weeks before the ministry arrived.

“The police said three people have been killed near here in the past year,” she said. “We come to those corners to pray, to feed people, and to remind them

they are loved.”

The outreach includes hot meals, clothing drives, and prayer circles for residents and passersby. “I tell my volunteers, don’t bring anything you wouldn’t wear yourself,” Norman said. “We want people to have the best—because that’s what God gives us.”

Norman’s street ministry began before the pandemic, but her call to the streets intensified after her own son was shot three times.

“My life is centered around prayer and warfare,” she said. “I pray for my children, that the streets don’t take them. That’s why this is real to me.”

When churches closed during COVID-19, Norman felt a divine instruction to “go out.” She began walking neighborhoods with a microphone, praying over buildings and people. Today, she travels internationally—to Dubai, London, and beyond—but always returns home to the West Side, where her heart and ministry remain rooted.

Although Chain Breakers operates without a physical building, Norman hopes to establish one soon.

“We need a space where we can pull people in after the outreach,” she said. “Once we leave, they need a place to go—somewhere for training, jobs, and programs for the youth.”

Her vision includes workforce development, technology and AI training, and job readiness programs. “Our young people need skills and opportunity,” she said. “That’s how we stop the

Norman believes every church should have a street ministry.



Apostle Sandie Norman and volunteers of Chain Breakers distribute food and pray with residents near Madison Street and Springfield Ave.



Apostle Sandie Norman, founder of Chain Breakers Street Ministry coordinating with violence hotspots on the streets of the Westside and Southside.

“Too many pastors don’t live in the neighborhoods they serve,” she said. “We’ve got killings happening across the street from churches, and the people don’t even know the victims. That has to change.”

Her work, powered mostly by personal funds and volunteers, draws inspiration from her belief that the church belongs where the people are.

“It’s a lot of darkness out here,” Norman said, scanning the street where a supply truck pulled into the recently reopened gas station. “But wherever there’s darkness, God sends light—and that’s why we’re here.”



Apostle Sandie Norman and volunteers of Chain Breakers distribute food, clothing, spiritual goodness and pray with residents on Roosevelt Rd near Avers Ave..



Chain Breakers VIP Ministries held a 24-hour outreach called “VIP Day Chicago,” offering meals, clothing, and prayer at violence hot spots across Area 4

Businesses Closing on Chicago's West Side

What's Behind the Trend and What It Means for the Neighborhoods

Across Chicago's West Side, from Austin and North Lawndale to Garfield Park and beyond, one troubling trend has become hard to ignore: businesses are shutting their doors at an increasing rate, leaving empty storefronts, rising food-insecurity risks and fewer jobs in neighborhoods already under strain.

A Rapid Decline in Local Commerce
According to city data, nearly one in five Chicago businesses that were operating in 2015 are no longer open in 2024. In West and South Side neighborhoods the impact is especially acute: once-strong business corridors now feature storefronts boarded up or rented out at minimal occupancy.

One particularly significant headline: a discount grocery chain closed its only branch in West Pullman, leaving the community without an easily accessible full-line grocer. Meanwhile, in Garfield Park, when another grocer left the area, local residents described the closure as a blow to basic food access and infrastructure.

Why Are Businesses Leaving?

Community leaders and business

analysts point to a number of overlapping factors:

- High operational costs, including rent, utilities and wages.
- Declining foot-traffic in some corridors, especially where public transit or nearby employment has weakened.
- Rising crime, theft and insecurity — issues that impose extra cost burdens on smaller businesses. The impact of the pandemic, supply chain disruptions and shifting consumer behavior towards online retail or suburban shopping.

In the case of grocery and food retail, the fact that many West Side areas were already underserved: a closure thus exacerbates a “food desert” or “food apartheid” condition.

Local Impacts: Empty Blocks, Lost Jobs, and Community Strain

For residents the consequences are real. Empty storefronts signal declining neighborhood vitality, fewer places to shop locally, and fewer jobs for community members. One West Side resident noted how a former grocery closure forced longer travel to access fresh produce.

Business owners report they're caught in a bind: rising costs plus less reliable local customer bases. One chef operating in West Town commented, “Even places that seem busy often close within a year or two.”

What Can Be Done?

