



ELMHURST WALK-IN ASSISTANCE NETWORK



connecting people in need to community resources

Spring 2026

Newsletter

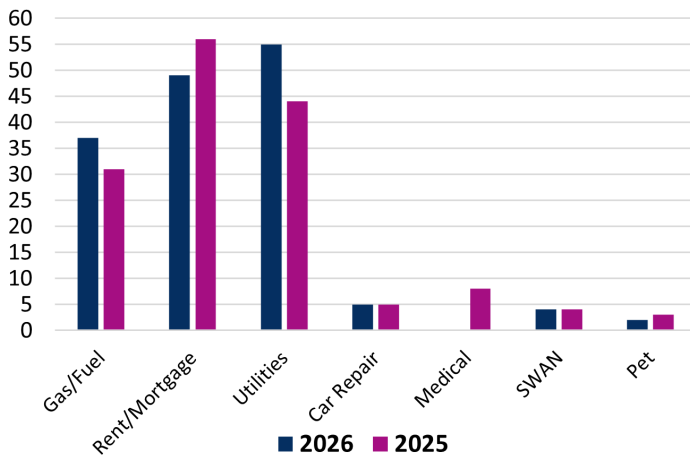
First third of the year shows steady demand for services

After five years of steady increase in demand, 2026 has so far been characterized by a leveling off. Some assistance categories are a little up, and some are a little down, but taken in aggregate, the trends are relatively flat.

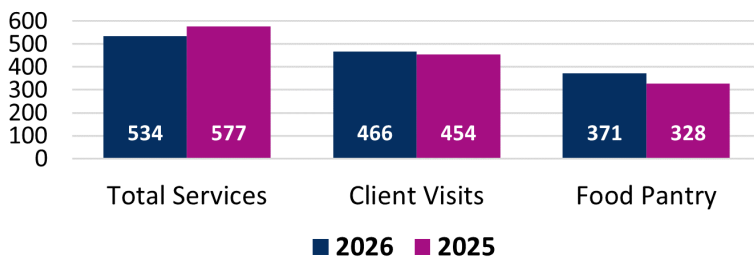
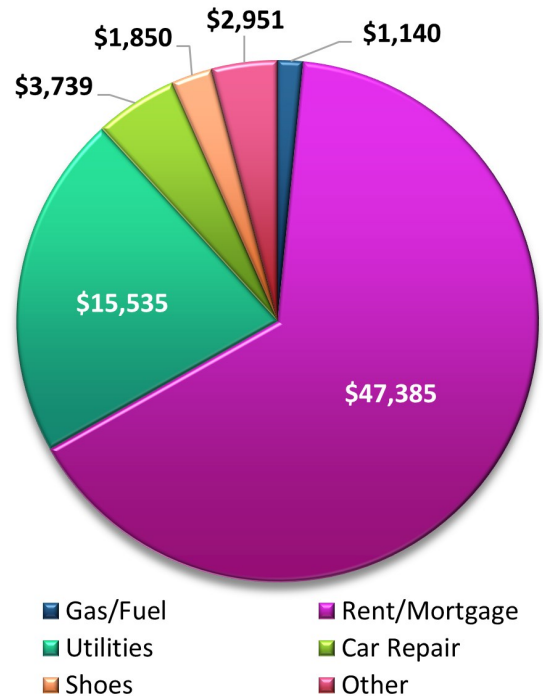
Of course, leveling off at a high point doesn't indicate a

real easing, and the current high gas prices and cuts in federal programs like SNAP and the Low Income Energy Assistance program suggest demand might heat up as the year continues. But for now, we're happy not to be reporting more record highs.

Client Services Provided January-April



2026 Client Assistance Dollars



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

2026 ANNUAL MEETING

FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2026

NETWORK IN ACTION

restoring stability, changing lives

As a departure from tradition, this year's Annual Meeting took the form of a breakfast rather than lunch, was in March as opposed to January, and was held at a new location at Bethel UCC church.

The purpose of the gathering remained the same: to bring together volunteers and board members, supporters, church and non-profit partners, and school and city government personnel to celebrate the work of EWAN and to learn more about both the year past and the year ahead.

