Love Don’t Pay the Rent

Fundraising + Advocacy in Evanston, Illinois
The Communications Ideal

A long-term communications plan that:
• Has a cohesive narrative
• Addresses the interests of different audiences
• Uses multiple communications channels
• Educates AND incites action AND raises money
• Can be adapted to changes in programs and priorities
• Can incorporate new ideas and efforts
• Allows you to be nimble
The Reality

• Start with an idea—a core theme or message
• Make a plan
• Change the plan—continuously—but make links to what came before
• Use offers for help—when they make sense

Our Story (this year)
Love Don’t Pay the Rent

Pro bono offer—an unknown with potentially great value
• Timing was good—beginning of fiscal year
• Tied to the book *Evicted*
• Wanted to make a splash
• Focused on the values of the community:
  • Cradle to Career—focus on children
  • Diversity → Equity
  • Pride in the community
• Challenged the reality of those values
• Started a conversation
Core of the Campaign

Posters with 4 key elements:

• A proposition: *Love Don’t Pay the Rent*
• A story (photo, photo + words)
• A challenge: *Evanston can do better.*
• An action plan/solution: *Find out how at connect2home.org.*
Stories

Yard signs:
• Stories are in the photos—love or loneliness. They portray the people who come to us for help.

Posters for retailers:
• Stories are also in the words, where posters will be near foot traffic.
• The words gives facts + an emotional statement + a values challenge.
The Child Story

Over 70% of homeless adults were homeless as children.

The tragedy and trauma they’ve experienced have darkened their lives as adults.

In Evanston, more than 400 kids are homeless.

This is Evanston. We can do better.

Find out how at connect2home.org.
The Youth Story

Almost 200 ETHS students are homeless every day.

About 300 District 65 grade school students are homeless too.

How do you concentrate on a test during the day when you don’t know where you’re going to sleep at night?

This is Evanston. We can do better.

Find out how at connect2home.org.
The Adult Story

We look right past them.

It’s hard to see their fear. Their pain. Their shame.

In Evanston, over 7500 neighbors are homeless or at-risk—that’s 10% of our population.

At minimum wage they’d need to work 3 jobs to afford the rent.

This is Evanston. We can do better.

Find out how at connect2home.org.
Distribution & PR

Planned activities:

• Push + Opt-Out approach for yard signs
• Canvas approach for retailers
• Blog posting that highlighted:
  • Why “Love Don’t Pay the Rent”? 
  • Evanston Can Do Better 
  • connect2home.org (rolling out our new URL)
• E-newsletter article
• Press conference (also announcing an event featuring the co-author of $2.00 a Day)
Distribution & PR

Reactions:

• Positive—“on-target messaging,” “love the posters,” “how can I get a poster?”
• Confused—“I don’t get it.”
• Negative—“Bad grammar!”, “This is insulting to African-Americans,” “Are you trying to make people feel ashamed?”

ALL led to productive discussion.

Unplanned activities:

• Distribution to people who requested yard signs
• Conversations with donors who called with questions
• Invitation to do a guest editorial in the local paper
Moving Forward

Carrying the theme forward throughout the year:

• Case statement
• Fall appeal & holiday card
• Video & messaging around gala in February
• E-newsletter & blog entries
• Community & volunteer events in the late winter & spring

Allusions to the campaign can be explicit or implicit but always focus on:

• The challenge
• The solution
• The values
Case Statement

To be tailored for use with:

• Major donors
• Corporations
• Civic & community groups
• Foundation meetings
• Volunteer groups
On any given night in Evanston...
...1,000+ People Are Homeless

People in households without children
- Total Last Year: 2,873
- On an Average Night: 692

People in households with children
- Total Last Year: 1,176
- On an Average Night: 549

Chronically homeless people
- Total Last Year: 404
- On an Average Night: 109

Homeless Students
- In District 65: 272
- In District 202 (ETHS): 178
...and Many More Are at Risk

Almost 10% of households in Evanston (7,500) are at risk of becoming homeless:

That’s the number that make less than half the area median income ($34,146) and pay more than 30% of their income ($853 a month) on housing.

To be considered affordable, housing should cost no more than 30% of one’s income.
Housing Is Too Expensive

A recent search for 1-bedroom apartments on Apartments.com for Evanston* showed:

- 0 available for < $1,000/month
- 22 available for < $1,500/month

* Market rate rents in Evanston are unaffordable for those working full time at less than $20 an hour.

* July 2016
Costs of Homelessness

Costs to the community:

“Some studies have found that leaving a person to remain chronically homeless costs taxpayers as much as $30,000 to $50,000 per year.” These costs result from stays in hospital emergency departments and inpatient beds, detox programs, jails, prisons, and psychiatric institutions.


Costs to the homeless person:

Chronic homelessness cuts 20 to 30 years off a homeless person’s life.