Local leaders and economic-development advocates suggest a multi-pronged response:

- Incentives and supports for small and minority-owned businesses: grants, subsidized rents, security assistance.
- Community-based retail development: instead of purely corporate chains, more emphasis on local ownership and tailored retail models.
- Improved infrastructure and safety in business corridors: better lighting, more foot traffic, coordinated patrols.
- Grocery and food access investment: filling the gaps where large chains exit, especially in low-income neighborhoods. One redevelopment project — turning a former grocer site into a mixed-use building with a ground-floor grocery — is underway on the West

Side as a response.

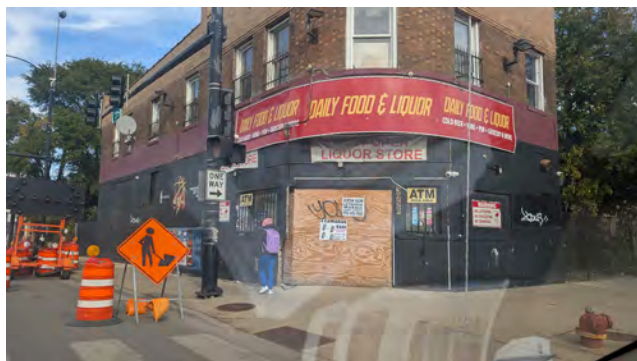
- Business retention efforts: before a store announces closure, community partners could intervene with mediation, financial support, or alternative business models.

The Way Forward

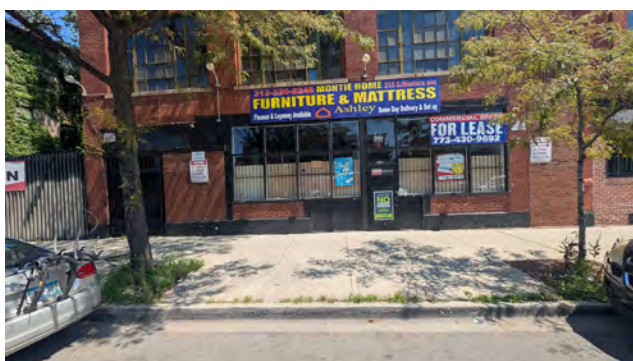
As Chicago's West Side navigates this transition, the risk is that declining business presence deepens economic and social isolation. But it doesn't have to be a foregone conclusion. With targeted investment, community engagement and strategic partnerships, neighborhoods can begin reversing the trend: replacing closures with new businesses, stronger local ownership, and retail ecosystems that serve the people who live there.

“If one store leaves and then we're screwed,” said a local food-access advocate, “then we really have a problem about the food infrastructure and ecosystem in communities.”

In a time when storefronts are closing, the effort must be made to make what opens matter — for employment, for access, for community resilience.



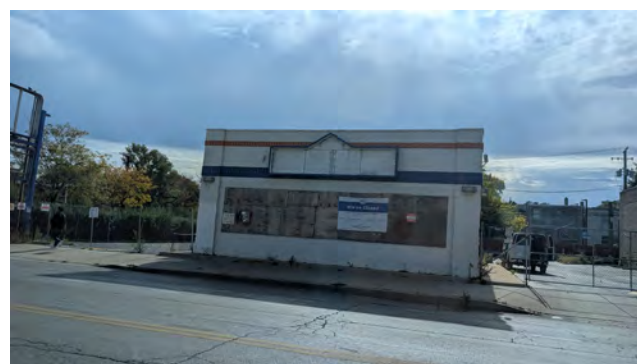
Business closed on Pulaski Rd



Business closed on 215 S Western Ave.



Business closed on Pulaski Rd



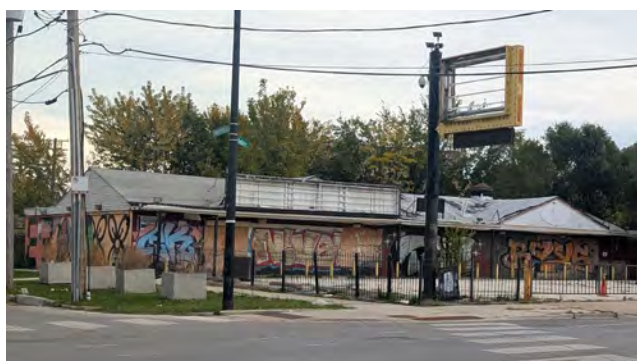
Closed White Castle on Madison Ave. near Springfield Ave. A torn down Aldi's was in the next block East of it.