The theme of this year's program was **Network in Action**. The goal was to recognize how the assistance EWAN provides

is never done alone, but involves all the previously mentioned constituencies. To illustrate the point, Executive Director Jackie Crnkovich told the story of a client whose family was taken from homelessness to an apartment and all the entities involved in making that happen (see story on page 3).

The morning ended with a brief look at the Strategic Plan under development as well as a question and answer period.

Elmhurst Bank generously provided the breakfast from Rough Edges Confectionary, and Bethel UCC donated their beautiful meeting space. Custom Bindery provided the printing.



ELMHURST BANK

A WINTRUST COMMUNITY BANK



Bethel United Church of Christ

Support our **Spring Giving Campaign**

Support our Spring Giving Campaign and make a difference in our community.

Watch for our upcoming mailing or scan to donate now.



Client story illustrates the power of “the network”

Question: What do Warm Coats for Cool Kids, a school social worker, EWAN, Daybreak Transitional Housing, The Elmhurst Rotary Club, McGrath Toyota, America’s Best, Bridge Communities, Immaculate Conception Food Pantry, Elmhurst Yorkfield Food Pantry, Methodist Clothing Closet, and Sharing Connections all have in common?

Answer: they were all part of an effort to help one woman and her three children move out of homelessness.

It was 10 years ago this month that the Elmhurst Walk-In Ministry unveiled its new name: the Elmhurst Walk-In Assistance Network. The board wanted it to reflect an essential reality: EWAN does not provide its assistance alone. Supporting our neighbors requires a web of partners—schools, churches, volunteers, other nonprofits, businesses, and donors—working together.

The unhoused family’s experience perfectly illustrates that truth.

The story begins with Garry Vaccaro, who runs a local non-profit, Warm Coats for Cool Kids, which provides brand new winter coats for local children.

Garry was delivering coats to Bryan Middle School when he learned that one student’s family was facing far greater challenges than winter weather. The family had lost stable housing and was living in a rental car. Garry decided to reach out to the mother, “Shelly,” to see

how he could help. By the time they connected, she had moved the family into a hotel. While Shelly had a full-time job in Chicago, the combined cost of the hotel and the rental car needed to get to work made it nearly impossible to save money to move forward.

Garry reached out to EWAN, and what followed was a coordinated response across the network.

Rotary Club members stepped in to fund an extended hotel stay. An EWAN volunteer met with Shelly to understand her situation and identify next steps. Through a partnership EWAN has with Daybreak Transitional Housing, a ministry of Immaculate Conception Parish, Shelly began working toward longer-term stability while awaiting placement with Bridge Communities, a transitional housing program under whose umbrella Daybreak operates.

One critical barrier quickly became clear: transportation. Without a reliable car, Shelly couldn’t maintain her job. Through the combined efforts of Rotary, EWAN, Daybreak, and individual donors, funds were raised to purchase a used vehicle from McGrath Toyota—providing a turning point for the family.

Before being able to get the car, Shelly had to pass a comprehensive eye exam, as her eyesight problems were more than the DMV handles. One of EWAN’s vision partners, America’s Best, provided the exam free of charge.

Meanwhile, the network continued to fill in gaps. The Immaculate Conception Food Pantry and Elmhurst Yorkfield Food Pantry kept the family fed. The Clothing Center at First United Methodist Church provided much needed clothing for the three growing teens.

When Shelly received the great news that she was accepted into Bridge Communities, and once an apartment became available, Sharing Connections out of Downers Grove supplied the needed furniture. Volunteers helped transform an empty apartment into a home.

After four months of homelessness, Shelly and her children moved into stable housing.

Their journey is not over. With the support of Daybreak mentors and the broader network, she continues to rebuild—balancing work, parenting, and the long process of recovery. But she is no longer navigating everything alone.

In a meeting with several of the people involved, Shelly was warned there would be a lot of people in her business. She responded with a simple but powerful observation: *“It actually feels good to have a village.”*

That village is the EWAN network in action. It is made possible by the many partners, organizations, and supporters who come together every day to ensure that when one neighbor struggles, they are met not by a single response—but by a community.





