

# OUR neighborhood

Evanston-Northwestern  
Community News  
Fall 2022

NEWS

## Dance Marathon Supports Local Nonprofits

**N**orthwestern University Dance Marathon (NUDM) made a successful in-person return for its 48th year, raising more than half a million dollars for two local nonprofits.

On March 4–6, hundreds of students took a break from studying for finals to dance from a Friday evening until early Sunday morning. It was all in fun—and an effort to raise money for Chicago Youth Programs and the Evanston Community Foundation.

“We are so happy that we finally got the opportunity to introduce three classes of dancers to the magic of NUDM” after a pandemic-induced hiatus, says Cady DeCamara, executive cochair of the event.

While Chicago Youth Programs was 2022’s primary beneficiary of funds raised, this was the 25th consecutive year that the Evanston Community Foundation has been the secondary beneficiary. ECF invests in the Evanston community through grants, leadership development, and capacity building.

“It’s so interesting that it’s the 25th anniversary, because that’s older than all the students involved now,” says executive cochair Daniel Birmingham.

“It’s really cool that, every year, we know ECF is going to be a partner,” he adds, noting that it’s important for students to recognize that “they can’t sit back and just exist for four years—they have to give back to



the community. Supporting Evanston is something that every student should prioritize.”

The NUDM student board participates in the ECF grant-making process alongside other community leaders.

“It’s so rewarding that a 21-year-old gets to be part of that conversation,” Birmingham says. “This is a cool checkpoint to reflect on what we’ve done with them for the past 25 years.”

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# The Art of Therapy

**E**vanston's Institute for Therapy through the Arts (ITA) helps people, families, and communities via its music, art, drama, and dance therapy programs.

According to former director Jenni Rook, creative arts therapy can be more effective for certain people than traditional approaches.

"Everybody needs to approach therapy the way that will work best for them," she says. Some people have autism, aphasia, or severe trauma or mental health issues that don't allow them to put their thoughts and feelings into words. "The arts are important because they allow patients to express themselves in a nonverbal way, communicating with a therapist who's trained to make sense of what they're creating."

Rather than speak about an experience, for example, art or music therapy patients might draw a picture or write a song about what happened. Dance-movement therapy connects the mind and body, helping a therapist understand psychological symptoms present in the body and use movement and breath techniques to address them.



**"The arts allow us to get creative to safely explore things that we don't feel comfortable putting into words."** Jenni Rook

Therapists who work with children can help them express themselves through play in a way that will help them cope with anxiety. Says Rook, "The arts allow us to get creative to safely explore things that we don't feel comfortable putting into words."

The institute partners with Northwestern in many ways. Some include providing direct services, such as the Parkinson's disease support group at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, and serving people with aphasia at the Center for Audiology, Speech, Language, and Learning.

Additionally, with Northwestern Medicine's Mesulam Center for Cognitive Neurology and Alzheimer's Disease, ITA researchers are

studying the effects of a music program on people with dementia and their families. The Musical Bridges to Memory study recently received a National Endowment for the Arts grant to do more of that work.

In another collaboration, Rook was featured during Northwestern faculty member Nina Kraus's keynote presentation for the American Music Therapy Association's conference.

"It's been really great being able to work with the Northwestern patient population and to collaborate, for instance, with speech therapists or doctors in the Alzheimer's center," Rook says.

Northwestern students have served as interns in ITA programs, and Kellogg School of Management MBA students have provided ITA with business expertise.

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**TO LEARN MORE about ITA programs, visit [itachicago.org](http://itachicago.org).**

## City, University Partner for Free Transport to After-School Program

**N**orthwestern's Digital Youth Divas program has partnered with Evanston's parks and recreation department to offer free transportation to program participants. The University funds transit so the middle school "divas" can get to the Robert Crown Community Center after school.

The DYD program engages middle school girls, especially those from nondominant communities, in design-based engineering and computer science activities. When the program began, founder and Northwestern professor Nichole Pinkard identified accessibility from schools as one barrier to students' participation.

"Transportation has been historically a barrier for youth of color to participate in programming throughout the city," says Miranda Standberry-Wallace, former community relations and engagement manager at Northwestern. The girls attend 14 schools across the city, and in order to get to the DYD program, they need transportation after school.



The parks and recreation department uses its existing transportation system to pick up the students from District 65 schools. Northwestern funds the program completely, so there is no cost to participants or the city.

Standberry-Wallace says the initiative can serve as a model for how programs can work with cities to address long-standing barriers and make access more equitable for people of color. Since the beginning of 2022, more than half of DYD participants have taken advantage of the transportation.

"It's important right now, especially coming out of the worst of the pandemic, that kids can participate in activities like this to reengage with the social aspect of their community," says Jeron Dorsey, recreation manager at the Crown Center. "If we can address some of the challenges with transportation, it will provide a resource for busy working parents so they won't have to worry about getting kids to and from these programs."

**"Transportation has been historically a barrier for youth of color to participate in programming throughout the city."** Miranda Standberry-Wallace



TO LEARN MORE about the program, visit [digitalyouthnetwork.org/divas](https://digitalyouthnetwork.org/divas).

## Dance Marathon

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ECF president and CEO Sol Anderson agrees: “Students arrive at Northwestern and spend four years giving back to the city we love: Evanston. Nothing demonstrates that better than Dance Marathon. We appreciate NUDM’s commitment and the bold and beautiful way they lead—always with a smile on their faces.”

Northwestern president Morton Schapiro joined students for part of Saturday afternoon. He cited the necessary health protocols in place in the wake of the COVID-19

pandemic as one reason why an in-person event could make a comeback this year.

“I’m so proud of the efforts of all the student volunteers,” he says. “They’ve had to deal with a lot over the last two years. I believe their efforts, with the support from alumni and the Evanston and greater Chicago communities, will make a real difference for this year’s beneficiaries.”

Dance Marathon is one of the largest entirely student-run philanthropies in the nation. Since 1975, it has raised more than \$22 million for nearly three dozen charities.

“We get to empower such a large portion of the student body and introduce them to these causes,” Birmingham says, noting that 15 percent of the undergraduate student body participates in the event. “I’ve just developed so much love for this organization.”



TO SUPPORT Dance Marathaon, visit [nudm.org](http://nudm.org).



## 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](http://northwestern.edu/communityrelations) or contact Dave Davis, executive director of the Office of Neighborhood and Community Relations, at [dave.davis@northwestern.edu](mailto:dave.davis@northwestern.edu) or 847-467-5762.

## Staff profile Peter Braithwaite



Peter Braithwaite joined Northwestern as director of procurement diversity and community engagement in February. He will support procurement and payment services and facilities management initiatives, focusing on the development, implementation, and management of strategic business diversity at the University.

Braithwaite earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology from the University of Kansas and has since spent more than 15 years as a leader in business development,

community relations, and government.

Northwestern welcomes Braithwaite and the strong track record of leadership and innovation he brings to this position.

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