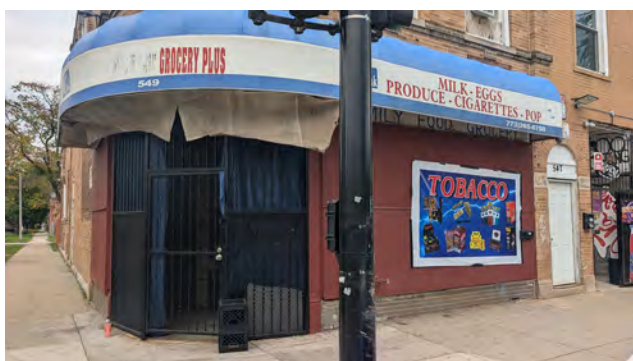
Business closed East of it.



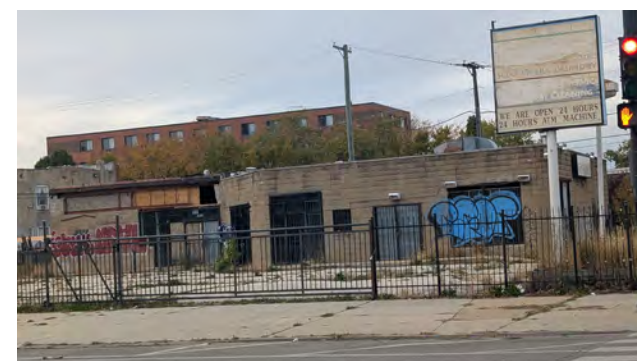
Businesses closed on Madison Ave. near Kedzie Ave.



Businesses closed on Kedzie Ave. north of Washington Blvd.



Businesses closed on Pulaski Blvd in the 500 block South



Businesses closed on Washington Blvd near Kedzie Ave.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF BRAD CUMMINGS



HSI Executive Director and co-chair of the Voice Newspapers advisory board, Donald Dew, gave a heartfelt speech about the many memories he shared with Brad.



Dr. Louverta Hurt used the spoken words to let everyone know how she felt about Brad.



Wilner Shaw shared one of the conversations she had with Brad about growing up in Milwaukee with his grandmother.



Publisher, Isaac Jones, gets all choked up discussing the 40 years he and Brad spent Publishing the newspapers together.



At Brad's Celebration of Life memorial service, State Rep. LaShawn K. Ford, founder of the Heroin/Opioid Task Force, spoke about the breakfast meetings he had with Brad discussing how the task force could save lives on the West Side of Chicago.



Brad's family member and friend posed for a group picture at his Celebration of Life memorial service left to right brother-in-law and sister Mark & Mary Beth Lawton, Sarah & Clara Bickler (niece & great niece) and Marie Calabria a family friend.



When Congressman Danny K. Davis came to the podium, he elaborated on the meeting at Brad's apartment and explained how the Voice Newspapers had been established.



Bernetta Howell Barrett, Founder/President and CEO of Pathfinders Prevention Education Fund. Whom I affectionately call the mother of the Voice Newspapers, reflects on her memories of Brad Cummings Standing by her side is her daughter, Dr. Cynthia Henderson.



Former public relations director of Loretto Hospital, founder of the Austin Chamber of Commerce and current State Representative Camille Lilly expressed her first meeting with Brad.



Alderwoman Emma Mitts had an emotional moment reminiscing about the 7 a.m. wake-up calls she had with Brad about attending a press conference in the 37th ward. Her daughter, Latonya Mitts, who is running for State Representative, 8th District, is next to her mother, giving support.

Story on pg.2

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF BRAD CUMMINGS

Brad's life was tragically cut short on June 26, 2025, in an apartment fire on the West Side of Chicago in the Austin community. Along with Brad, 28-year-old Destiny Brown Henry, five-year-old Jayson Henry, and his mother, 32-year-old Regina (Gina) Brown Henry, also lost their lives. This horrific incident was not just an accident; it was a senseless act of domestic violence.