Music to Your Ears: Three Nights with the Elmhurst Symphony

Enjoy an elegant season of live music with VIP treatment! This package includes 4 VIP tickets—with reserved center-section seating—to 3 Elmhurst Symphony Orchestra performances of your choice, creating an unforgettable experience for music lovers. Also included is a \$100 gift card to Roberto's Ristorante & Pizzeria, perfect for dinner before or after the show.

Donated by Bruce & Colleen Horek

Chicago Bears Tickets: Bears vs. New Orleans Saints

Cheer on the Chicago Bears from fantastic seats as they take on the New Orleans Saints at Soldier Field! This package includes 2 tickets in Section 114, Row 18—offering a great view of all the NFL action. Get ready for an amazing game-day experience filled with energy, excitement, and unforgettable football moments.

Date and time: TBD

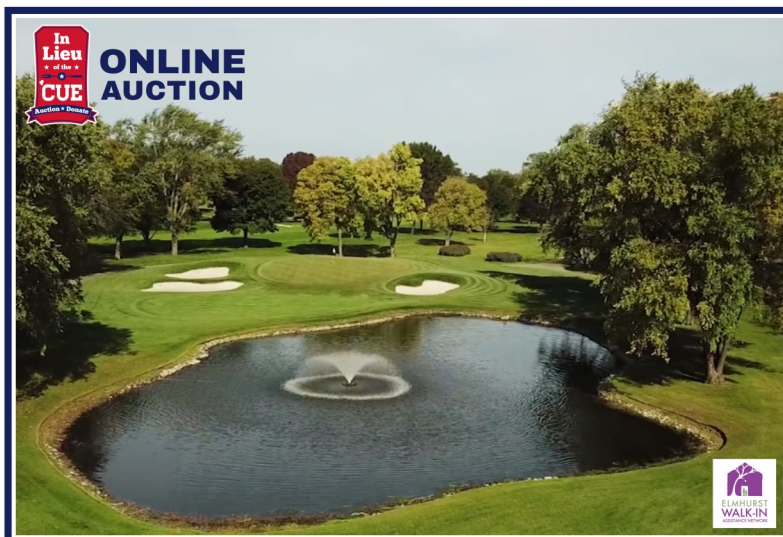
Donated by Courtenae Trautmann



A Day at River Forest Country Club

Enjoy an exclusive day of golf hosted by a member at the lovely River Forest Country Club. Each package includes golf for 3 guests for 18 holes, carts provided, and two caddies to enhance your experience. The day also includes River Forest golf swag, plus lunch, appetizers, and cocktails following your round—making for a truly memorable day on the course.

Donated by Bruce & Colleen Horek



★ Elmhurst Walk-In Assistance Network is a proud beneficiary of the Second Annual ★



Saturday, May 30th - 6:30pm

Join us for the Second Annual Dan Gibbons Twilight Trot on Saturday, May 30 at 6:30 PM in South Elmhurst. This family-friendly 5K fun run is hosted by the Dan Gibbons Turkey Trot Foundation, which was founded on the belief that hunger and basic human needs exist year-round.

For more than 41 years, the Dan Gibbons Turkey Trot Foundation's Thanksgiving Day Turkey Trot has supported people in need across DuPage County. The Twilight Trot was created to extend that impact, providing additional funding to local nonprofits in June—complementing the January distributions from the Turkey Trot.

EWAN is proud to be one of four Elmhurst nonprofits benefiting from this event, alongside the Elmhurst-Yorkfield Food Pantry, Immaculate Conception Food Pantry, and United Community Concerns Association (UCCA).

Stick around after the race for the after party at the Knights of Columbus' Renaissance Room, featuring a DJ, free hot dogs and lemonade for kids (while supplies last), and drink specials for paid participants with race bibs.

This promises to be a fun and meaningful community event. We hope you'll join us in supporting our neighbors in need!



