

OUR neighborhood

Evanston-Northwestern
Community News
Summer 2019

NEWS

Strengthening Local Businesses

For Northwestern University, being a good neighbor includes supporting local and diverse businesses in Evanston and Chicago.

“We all benefit when local businesses do well,” says Jim Konrad, executive director of procurement and payment services. He adds that working with them can often save the University time and money.

Northwestern’s procurement diversity initiative aims to expand and strengthen these relationships through vendor opportunities and development and partnerships with advocacy organizations—ultimately striving to become a national model for supporting local businesses and contributing to a vibrant city and region.

In 2018, the contract with Northwestern’s new food-service partner, Compass Group, “was the perfect launching pad to step up our day-to-day efforts,” Konrad says. “A food-service provider needs lots of vendors. If they can find a local bakery, or a small business that supplies vegetables, it helps them but it also helps us support local and small businesses.”

Ana Vela’s Amanecer Taco Shop in Evanston had been selling breakfast tacos from a food truck outside Northwestern’s Technological Institute on Sheridan Road, but it had been challenging for the business to grow. “Our brick-and-mortar

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Ana Vela with brother and Amanecer cofounder Mario

STAFF PROFILE: CINDY BENSON



Northwestern University Police welcomes Cindy Benson as commander of investigative services.

Benson and her diverse, experienced team work together with the University community and the Evanston Police Department to ensure the safety and security of students, faculty, and staff.

“It’s been refreshing for me to mentor and collaborate with students,” she says. “We work with a lot of student groups who come up with great ideas—everyone has Northwestern’s safety and best interests at heart. It’s a nice collaborative effort.”

Supporting Mental Health

Therapists in training at Northwestern’s Family Institute get hands-on experience in its community program. The master’s students, supervised by professional therapists, partner with schools and community organizations to serve the mental health needs of Evanston.

These future marriage and family therapists create relationships and strengthen community ties by maintaining regular, in-person contact at participating schools, including Oakton and Kingsley Elementary Schools, Chute Middle School, and Evanston Township High School.

“What we can offer at the Family Institute is support—for mental health awareness, for parents living paycheck to paycheck or experiencing depression or anxiety,” says Dara Winley, the program’s community fellow. Student therapists also help parents whose children are being bullied and advise on navigating school resources.

Seeing a child in a school setting, especially when a referral comes from the school, can help a therapist understand the constraints that influence academic success. School-based services also reinforce relationships with school staff, who can support overarching mental-health goals.

“There’s a desire from our student therapists to get to know people with different cultural backgrounds,” Winley says. “Seeing people who have different trials and struggles and having experiences with families in underresourced communities, they see how people are navigating how to prioritize their own and their children’s mental health.”

Around 25 master’s students participate in the program, which lasts two years and culminates in a degree in marriage and family therapy. Ultimately, Winley hopes a research project can measure the effectiveness of

therapists’ participation and what they’ve learned as it relates to their clients, one another, and the broader community.

Winley and program leaders are also planning fall workshops to develop strategies to best meet additional needs identified by parents, who in surveys noted they’d like services to include mentoring, one-on-one support, and math and science programming.



Dara Winley

TO LEARN MORE about the Family Institute, email Dara Winley at dwinley@family-institute.org.

Evanston Middle Schoolers Visit Campus



When Northwestern doctoral student Eric Brown was recruiting students at Evanston's Nichols Middle School for his dissertation research, at least five or six asked whether he'd be interviewing them on campus.

"That was curious to me," he says, because he'd planned to interview them at their school during lunch periods. The students mentioned having watched Northwestern football and basketball games or being curious about the University but not having been to the Evanston campus. Their interest in visiting Northwestern became a conversation starter.

Brown, whose research at the School of Education and Social Policy focuses on black boys' experiences in racially diverse middle schools, came away from those conversations thinking about opportunities for local middle schoolers to visit campus.

With support from the SESP community partnerships office and Northwestern's Office of Neighborhood and Community Relations, Brown developed a one-day program for 40 black, Latina and Latino,

and multiracial students—communities that have historically been underrepresented in higher education.

The day included a presentation on what planning for college should look like during all four years of high school. "Kids might think college isn't something to worry about until senior year," Brown says, "but we know that approach to college planning disadvantages members of historically underrepresented communities."

Brown also arranged for a discussion with Northwestern students and staff in which middle schoolers could ask about what to expect in college, especially as members of underrepresented populations. "We wanted them to come away with a positive association with that identity," he says, "even though it's often not presented in a positive way."

As an African American man attending a predominantly white university, "I'm obviously a member of a historically underrepresented group," Brown adds. "It's important for me to think about the communities I'm a part of and doing what I can to bring them to the places where I don't see them represented."

He notes that the issue of why certain minority groups are less represented is complicated and can't be solved simply by bringing a group of students to Northwestern. But exposure is important, and such groups don't get that experience as often as their wealthier peers.

"I think it's up to the people in organizations to better serve these communities," Brown says. "Get them in the door and give them an experience they can perceive as relevant."

TO LEARN MORE, email Eric Brown at erbrown@u.northwestern.edu.

Local Businesses

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shop is pretty far from campus for students to swing by," she says. "When there was construction on Sheridan, we couldn't park there anymore. We had students emailing and calling to ask, 'How do we get your tacos closer to us?'"

A networking event for minority-owned businesses provided the solution. Vela met a University representative who let her know about Northwestern and Compass's open call to local food vendors to explore partnership opportunities.

Amanecer has now been a partner since last fall. Compass thought Vela's grab-and-go breakfast tacos were a good fit for the Tech Express café, where Amanecer now delivers tacos Monday through Friday mornings.

"As a local Evanston business that's minority- and woman-owned, the challenges continue to be stacked for us," Vela says. "Having an opportunity to showcase our product and get it into the hands of Northwestern staff and students has been great for the growth of our business." Compass says the tacos are the café's top-selling product, and Amanecer now sells them at Kresge Café as well.

Chicago hot-sauce maker Co-op Sauce has also benefited from the outreach efforts. "When we heard Northwestern was considering local businesses to come on board, we jumped right on it and threw our name in the hat," says Eno Rocha, Co-op's sales director.

Conversations with Compass led to Co-op's locally sourced sauces being available in Northwestern dining halls. Offerings include a special Wildcat sauce, which is also sold at the campus bookstore.

Says Vela, "We do our best to get the word out, but Northwestern is massive—it's hard for every student to know who we are." After selling on campus for a full academic year, "a lot more people have found out about us, and students have gone out of their way to visit our shop. Sometimes as a small business, just having an opportunity to prove yourself—that you have a high-quality product—is all you need. You just need that first step to really open more doors."

TO LEARN MORE about procurement and business diversity opportunities at Northwestern, email Jim Konrad at j-konrad@northwestern.edu.

EVENTS



'KITS, 'CATS, AND KIDS BLOCK PARTY
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 5–8 P.M.
Downtown Evanston (Sherman Avenue between Church and Clark Streets)
A family-friendly celebration of the partnership between Evanston and Northwestern.

EVANSTON DAY FOOTBALL GAME: NORTHWESTERN VS. UNLV
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2:30 P.M.
Ryan Field, 1501 Central Street
Northwestern celebrates Evanston as the Wildcats take on UNLV.

EVANSTON MASHUP
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 5:30 P.M.
East Lawn, Norris University Center, 1999 Campus Drive
An Evanston business and community mixer featuring conversation, food, and music.

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 Dave Davis, executive director of the Office of Neighborhood and Community Relations, at dave.davis@northwestern.edu or 847-467-5762.