



ELMHURST WALK-IN ASSISTANCE NETWORK



connecting people in need to community resources

Fall 2026

Newsletter

What brings you in? Need driven by a range of circumstances

As volunteers meet new clients, they learn not only what assistance they are seeking but ascertain as well what the circumstances are that led to the need.

The obstacles our neighbors face that put them in financial straits vary widely. There are some that are quite common, such as job loss, a reduction in hours, and health concerns; but there is also a wide array of situations that fall under the category of "other." These latter serve as good illustrations of how predictably unpredictable life can be.

EWAN recently took a look at 40 clients who visited the site for the first time in 2026 to see what patterns might emerge. The adjoining graphic illustrates the findings.

Somewhat surprisingly, only 7 clients were needing help due to job loss or reduction in hours. Health events rose to the top of circumstances that hurt clients' budgets. This serves as a reminder that hourly workers have few protections when they or a family member falls ill.

Most of the people EWAN serves are classified as ALICE, which stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. Over a fifth of DuPage County

residents fall under this designation. Practically speaking, such households are generally living hand to mouth and have little opportunity to save for a rainy day. The current high price of gas and groceries only makes saving more difficult.

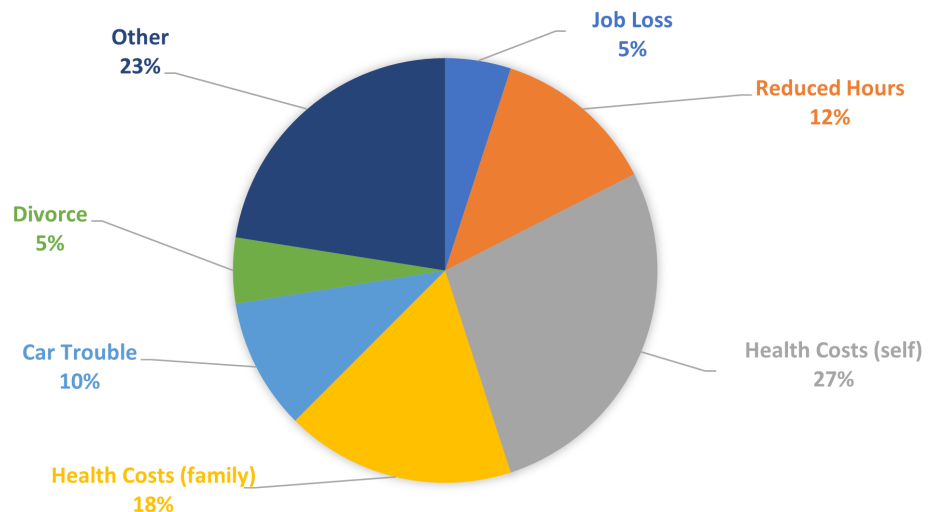
Examples from the "other" category illustrate the range of issues that can play havoc on a budget. For one family a

simple water leak put their water bill beyond reach, while another faced an unexpected rent hike. Another client's finances were impacted by fraudulent activity on his bank account. Two families were coping with funeral expenses.

All these examples demonstrate the strains households face when trying to stay afloat. EWAN is proud to offer a place where people can turn.

WHAT BRINGS OUR CLIENTS IN?

(THROUGH AUGUST 2026)



The EWAN Mission: *The caring people of Elmhurst unite to provide compassionate assistance to people in need in our community.*

De Colores Service Squad Visits and learns budgeting challenges

This summer, Elmhurst Walk-In Assistance Network welcomed 16 middle school students from the inaugural De Colores Service Squad, a new summer leadership and global outreach program through First United Church of Christ.

Designed for students entering 6th through 8th grade, the Service Squad gives young people opportunities to learn about global and local needs, explore Latin American culture, participate in service experiences, and develop leadership skills through teamwork and problem-solving.

During their July 28 visit to EWAN, Executive Director Jackie Crnkovich led students through two hands-on

activities designed to build empathy and understanding. Students explored the difficult financial decisions a family might face following a job loss, and then students planned a day of nutritious meals on a limited budget.

