

OUR neighborhood

Evanston-Northwestern
Community News
Fall 2018

NEWS



“ People often ask what the relationship is between Northwestern and the city. This is such a prime example. ”

Paul Goren,
District 65
superintendent

School Bus Equity in Evanston

Three years ago, Karen Smilowitz attended an Evanston/Skokie School District 65 board meeting about potential changes to bus routes to reduce costs—and she thought she might be able to help.

“The concern at my children’s school was that there would be increased car traffic if

they reduced busing,” she says. “I offered to help out and count cars for a traffic study.”

That’s because, in addition to being a District 65 parent, Smilowitz is a professor of industrial engineering and management sciences at Northwestern and an expert in transportation logistics.

The district serves 8,000 students at 15 schools and 3 centers. Students receive free bus transportation if they live more than 1½ miles from school or if there is a hazard—such as a major street or no sidewalks—along the route.

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

I am thrilled to serve as Northwestern's new executive director of the Office of Neighborhood and Community Relations. In this role, I serve as the University's primary liaison to the city of Evanston. I advise our senior leadership and create opportunities for the University to build strong, supportive partnerships with Evanston's residents, community organizations, schools, civic and business groups, and local government.

This newsletter showcases our outstanding community members and the partnerships that make our community stronger—



initiatives that reflect the University's commitment to the city and its residents.

As we begin a new academic year, I look forward to working

with our campus and Evanston communities to expand existing efforts and establish new mutually beneficial partnerships.

By moving beyond community outreach to strategic engagement, we can increase opportunities for research and enrich the student experience while also enhancing the quality of life for all Evanston residents.

I hope to hear from you soon about how our office can assist you and your organization.

Best regards,

Dave Davis
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Partnering for Safety



Aiming to improve community safety and strengthen emergency preparedness, Evanston and Northwestern have agreed to share the University's emergency operations center.

Located at University Police headquarters on Davis Street, the center provides a secure location during large events and major emergencies. City and University crisis management teams will use the center to collaborate on effective, informed decisions in coordination with local, state, and federal agencies.

"We have learned from experience how vitally important it is to work together on emergency response to manage either a man-made or natural disaster, as either will most definitely impact both the city and the University," says Bruce Lewis, chief of University Police. "Sharing this asset makes good sense."

The city and Northwestern agreed to share the facility for one year, beginning in September 2018, with an option to renew annually. In March, both entities used the center during a joint training exercise that simulated a hazardous materials spill.

"We have a state-of-the-art facility that we determined could accommodate both the city of Evanston and Northwestern," says Greg Klaiber, director of emergency management for the University.

The center is not just for emergency incidents, he says, but also for planned events, such as parades and Northwestern football games. "If there's an incident in southwest Evanston, for example, that is relatively far away and does not impact the campus but Evanston feels the need to activate the center, the city has the ability to do that."

With advanced IT infrastructure and immediate access to 1,400 closed-circuit cameras on campus, the center also has communications capabilities for sending up-to-the-minute emergency notifications to the community.

For special events like Northwestern's Dillo Day and Commencement, the center is a command post for various University departments involved—such as facilities, communications, housing, and student affairs.

"The people who are assigned to respond are called in to manage the event," Klaiber says. "In the event of a weather-related incident that impacts Evanston, of course that includes the University. So we would have both teams collaborating and coordinating a response."

"Disaster- and emergency-incident mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery are responsibilities shared by all public safety personnel," adds Evanston fire chief Brian Scott. "Sharing this outstanding facility will maximize public safety by ensuring the effective collaboration of all stakeholders."

Fresh, Fun—and Philanthropic

Evanston resident Larry Murphy has been involved in education and ministry throughout his professional life. When he and his wife, Jean, mused about a new type of business they might go into, it was a matter of finding “a joy-giving business that would underwrite our personal values and social commitments,” he says.



In September 2015, the couple (pictured above) opened YoFresh Yogurt Café on Chicago Avenue in south Evanston. The restaurant specializes in self-serve frozen yogurt and smoothies and also serves comfort food items, including pizza, hot dogs, soup, and sandwiches.

“We thought of something very simple,” Murphy says, “a product that generates smiles from people. That’s the type of business we wanted to engage in to feel happy and joyful about life.”

He says going into this business might be called social entrepreneurship. The Murphys will dedicate some of its proceeds to establishing a foundation to help young people of color travel.