Brad, being a reporter / "The Newpaperman", believed in truth, transparency and uncovering injustice, while honoring the lives of those taken too soon. Brad would want you to know the full story.

The strokes of a reporter's pen hit the paper in Chicago, Illinois, on November 18, when G. Bradley "Brad" Cummings came into the world. Adopted as a baby by George and Ada Cummings, Brad grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. With a brilliant mind, he left for George Washington University at just 16 years old.

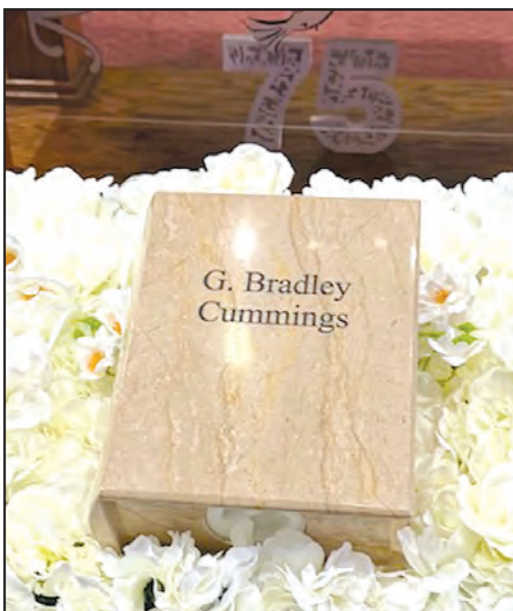
His first job after college was as Public Relations Director for the traveling circus, Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey, where, as he liked to say, "I ran away to the big top."

Brad had an infinite love for his community and a deep passion for civil rights. Inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., he stood not in the shadows but in the forefront attending rallies, sharing information, believing in freedom of the press, and working to remove disparities. Equality for all was his mantra.

An avid reader who always kept his library card on hand, Brad loved education and the lifelong pursuit of knowledge.

After leaving the circus, Brad returned to downtown Chicago as an account executive for a prominent advertising agency and public relations firm. During this time, Roger Ebert sightings became a running joke. Strangers would stop him to say, "I don't agree with your movie review," and Brad would laugh, replying, "Not Me."

The story dug deeper. Brad's next chapter brought him to Chicago's West Side, where he served as Marketing Research Development Director for Edgewater and Saint Anne's Hospital. He was more than just a Marketing Director, he was a bridge between the organization and the people it served, a trusted voice who connected needs with resources and hope with action. After the hospital's closure, Brad's compassion for the community only grew stronger. As a heartbeat in the community the "Voice" that listened, the hand that reached out and the spirit that brought people from all cultures and walks of life together. His commitment to uncovering truths and amplifying unheard voices led him to dig even deeper into the issues affecting everyday people.



In 1985, Brad and Isaac founded "THE AUSTIN VOICE Newspaper," a publication dedicated to speaking for those without a voice. For decades, Brad & Isaac used words and photos to shine light where others saw darkness, giving a platform to stories that might otherwise have been forgotten. Together, they ran the "VOICE" faithfully until Brad's untimely passing.

His compassion for the community led him to serve on

numerous boards and committees, always using the paper as a tool to keep residents informed. Brad served as President of the Austin Business Council, founded the Austin AIDS Prevention Coalition, which evolved into the Westside HIV/AIDS Regional Planning Council (WHARP). Brad became a tireless advocate in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Chicago's West Side African American communities. Brad introduced the nation's first guidebook for implementing successful youth HIV prevention programs and warned of the rising rate of HIV cases among women in Chicago while serving as Chair of the Communications & Community Relations Committee. Brad also served as an Advisory Board Member of Pathfinders Prevention Education

Fund. Additionally, Brad served as a member of the board of directors of Healthy Family Chicago and the Prosser High School Local School Council, as well as secretary for the Paul Simon Job Corps Center Community Relation Council.

Brad was preceded in death by his beloved grandmother Verna; his parents, George and Ada Cummings; his aunts, Ethel and Maxine; and his uncles, Dan and Marv.