The activities prompted thoughtful conversations about food insecurity, financial hardship, and the importance of supporting neighbors in need. We are grateful to the De Colores Service Squad for spending part of their summer learning about our community and developing the skills and compassion to make a difference.



“

EWAN helped me a year ago. I was overwhelmed, stressed and didn't know where to turn.

Everyone was compassionate, kind and nonjudgmental. They lifted me up not just with their resources but through the warmth of their open arms. Paying it forward so that they continue to have the necessary resources to help those in need.

Thank you and God bless all the volunteers.

”

EWAN Client (now Donor)



U.S. Rep. Casten holds non-profit round table on food insecurity

On August 19, U.S. Congressman Sean Casten hosted a Rising Cost of Groceries and Cuts to Food Assistance Roundtable at the Lyons Township Office. EWAN was honored to be among a number of local organizations invited to share how they are seeing families effected by these national issues.

Executive Director Jackie Crnkovich represented EWAN and spoke about the record numbers of people seeking assistance from EWAN over the past several years. While EWAN doesn't directly provide food assistance, it does see the choices families have to make between paying bills and feeding their families.

The goal of the round table was to give Rep. Casten first-hand accounts of how inflation and cuts to food assistance are impacting constituents' lives. The hope is he can take what he learned back to Congress to influence policy changes.

The representative from the Northern Illinois Food Bank indicated they have not experienced any recovery since the COVID pandemic.



Executive Director Jackie Crnkovich (second from right) took part in a discussion with several other non-profits and Congressman Sean Casten (fourth from left). Organizations shared stories of how their clientele is being affected by the current economic climate.

Needs have doubled since prior to the pandemic and show no signs of receding. All the non-profits present shared similar stories of increased demand.

Congressman Casten opened the discussion with the idea that, "It's easy to lower food prices in America." He cited policies that were driving up

need, such as the war in Iran and tariffs.

The problems are being further exacerbated by the recent cuts in SNAP (food stamp) benefits. Illinois officials report that 148,000 Illinois residents have lost benefits due to the new work requirements with further changes going into effect in October.



Barb Szczepaniak, Vice President of Programs at DuPage Foundation presents the \$24,000 grant check to Executive Director Jackie Crnkovich and Board President Erin Radcliff at the Grant Open House on June 11.

DuPage Foundation grants EWAN \$24,000

The Elmhurst Walk-In Assistance Network received a \$24,000 grant through DuPage Foundation's Community Impact grant program. The money awarded will be used to help EWAN cover rent and utility assistance.

This year, the DuPage Foundation awarded more than \$1.3 million to 71 DuPage County nonprofit organizations. Thanks to additional donations from DuPage Foundation's donors and donor-advisors, the Foundation was able to grant \$820,000 above its regular Community Impact grant budget. One such donor, the Pane e Pesci Fund, partially funded the award to EWAN this year.

The goal of the Community Impact grants is to support programs and projects that improve and enrich the quality of life for DuPage County residents.

"Naturally we were truly delighted to receive this grant from the DuPage Foundation," said Executive Director Jackie Crnkovich. "\$24,000 will see a lot of Elmhurst families through tough times. We are honored to know that the Foundation views us as a trusted partner in serving the needs of people in our community."

Thank you! 2026 Business Partners

*Community
Bridge Builder*
\$5,000+

*Community
Champion*
\$1,000

*Community
Partner*
\$500



Back-to-school and resource fair prepares families for school year

Elmhurst Walk-In Assistance Network (EWAN) was proud to join the Elmhurst Resource Collaboration and Roots and Wings/Alas y Raices for their Annual Back-to-School, Resource & Health Fair on August 15.

The event brought together more than 50 local agencies and community organizations, creating a one-stop opportunity for families to learn about health, education, human services, and other resources available in their communities. Despite the rainy day and close quarters, **more than 300 families** attended and connected with organizations ready to provide information, support, and assistance.

