Plans were just about set for EWAN’s March 17th Spring Volunteer Training. Our Special Events Committee was ready with green napkins and shamrock decorations to brighten our traditional “community salad” lunch. A speaker from The People’s Resource Center was lined up to tell us about its programs.

By March 15th the virus situation was heating up enough for me to send an email to volunteers saying we’d go ahead and meet, but maybe we shouldn’t share a salad. The speaker cancelled the day before, and a small group of ten ended up meeting. We discussed a few modifications we’d put in place for a couple of weeks while the virus did its thing.

Next it became clear our board meeting scheduled for the 18th would have to be cancelled. The Community Bank, where we meet, wasn’t allowing groups in. St. Peters didn’t want us in their meeting rooms either. Zoom meetings had not yet become a part of everyone’s lexicon.

Just days later, reality truly sank in, and EWAN had to close its purple door to in-person meetings. All contact would be by phone, and we quickly devised procedures to handle paperwork by email. Further, a number of volunteers regretted to say they could not risk working during the pandemic.

At the start, our newly minted Director of Volunteers and Training, Mary Callahan, and I manned the phones as we tried to work out how many people could safely operate at the site. Ultimately, we settled on a pared down model of two volunteers in the office each day.

Early April was the craziest time, as people newly out of work scrambled to pay their rents. Families fretted about feeding their kids in the absence of school lunches. And we worried that at the rate we were going, we’d be out of money by mid-summer.

Weeks have turned into months, and we continue to operate under this new format. We have welcomed back a few more volunteers, and have gotten adept at deciphering bad photos of leases printed from the computer.

We truly miss the face-to-face encounters with our clients though. The phone doesn’t offer the same sense of personal connection. We hope that before long we will be able to modify our space and welcome clients in again.

Page two of this newsletter will provide a more detailed look at how the virus has impacted EWAN’s numbers.

Throughout this ordeal, I have been so grateful for EWAN’s very existence. I often wonder what people would do if we weren’t here. It feels like we were made for this moment. I’ve been equally grateful for the tremendous support from the community without which we couldn’t do what we do; we will not be out of funds by mid-summer. Elmhurst should be proud!

Jackie Crnkovich, Exec. Dir.
The need for help is great...

It’s no surprise that an organization whose mission is to provide financial assistance in times of need would find itself very busy in a crisis like this.

The requests for assistance are far exceeding what we had budgeted for in 2020. The biggest category of requests has been rental assistance (see chart). EWAN had budgeted $35,000 in rent for the year; as of June 18th it had given out $72,809. Further, the number of new clients is almost three times the norm for this point in the year.

Other categories of assistance have not seen such dramatic increases. However, the moratorium placed on utility shut-offs is set to expire soon, and EWAN expects a huge influx of assistance requests for utility bills once that happens.

“One of the biggest points of stress for me has been seeing the concern my students felt that they were going to lose their homes. I am so grateful to have a place like EWAN to refer families to. With my whole heart, I thank you.”

Nelly Avina, York High School Social Worker

...so is Elmhurst’s response

The demand created by the virus could have posed serious problems for EWAN. Fortunately, the incredible outpouring from the community has thus far allowed EWAN to meet the challenge.

From the start, people recognized the gravity of the moment. Executive Director Jackie Crnkovich recalls just days into the lockdown Pastor Rich Wolf from St. Peters UCC came into the site with a $5,000 check from the church. “He was clear to point out this gift would be on top of their regular annual donation. He knew there were people out there who were going to be hurting, and wanted us to be in the best position to help.”

Individuals and organizations have been reaching out in similar ways since the crisis began. The DuPage Foundation created a special COVID response fund and greatly simplified its usual grant application process. They awarded EWAN two grants for a total of $15,000. The Rotary Club of Elmhurst eliminated its usual grant application process and just sent a generous check.

The District 205 Foundation shifted from its focus of providing enrichment for students to helping ensure District families’ basic needs were being met. They gave EWAN $15,000 as well.

Individuals have come through with equal generosity. The response to a special COVID-19 appeal was swift and strong. Further, over 100 people have donated for the first time.

The repercussions of this crisis will be with us for a long time. The community’s support will remain critical to EWAN’s ability to respond.
**In lieu of the ‘Cue:** EWAN will keep the spirit of the ‘Cue alive with a host of mini-fundraising events

Sadly, yet another casualty of the pandemic will be our annual ‘Cue for a Cause, EWAN’s major fundraising event. In its place, we are planning a number of small fundraisers in which you can take part. Information on how to participate in all these activities can be found on our website: elmhurstwalkin.org.

**July 10: Trivia for a Cause**

Let’s face it: With the ‘Cue being just one of many fun events cancelled this summer, entertainment can be hard to come by. Here’s a little something to do, and as an added bonus, you’ll be raising money for EWAN!

Go to elmhurstwalkin.org, and sign-up a team to play a round of general trivia from 7:30-8:30 on Friday, July 10. Hosted by Baig of Tricks Entertainment, you’re sure to have fun with this pub-style trivia event. You pay $30 per device to play and stand to win some great prizes if you win.

**Split the Pot Raffle for a Cause: Tickets available starting July 1.**

Are you sad to be missing out on all those great raffle prizes at the ‘Cue? Well, all is not lost! You still have the opportunity to win some cold hard cash by buying split the pot raffle tickets online. Tickets will be sold at $5 each or 6 for $25. We’ll do all the hard work of filling out your tickets (and let’s face it, that’s the worst part of a 50/50 raffle). The winner will be drawn on September 6—the day the ‘Cue would have been.

**T-shirt for a Cause**

Go online right away and order your “We’ll be back” ‘Cue t-shirts. These are seriously cute shirts; you will not want to miss out on the COVID-19 commemoration apparel of the summer. These super-soft and comfortable shirts will be available in men’s, ladies’ and children’s sizes, and can be ordered in blue or red. You might just want one of each! Two order dates are posted online. The first date ends July 12, so hurry!

**BBQ Jim’s for a Cause. September 6**

Would your summer be incomplete without some BBQ Jim’s signature pulled pork or brisket? No need to fear! Jim Lawshe and wife Mary Beth will be bringing their food truck to the City Lot at York and Vallette (yep, site of the ‘Cue) and will be serving up all you need to scratch that barbecue itch. BBQ Jim’s is generously donating all food profits to EWAN, so order plenty! Stay tuned for hours and menu items.

**Concert for a Cause. Fingers crossed, Sept. 6.**

If we’ve learned nothing from COVID-19, we’ve learned you can’t plan too far ahead. IF circumstances allow, we may be offering up a chance to accompany your barbecue with some great music from one of our favorite ‘Cue bands, Forget Hannah. We’ll be sure to let you know when we know if the concert can happen.
York sophomore, Peter Vreeland, has not been sitting idle during the pandemic. This enterprising student started a yard sign business to help people celebrate birthdays during the lockdown. Even more impressive—he’s donating his profits to EWAN.