He leaves to cherish his memory: his sister Mary Beth Lawton (Mark); his niece Sarah J. Bickler (Adam); his great-niece and great-nephew, Isaac Bickler and Clara Bickler; his "brother from another mother," business partner, and dear friend Isaac Jones and his wife Loretta Jones; his cherished staff at The Voice Newspapers, who worked alongside him for more than 40 years. Close friends and elected officials, Congressman Danny K. Davis State Rep. La Shawn K. Ford and Alderwoman Emma Mitts, to name a few.

Brad's legacy is one of service, justice, and love for community A VOICE that will echo in Chicago for years to come.

A very, very special thank you from Brad's sister, Mary Beth Lawton.

On behalf of the G. Bradley Cummings family, We would like to personally thank everyone involved in making his Homegoing a Success, including the speakers, singers, and contributors, for your thoughtful words, as well as your spiritual voices; they deeply moved us. Brad was brought back to life. We felt his presence all around us. And for that, we are profoundly and internally grateful. Thank you Dr. Nicole "Nikki" Harvey.

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Greater Saint John Bible Church Pastor Ira Acree lead off with a powerful prayer at Brad Cummings' Celebration of Life homegoing.



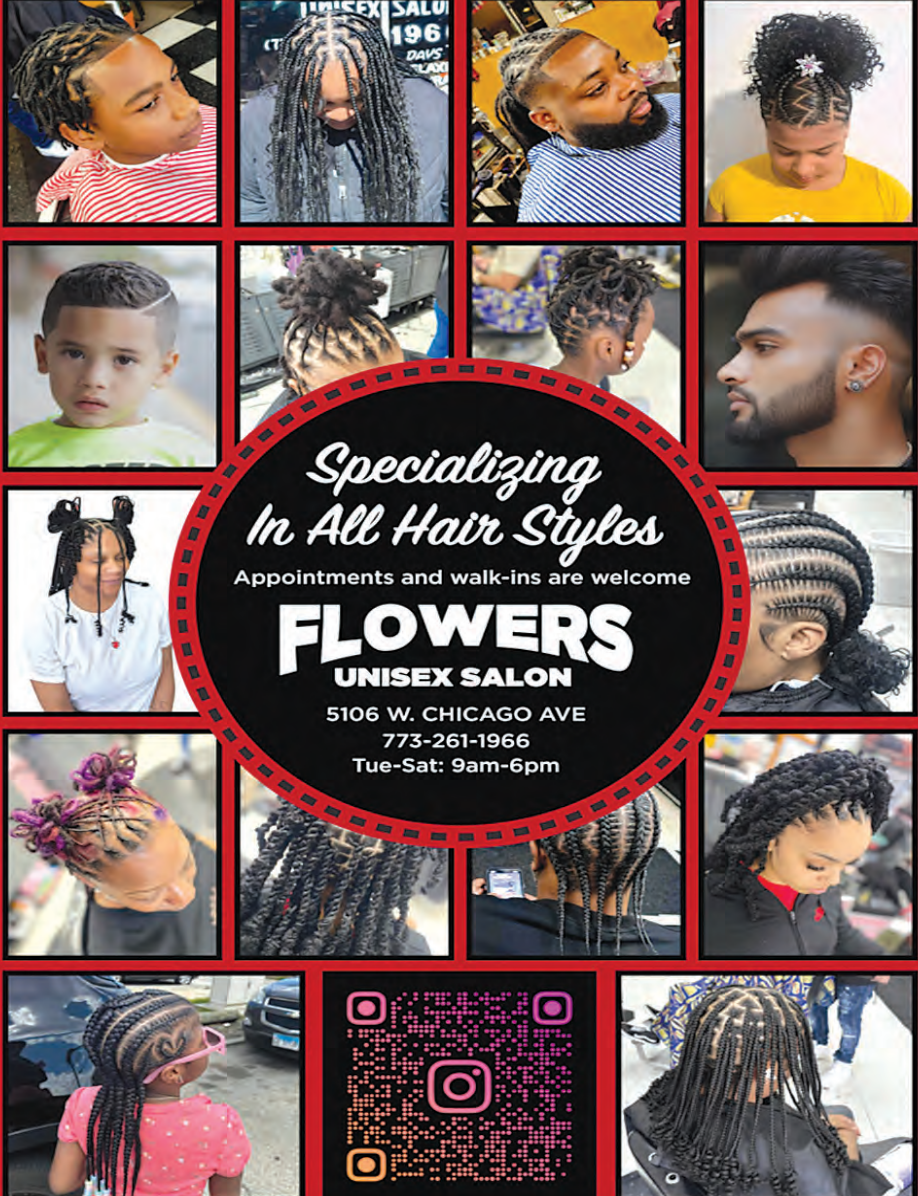
Beth Allen, who served as the Community Liaison of the Chicago Paul Simon Job Corps Center, stated Brad came to the Center with a negative perspective but left as a member of community relation Council after taking a tour of the campus.