Families from Elmhurst, Bensenville, surrounding communities, and School Districts 205, 100, and 2 were able to meet directly with local organizations and discover resources to help their families prepare for the new school year and beyond.

For EWAN, the event was a wonderful opportunity to connect with families and fellow service providers. We are grateful to the Elmhurst Resource Collaboration and Roots and Wings for bringing so many organizations together and to all of the community partners who contributed their time and resources.

The success of this event is a great reminder of what can happen when local organizations work together: **more families connected to more resources, all in one place.**

We look forward to continuing to collaborate with our community partners and finding new ways to make resources and support more accessible to the families we serve.

Thanks as well to the First Congregational United Church of Christ for collecting and donating a wonderful collection of school supplies.



Volunteers answer the question:

What do you find most rewarding about your work at EWAN?



The most rewarding part is knowing that I may have helped someone feel supported during a difficult time. I appreciate the opportunity to listen to each person's story, treat them with dignity and help connect them with resources that can make an immediate difference. **Rashidat Brobbey**

The people! Especially when a new client comes in with desperation but substitutes tension with gratitude after we are able to help. In these situation, volunteers often work together to bring all the best ideas on how we can help surround their issues. **Jodie Leahy**



It's incredibly humbling to see people from the community coming together to help a client in need. We will always be our clients' biggest champion! **Christine Falkenberg**



Most rewarding: when a new client comes in for a little help and you can see the relief and gratitude they feel from our assistance. **Christy Noland**

The most rewarding aspect, beyond knowing that EWAN was able to help a client in need, are occasions when I've assisted a client more than once and am able to chat on a more personal, less formal level...Clients like when we see them as people and not just a client. **Barb Rimington**



The most rewarding part of working with clients is EWAN's ability to offer assistance immediately, often providing help on the spot when it is needed most. Few agencies have the ability to respond so quickly to an individual or family facing an immediate financial hardship. For many clients, receiving assistance right away brings a genuine sense of relief and reassurance. **Kathleen Hart**



It's very rewarding when a client expresses relief. I am so proud to be part of an organization that can help folks in this way. **Vida Cruz**

What I love the most is when you see the sincere thankfulness in people after you have helped them. What a wonderful relief it must be for them.

Nancy Kinsella



The most rewarding moments at EWAN are when clients express their appreciation for the financial assistance and emotional support they are receiving. At these times, I feel deep gratitude for the opportunity to volunteer with our clients and for the generosity of our donors which allow us to offer this assistance. **Karen Crum**



I think the most rewarding part of volunteering at EWAN is that those who qualify get to leave knowing we can pay that bill that they are unable to pay. It's gratifying to say the check will go out in the next couple of days.

Gina Horn

In general, the most rewarding is helping a client that is really struggling to get some peace of mind that everything will be okay. You can almost see the burden lift off their shoulders. I think of the saying, "There but for the grace of God go I." We are here to help our neighbors, and EWAN does it in a positive, concrete way every day. **Jaynie Dunne**



Summer on-line auction raises funds continuing former 'Cue momentum

Thanks to the generosity of our auction donors and everyone who participated, this year's online auction raised an incredible **\$22,535 for EWAN!** With no 'Cue for a Cause event this year, the auction was an important way to help bridge the gap and continue providing much-needed support to local Elmhurst families.

We are especially grateful to the donors who made this year's auction possible:

- **Will & Tammy Conrardy** – Lake Michigan Yacht Cruise
- **Bruce & Colleen Horek** – Three Nights with the Elmhurst Symphony & A Day at River Forest Country Club
- **Courtenae Trautmann** – Chicago Bears Tickets: Bears vs. New Orleans Saints.



We would like to extend a very special thank you to **Elmhurst Presbyterian Church**, which has generously donated five York High School parking spots for the past three years. Over that time, these parking spots have raised an incredible **\$46,175 for EWAN!**

We are so grateful to all of our auction donors for their continued generosity and to everyone who bid, shared the auction, and helped make it a success.