LEARN MORE & REGISTER

Online registration closes Wednesday, May 20th
Packet pickup and walk-in registration: Wednesday, May 27, 4-8pm
The Renaissance Room - Elmhurst Knights of Columbus



Your participation helps support these 4 Elmhurst Nonprofits

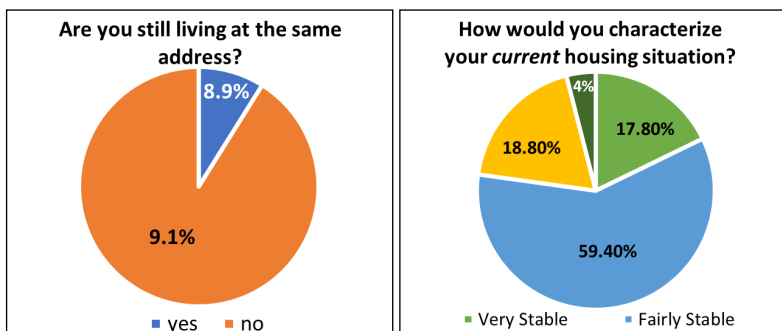


Summary of 2025 Rental Survey Results

Starting in 2026, EWAN began following up with clients 90 days after they received rental assistance with a short survey. The goal of the survey is to measure the effectiveness of the help we provide in keeping families safely housed and clear of eviction. The results from the 2025 survey responses demonstrate a highly positive impact from EWAN services.

In 2025, 134 households received rental assistance. Rental help was provided a total of 189 times as a number of households required another month's help to get back on their feet. Fifty-three percent of clients who were surveyed responded, and results are based on 101 surveys.

The following graphs show the results of the surveys.



“

This help didn't just cover my rent - it gave me back my confidence.

Instead of waking up every day stressed about how I would get the money, I could focus on finding a job.

It gave me a much-needed breather during a really difficult time. I realized as long as I keep searching, I will eventually find work - and that mindset helped me land a job.

Thank you for believing in people like me.

EWAN Client

”


We help.

Rotary Club of Elmhurst grants \$5,000 to support EWAN

The Rotary Club of Elmhurst has awarded EWAN a **\$5,000 grant** as part of its annual support for local nonprofits.

The Rotary Club of Elmhurst—our community's branch of the international service organization dedicated to *“doing good in the world”*—provides funding each year to groups that advance community and humanitarian service.

This year, Rotary is distributing **\$40,000 in grants to 18 nonprofit organizations**. Of that total, \$35,000 will support local groups serving Elmhurst and surrounding communities, while \$5,000 will be directed to organizations providing goods or services internationally. In addition, Rotary will award a \$20,000 college scholarship to an Elmhurst high school student.

The Elmhurst Rotary has been a long-time supporter of EWAN, and we are grateful for their continued recognition of our positive impact.

EWAN wins support from 100+ Women

Four times a year, members of 100+ Women Who Care, Elmhurst Area, gather to hear presentations from three nonprofits and each woman commits to donating \$100 to the organization selected by vote.

At the second quarterly meeting on May 4, 100+ Women Who Care member and EWAN president Erin Radcliff presented on behalf of EWAN and made the case for receiving this quarter's support.

Radcliff centered her appeal on the federal government's proposed cuts to the **Low Income Energy Assistance Program** and the increased demand such cuts could place on EWAN's utility-assistance funds. Her argument resonated strongly with the group, leading to EWAN's selection.

Since 2013, 100+ Women Who Care, Elmhurst Area, has used its collective giving model to support local nonprofits, contributing more than **\$830,000** to community organizations. This marks the fourth time EWAN has been chosen.

- In 2014, the group funded general assistance.
- In 2017, their gift launched EWAN's dental assistance program.
- During COVID, they directed unsolicited emergency-relief support to three Elmhurst charities, including EWAN.

At a time of rising costs and growing financial uncertainty, this quarter's gift will make a significant difference for EWAN clients who rely on utility assistance and other essential support.

Help EWAN Save More for Those We Serve

We're transitioning to electronic thank-you letters to reduce printing and postage costs, so more of every dollar you give goes directly to supporting our neighbors.

Every donation matters, and we are deeply grateful for your support. This change simply helps us steward your generosity more responsibly.



Make Sure We Have Your Email

Scan the QR code to sign up for our newsletter and receive your donation acknowledgments electronically.



Thank you for helping us serve our community - thoughtfully and efficiently.



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