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Faith, Families, and Fear: Community Voices Around the ICE Facility in Broadview

Just beyond Chicago’s western border sits a quiet but heavily guarded federal building that has become a symbol of both anxiety and activism for immigrant families across the region — the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) processing center in Broadview.

Every week, families gather outside the facility, many before dawn, waiting for a glimpse of loved ones who are being detained, transferred, or deported. While the building looks like a standard government office, it serves as one of the Midwest’s main ICE detention and removal points, processing individuals from Illinois and neighboring states.

For years, faith-based groups and immigrant-rights advocates have stood outside the Broadview facility every Friday morning. They form a small circle for prayer, singing, and support — what they call the Broadview Friday Morning Vigil. Led by coalitions such as the Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants (ICDI), the vigils offer a moment of compassion amid an otherwise tense and bureaucratic process.

“We’re here to remind everyone that these are human beings — mothers, fathers, and children,” said Rev. David Kelly of the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation. “Our presence says they are not forgotten.”

The Broadview ICE facility has operated for decades, initially used by the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) before becoming part of ICE after the Department of Homeland Security was established in 2003. The site is mainly used for short-term detention, processing, and deportation logistics, rather than long-term holding.

Still, its presence has sparked long-running concerns about transparency and accountability. Advocates argue that individuals are sometimes moved to Broadview with little notice, leaving families and attorneys scrambling to locate them before deportation.

“People are often taken from local jails and sent here without the family knowing,” said Maria Torres, an organizer with Organized Communities Against Deportations (OCAD). “For many, Broadview is the last stop before they are deported.”

Residents from Chicago’s West Side particularly neighborhoods with growing immigrant populations such as Little Village, North Lawndale, and Austin — say the facility’s operations have ripple effects across families, schools, and workplaces. The uncertainty around deportations often creates fear in communities that already face social and economic challenges.

At the same time, Broadview has also become a hub for solidarity and outreach. Volunteers from across Cook County gather weekly to offer legal information, moral support, and sometimes simple gestures like coffee or snacks for waiting family members.

Local faith leaders and community groups are calling for more humane immigration policies and greater local oversight of detention practices. Many point out that Chicago identifies as a “Welcoming City,” yet its proximity to Broadview ICE represents an unresolved contradiction.

“We need a system that values dignity and due process,” said Apostle Sandy Norman of Chain Breakers Ministry, who has visited Broadview to pray with families. “This is about compassion — about treating people the way we’d want our own families treated.”

As national debates over immigration enforcement continue, Broadview stands as both a physical and moral crossroads — one that challenges the Chicago area to reflect on how justice, safety, and humanity intersect.

- Weekly Vigil: Every Friday, 7:15 a.m. outside the Broadview ICE Detention Center, 1930 Beach St., Broadview, IL.
- More Info: icdichicago.org



Entrance to the ICE processing center in Broadview, which has recently drawn national attention due to protests and a lawsuit over conditions. The federal building in Broadview serves as the primary ICE processing facility for the Chicago area.

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What the Government Shutdown Means for SNAP Food Assistance on the West Side



The Greater Chicago Food Depository issuing food on 16th Street and Hamlin Blvd in front of Access Community Health Westside.



Ark Church Food Pantry at 5040 W. Roosevelt Road issuing food on Roosevelt Rd Street and near Cicero was packed with residents looking to help their food supply.

With the federal government shutdown now stretching into its fifth week, thousands of West Side families who rely on SNAP food-benefit assistance are facing uncertainty, disruption and potential hardship.