Your support makes a meaningful difference for local families in our community.



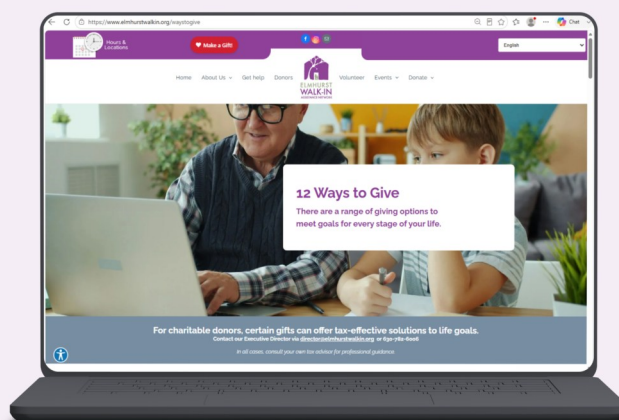
THANK YOU!



Dan Gibbons, CEO of The Dan Gibbons Foundation, presents a \$3,500 beneficiary check to Associate Executive Director Kim Anciulis on July 21. The generous donation was made possible by the community's support of the 2nd Annual Dan Gibbons Twilight Trot, held May 30. We're grateful to everyone who helped make this event such a success!

12 WAYS TO GIVE

Find a way to make a difference that works for you.



From gifts today to gifts that help shape EWAN's future, explore 12 ways to give.

GIVE TODAY • PLAN AHEAD • GIVE TAX-EFFECTIVELY



SCAN TO EXPLORE

Client services maintain steady pace as living expenses continue to rise

After eight months of 2026, “steady” remains an appropriate word for EWAN’s service activity. The number of people seeking assistance continues to reflect the higher level of need we have experienced in recent years, as high housing, food, and energy costs continue to put pressure on household budgets.

Through August, EWAN provided 1,122 client services, compared with about 1,087 during the same period in 2025. Client visits have also remained

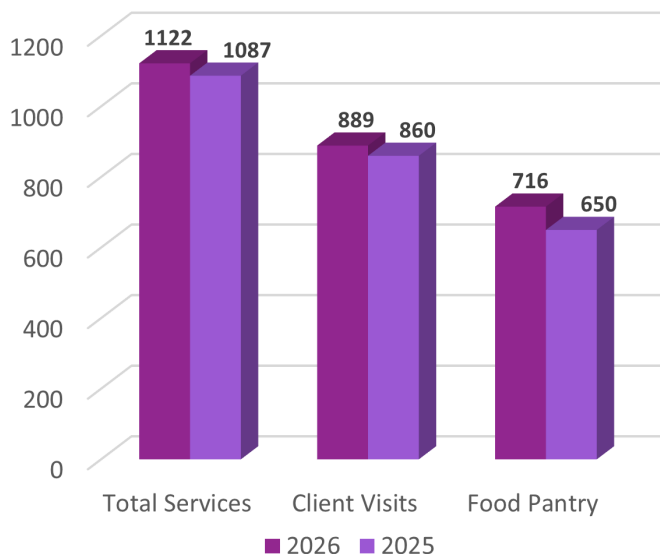
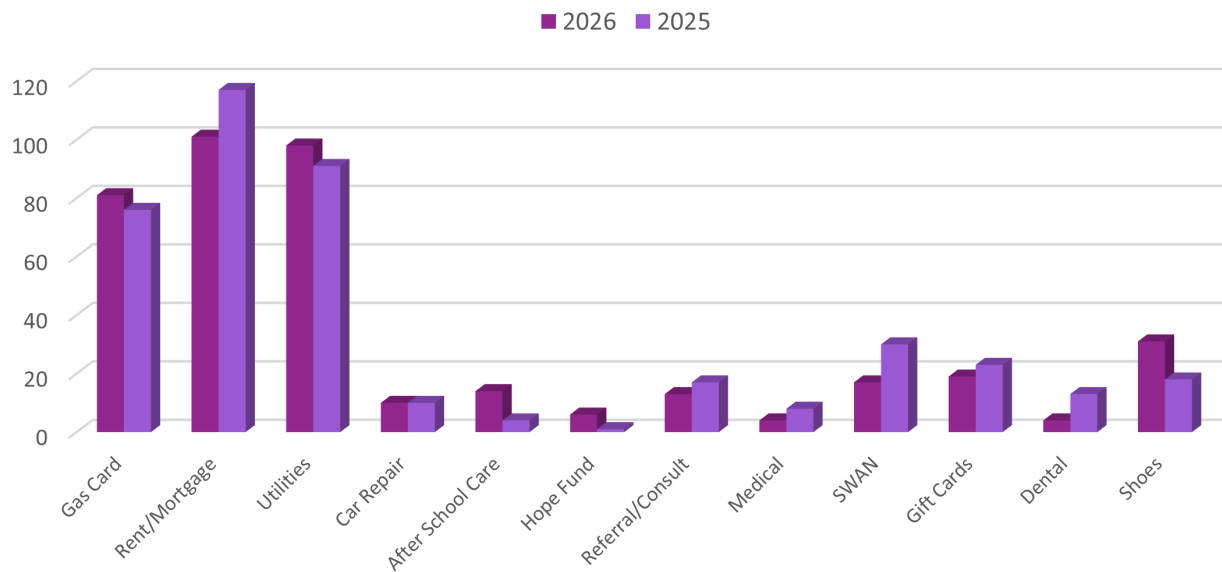
relatively consistent, at 889 this year compared with 860 last year. Food Pantry services have increased as well, from approximately 650 in 2025 to about 716 in 2026.

