

# OUR neighborhood

Evanston-Northwestern  
Community News  
Fall 2020

NEWS



“As Northwestern’s Evanston and Chicago homes grapple with two historic challenges, the University is in a position to help lead the way in finding a solution, and it has a duty to do so.”

## Advancing Equity and Social Justice in Evanston

In July, Northwestern and Evanston announced that the University will contribute \$1 million to the city for a sixth consecutive year, as well as create a \$500,000 grant program aimed at advancing racial equity and social justice.

In unveiling what this year will be called the Good Neighbor Racial Equity Fund, mayor Stephen Hagerty and University president Morton Schapiro noted that the annual \$1 million gift will be invested in programs that dismantle systemic barriers faced by historically marginalized communities.

Northwestern is also creating a \$500,000 Racial Equity and Community Partnership Grant. In the innovative pilot program, to be administered by the Office of Neighborhood and Community Relations, grants will be awarded to partnerships between community-based groups and Northwestern faculty, students, and staff.

“As Northwestern’s Evanston and Chicago homes grapple with two historic challenges—COVID-19 and systemic racism—the University is in a position to help lead the way in finding a solution, and it has a duty

to do so,” Schapiro says. “As part of our efforts to strengthen our communities, we are increasing our commitments in Evanston and Chicago.”

In June, Schapiro pledged to allocate resources in the coming year to advance social justice and racial equity in Evanston and Chicago. This plan shifts the focus of Northwestern’s Good Neighbor Fund, which for the past five years has supported Evanston programs, positions, and

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As Evanston and Northwestern navigate the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and systemic racism, we are reminded of the power and importance of community. Through the bonds of human connection and collective healing, we learn to cope with the fear, anxiety, and



feelings of powerlessness triggered by these events.

Despite these challenges, our city is fortunate to have strong public servants,

a robust nonprofit network, and highly engaged residents who care deeply about Evanston. I have seen firsthand their widespread charity and kindness, and I remain inspired by the enduring goodness and humanity of our neighbors.

In this edition of our newsletter, you'll read about just a few examples of our community coming together to meet the challenges of the day.

Guided by our values and our unrelenting commitment to strengthening Evanston, I am confident that we will emerge a stronger and more resilient and compassionate city, moving us closer to what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called the "beloved community"—a society built on the values of justice, equal opportunity, and love of humankind.

Please continue to take care of yourself and one another.

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## Kellogg Helps Local Businesses

In the midst of a pandemic that has hit small businesses especially hard, Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management is stepping in to help with strategic consulting support for local business owners.

In the first partnership of the new Kellogg Small Business Advisory Initiative, local Kellogg alumni and students are providing pro bono consulting to Evanston businesses in the areas of digital marketing and social media, public relations, financial planning and analysis, and human resources management.

"I am thrilled to see the Kellogg community coming together to support small businesses that are currently facing significant challenges," says Kellogg dean Francesca Cornelli. "We are a community defined by empathy, creativity, and innovation, and this effort is an inspiring example of our values in action."

The idea was sparked during a conversation between Timothy Feddersen, professor of managerial economics and decision sciences, and Linda Darragh, executive director of the Kellogg Innovation and Entrepreneurship Initiative, who had already been working to connect Kellogg alumni with startups and small businesses.

"I've spoken with multiple Kellogg students, faculty, and alumni regarding the devastating impact COVID-19 is having on the economy, particularly small- and medium-sized businesses," Feddersen says. "The Kellogg community is looking for ways to help."

The goal is to leverage Kellogg expertise to assist businesses in finding ways to survive the current crisis and, Feddersen hopes, come out stronger. "Kellogg is a global community, and hopefully we can start with Evanston and scale up from there."

The initiative allows business owners to browse an online network of Kellogg volunteers across various functions and industries, then schedule meetings to discuss business challenges. Owners can also work with student volunteers on short-term projects, such as cash flow analysis.

"Conversations with local businesses have certainly touched on issues of financial uncertainty and reopening challenges, but they have also focused on how the core of their businesses is shifting," Darragh says. "They are facing strategic and marketing issues that benefit from the expertise of the Northwestern community."

According to Darragh, much of the assistance is focused on marketing, especially for businesses that need to rethink how to identify and attract new customers in uncertain times.

Northwestern's student-run microfinance organization Lending for Evanston and Northwestern Development will also work with the city to provide short-term, no-interest loans to local businesses.