SNAP provides hundreds of dollars each month to low-income households so they can buy groceries. According to federal data, the program serves roughly 42 million Americans—about one in eight—and distributes billions in benefits each year.

What's happening?

The key issue: Because Congress has not approved new funding and the appropriation lapse continues, federal funds that cover SNAP benefits are running out. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has warned states that if the shutdown continues past November 1, the agency may not issue regular SNAP benefits for November.

In states like Oregon, officials say: "If the shutdown continues into November, SNAP benefits will not be issued until federal funding resumes."

And in New York, the state is preparing for delay:

"On Oct. 10, 2025, the federal government warned that there may not be enough funding to pay November SNAP benefits if the appropriation lapse continues past Nov. 1."

What this means for West Side residents

For families in neighborhoods such as Austin, Garfield Park, North Lawndale and Little Village, the stakes are high.

- Households that rely on SNAP often depend on it for more than just "extra groceries." Many use it for their primary food budget. Research shows that for low-income households, SNAP may cover more than 60 % of monthly grocery spending.

- If benefits are delayed or cut, families will have to scramble: choosing between paying utility bills, paying rent, or buying food.

- Local food banks and pantries are already under strain. One national

see **SNAP** page 11



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Nov 14th- Sip-N-Paint- 1pm-3pm

Nov 21st -Friendsgiving Pie Social (Bring a friend) 1pm-3pm

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN by the West Side Expanded Mental Health Services Program Commission that a public hearing will be held on the proposed annual budget and appropriation ordinance for the West Side Expanded Mental Health Services Program on November 17, 2025 at 7:30 pm at The Inspire Business Center, 1016 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, IL 60607.

Governing Commission of the West Side Expanded Mental Health Services Program.

By: Zashandra Wright, Chairperson

SNAP from page 10

nonprofit reports that SNAP typically provides nine meals for every one meal provided by food banks — so if SNAP drops off, the gap is huge.

What about October and earlier?

Here is some good news: For most states, October SNAP benefits are still expected to be issued “as usual,” because those funds were already approved prior to the shutdown. But the real concern is November and beyond — when new funding is required to continue the program.

What you can do — steps for West Side households

Community organizations and state agencies are recommending residents take the following proactive steps:

- Check your EBT card balance and plan ahead. If you have leftover benefits from previous months, those may still be available to use.
- Know where your local food pantries and support services are located — in some cases you may need to rely more heavily on them.
- Stay in contact with your state/local SNAP office. They will be issuing updates via websites, social media and newsletters about benefit timing and eligibility.
- Register for alerts or text messages from your benefit agency so you receive notifications promptly.
- If you are not already on SNAP but may qualify, you can still apply — but be aware that if the shutdown continues, newly approved applicants may face delays in receiving benefits.

What community groups are saying

Local service providers on the West Side are mobilizing. A spokesperson for a West Side food bank noted:

“If the SNAP program pauses or drops off, the number of people coming through our doors will go up

— and quickly. We simply don’t have the capacity to absorb tens of thousands more without significant support.”

Why we’re here

The reason the shutdown is affecting SNAP is because while the program is mandatory (i.e., eligible households must receive benefits), the funds to administer and distribute those benefits must be appropriated by Congress each year. When funding lapses, the USDA warns it may no longer have legal authority to issue new benefits until funding is restored.

What comes next?

Two federal judges have recently ruled that the USDA must continue payments from contingency funds and cannot simply stop the program

— but the rulings leave many unanswered questions about timing, amount and processing delays.

For now, West Side households and community service groups are preparing for the worst and hoping for a quick resolution. If the shutdown ends soon and funds are approved, November benefits may be paid retroactively — but if it drags on, families could face a major gap in support.

If you’re a SNAP recipient in West Side Chicago, keep using any existing benefits you have, call your state SNAP office for updates, identify local assistance now, and plan for the possibility that November benefits may be delayed. Every dollar, every meal matters — and the local network of neighbors, food banks and service groups will need to pull together.



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Ark Church Food Pantry at 5040 W. Roosevelt Road issuing food on Roosevelt Rd Street and near Cicero was packed with a long line residents looking to help their food supply. Many found out through social media.

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