The dollar value of assistance tells a similar story. **EWAN has provided approximately \$145,000 in client assistance through August**, with the largest share, \$93,016, going toward rent and mortgage assistance. Another \$27,651 was provided for utilities, with

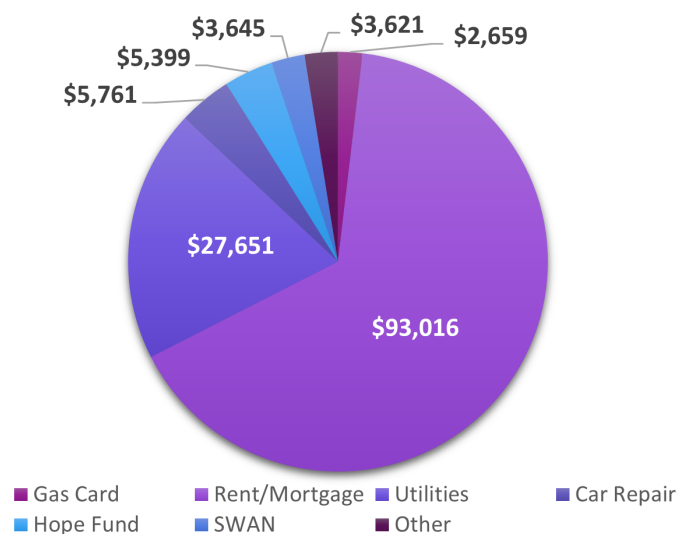
additional high areas of assistance dollars going toward car repairs, gas cards, the Hope Fund, Students with Activity Needs (SWAN), and other needs.

While individual service categories continue to fluctuate from month to month, the overall picture remains one of steady demand. Our neighbors continue to turn to EWAN for help with basic needs, and the generosity of the Elmhurst community allows us to respond as those needs arise.

Client Services Provided (January-August)



2026 Client Assistance Dollars





STAY CONNECTED WITH EWAN



A few emails. A little more EWAN.

Sign up for occasional updates, news, stories, and ways to stay connected — just a few times a year.

Scan to sign up



*Our print newsletter will still arrive twice a year.
This is simply another way to stay in the loop.*



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