"Our businesses are the cornerstone of our community," says Evanston mayor Stephen Hagerty. "They create an experience and sense of place that makes Evanston special. Leveraging Kellogg's network of volunteers, expertise, and know-how will help our businesses more quickly recover from this unprecedented global pandemic."

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**TO LEARN MORE** and sign up for the program, Evanston business owners can visit [evanstonnu.startuptree.co](http://evanstonnu.startuptree.co).

## Combatting Food Insecurity

Since the COVID-19 crisis began, the Northwestern community has stepped up to help Evanston address the food needs of residents facing economic hardship.

Northwestern professor Karen Smilowitz and a group of students are assisting the city's food-resource task force to create a digital map of where food insecurity exists across Evanston. The team of graduate student interns, in place before the pandemic, pivoted to address concerns resulting from stay-at-home orders and rising unemployment.

In April, Northwestern partnered with the city to launch an emergency food pantry, which initially distributed around 500 boxes of food per week. But as other benefits—like federal nutrition assistance and unemployment pay—kicked in, fewer people visited the pantry. While there's still a need for that type of service, Evanston community services manager Audrey Thompson says the city also wants to capitalize on its other resources.

"What we've recognized with the help of the [team's map] is that even though the city is resource-rich, we still have a problem with collaboration and making sure everyone knows about the resources," she says. "Now everyone is able to see, by address, how close food really is to them."

The team plans to add the map to the Evanston Care Network's website, where "housing" is the number one search and "food" is second. In addition to showing food availability (such as hot meals, produce, and soup kitchens that deliver), the map also helps food providers better identify residents in need of assistance.

"Research tells us we have to do a better job divvying up the resources all across Evanston. We do a good job, but the map identified where we can do better."



"When you have your head down and you're just working, you don't know there's another provider three blocks from you," Thompson says, noting that the map allows a provider who's out of food to suggest checking in at nearby providers.

The Northwestern graduate students provided a needed benefit in pulling together disparate data and putting it in one place, she adds. "We had fliers, but it's helpful to actually see on the map where food exists. The technology they created really helps us see where we need to beef up providers."

Food insecurity doesn't just mean that people don't have food, Thompson says. "We look at how far you have to travel for food that's healthy. Just because there's a McDonald's in your neighborhood doesn't mean your neighborhood isn't food insecure."

"The research tells us we have to do a better job divvying up the resources all across Evanston. We do a good job, but the map identified where we can do better."

**TO LEARN MORE**, email Audrey Thompson at [athompson@cityofevanston.org](mailto:athompson@cityofevanston.org).



# Racial Equity Fund

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infrastructure projects. Like those for the Good Neighbor Fund, priorities for the racial equity grant will be agreed upon jointly by the Evanston mayor and Northwestern president.

“Advancing racial equity and eliminating the social and economic disparities that have been present in our city for decades require a community-wide commitment,” Hagerty says. “The Good Neighbor Racial Equity Fund will allow Evanston to build on our efforts to eradicate systemic racism, remove barriers for marginalized communities, and further invest in programs that uplift our entire city. I want to thank Northwestern for partnering with us in this critical work.”

Dave Davis, executive director of neighborhood and community relations, says this year’s Racial Equity Fund contribution will go toward helping Evanston improve outcomes for people of color in four priority areas: economic opportunity; justice and government; neighborhoods and infrastructure; and public health.

“At this historic moment, as Americans across the country fight to ensure that Black Lives Matter, these priority areas are focused around measurable community indicators and a racial-equity-driven policy process that centers the experiences and voices of those who are most affected,” Davis says.

The new Racial Equity and Community Partnership Grant program will fund collaborations between Northwestern community members and groups. These partnerships will pilot ideas and programs that could advance research-based knowledge, address local issues, and be leveraged for broader impact by securing additional foundation and government support.

The grants will also help add new initiatives to a number of University and community partnerships that are already assisting Evanston schoolchildren and small businesses—projects that exemplify the deep commitments that advance Northwestern’s mission while also moving the needle on critical community issues.

A grant website will be launched in November, when officials will announce funding priorities and make applications available. Applications will be due in January.

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**TO LEARN MORE** about the grant program and who should apply, visit [northwestern.edu/communityrelations](https://northwestern.edu/communityrelations).



## CONNECT WITH US

Our monthly email newsletter includes important community updates. Email Shayla Butler at [shayla.butler@northwestern.edu](mailto: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](https://northwestern.edu/communityrelations) or contact Neighborhood and Community Relations executive director Dave Davis at [dave.davis@northwestern.edu](mailto:dave.davis@northwestern.edu) or 847-467-5762.