“When we travel, we don’t see young students of color,” he says. “We think that is a terrible shame, because those who are already socially marginalized will continue to fall further and further behind unless they gain the competencies for how one interacts in the world. One of the ways that happens is through travel.”

Murphy was asked by Northwestern if he would be interested in catering for a Rebuilding Together volunteer event, and

he’s now done so for the past three years. He’s also provided frozen yogurt for the Neighborhood and Community Relations community picnic and catered for the Office for Research.

“YoFresh has been a great community partner,” says Dave Davis, executive director of the Office of Neighborhood and Community Relations. “Not only is their food delicious, but they also strengthen our community by investing in our youth. We look forward to continuing our relationship.”

“Being a part of these significant events has been a very fulfilling experience for us,” Murphy says. “We’ve valued our connection to Northwestern and are hoping it can continue and even expand.”

TO LEARN MORE, visit yofreshyogurtcafe.com or email yofreshevanston@gmail.com.

Transportation Study

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According to Smilowitz, most students are bussed because of hazards. As the district evaluated routes, “we helped them visualize and understand the big pinch points that were driving up their costs,” she says. “We looked at ways they could refine the routes and think more strategically about where stops were located.”

Afterward, Smilowitz and district superintendent Paul Goren talked about how they could continue to work together to help the district as a whole. “It was the beginning of a fantastic relationship,” he says.

Three years on, Smilowitz’s team of faculty and students is performing expert analyses of the flow of transportation services in the district. The project is in its second year of a four-year grant to explore using operations research methodology in public sector decisions.

“In the early stages, we shortened a few bus routes and became more efficient in our routing, and that was due to Karen and her team,” Goren says. Shorter routes resulted in cost savings and less time on the bus for students. A referendum has since passed that alleviated some cost concerns and allowed the district to focus on equity.

“When you think about who’s riding the bus,” Smilowitz says, “a big component is race—how do you visualize that? Paul Goren has a great vision for the district, and our job as engineers is to think about using models to test these ideas in terms of distribution of the costs across different communities in the district. If they’re going to make changes, they want to make sure there are significant benefits.”

As part of the project, Goren addresses Smilowitz’s class each year and hears “fantastic, creative solutions from students to address our challenges, and awesome new opportunities for us to consider. What’s really neat is that students talk about equity and the relationship with transportation.”

Smilowitz calls her group of students and researchers “the sandbox—we can think about some crazy ideas and use models to rule some out. Sometimes benefits don’t outweigh the costs, and sometimes we find ideas that are worth studying. It’s a really great way to work with the district.”

Goren agrees: “If you’re a resident of Evanston, people often ask what the relationship is between Northwestern and the city. This is such a prime example. What started as a parent showing up at a public board meeting turned out to be a wonderful partnership with one of the great experts of the world, and between the University and the school district.”

CONNECT WITH US

Our email newsletter includes a monthly Northwestern events calendar. Email Shayla Butler at shayla.butler@northwestern.edu to sign up.

Do you have a business or non-profit in Evanston? We can help increase your visibility, facilitate connections to the Northwestern community, and find student volunteers.

For details, visit northwestern.edu/communityrelations or contact Neighborhood and Community Relations executive director Dave Davis at dave.davis@northwestern.edu or 847-467-5762.

EVENTS

YOU’RE A GOOD MAN, CHARLIE BROWN FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2– SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18

Wallis Theater, 1949 Campus Drive.
Explore a day through the eyes of Charlie Brown, Snoopy, and their colorful friends. Recommended for ages 3 and up. Tickets \$6–\$12.

MEN’S BASKETBALL **NORTHWESTERN VS. NEW ORLEANS** 7 P.M., THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8

Welsh-Ryan Arena, 2705 Ashland Avenue.
Cheer on the ‘Cats in their first game of the season as they play in the renovated Welsh-Ryan Arena. Ticket prices vary.



NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY **SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** 7:30 PM, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8

Pick-Staiger Concert Hall,
50 Arts Circle Drive.
Join the merriment as the orchestra performs music for the holidays. Tickets \$5–\$8.

WOMEN’S BASKETBALL **NORTHWESTERN VS. ILLINOIS** 2 P.M., MONDAY, DECEMBER 31

Welsh-Ryan Arena, 2705 Ashland Avenue.
Cheer on the ‘Cats as they play in the renovated Welsh-Ryan Arena. Ticket prices vary.