Greatest Burden on the Youth

Children who are homeless...

- Have higher rates of acute and chronic health problems
- Are more likely to have been exposed to violence
- Are more likely to have anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and aggressive behavior
- Are less likely to finish school
- Are 60% more likely to be homeless as adults
Housing is the Foundation

Without stable housing, it is nearly impossible to:

- Excel in school
- Hold a job
- Care for a family

Stable Housing
Our Mission at Connections

We prevent people from losing their homes and re-house those who have become homeless, to help move individuals and families out of the shadows of homelessness and reach the greatest possible level of self-sufficiency.
We Know What Works: Housing First

Providing housing, along with other support, is the most effective way to move people out of homelessness.

It gives people the place from which to work on:

- Employment
- Education
- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Substance Use
- Family Ties

But until people can find housing they can afford, we need other solutions.
Connections’ On-Ramps to Homeless Services:

**Outreach workers** engage homeless people where they are – streets, parks, public spaces.

**Entry Point** is a daytime drop-in center co-located at Hilda’s Place. It provides access to showers, computers, phones, outreach workers and case managers.

**Hilda’s Place** is a shelter that provides dormitory-style housing for adults, with the goal of moving into housing upon exit.
Connections’ Housing for People with Special Needs:

**Supportive Housing** provides ongoing subsidized housing and case management to individuals who are disabled and chronically homeless and to families that include someone with a disability.

**Tenant-Based Rental Assistance** provides a 2-year housing subsidy and case management for working families with children in Evanston schools.

**Our House** is a residential program for homeless young adults between the ages of 18 and 24.
Services Provided

Clients

**Basic Needs:**
Shelter, food, clothing, hygiene, access to computer and phone

**Housing Assistance:**
Location, application assistance, rent subsidies, tenant education

**Health and Well-Being:**
Medical and mental health care, children’s advocacy, parent education

**Career Services:**
Job readiness training, employment counseling, academic testing, education

**Life Skills:**
Workshops, tutoring and mentoring, social skills
Reach of Connections’ Programs

**Total Served:** 733

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Programs</th>
<th>People Served in FY16</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Re-Housing (including Hilda’s Place)</td>
<td>142</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supportive Housing—Individuals</td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supportive Housing—Families</td>
<td>84 (including kids)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rental Assistance for Families</td>
<td>64 (including kids)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing for Youth</td>
<td>7 young men</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homelessness Prevention</td>
<td>0 (due to the State budget impasse)</td>
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**Supportive Programming** (these services overlap with housing services)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outreach &amp; Basic Necessities</td>
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<td>Health Services</td>
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<td>Employment Support</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>166</td>
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# How You Can Help…

## 1. Provide Your Own Financial Support
- Join the 365 Club and pledge to give a dollar a day
- Increase your giving by 10%
- Sign up for recurring giving
- Make a major gift

## 2. Help Us Get Other Financial Support
- Recruit friends and relatives to start giving
- Solicit gifts from your employers
- Sign up for company matches

## 3. Help Us Spread the Word
- Invite us to speak at your workplace
- Invite us to speak at your church, synagogue, temple, or mosque
- Host a coffee where we can tell guests about our vision
- Feature Connections at a meeting of your local Rotary, Kiwanis, block or other club
- Talk about us on social media
A Story of Success: LAMONT

Lamont stopped by the office to talk with his case manager and proudly showed off the new car that he had recently bought. His fiancée was with him with a beautiful engagement ring on her finger. He talked about his position at a local warehouse where he is the supervisor with 50 employees reporting to him. Humbly, he confirmed that he has been clean and sober since 2014 and is reconnected with his family.

He looked remarkably different from the man who had initially interviewed to stay at Hilda’s Place Shelter. At the time, Lamont had a good work history with a tremendous level of experience in his family’s business, but he also had a history of violence and substance abuse. He was, actually, awaiting a court date for sentencing on an assault charge.

Everything started to change for the better when, during the initial interviews and meetings at Hilda’s Place, he finally admitted that he heard voices. Lamont had been hearing voices for 30 years and told no one. He tried quieting the voices and the violence that “they” elicited with drugs and alcohol. The unpredictable violence and addiction were the cause of his separation from family, lost employment, and homelessness.

The day that he shared his mental health secret and trusted someone with that reality was the day that he was able to start getting his life back. Lamont was referred to the psychiatrist on site at Connections, was diagnosed, and was able to receive the right medication that finally silenced the voices. A staff advocate accompanied him to his court date (more than once), making a plea to the judge that helped him receive drug rehab and a spot in a halfway house in lieu of jail time.

What if Lamont had never spoken up and told the truth about his struggles? What if the judge hadn’t been willing to offer an alternative sentence? Connections created the opportunities for these critical pivot points in Lamont’s life to go the right way. We helped Lamont to change the questions to positives. What if Lamont had the medication he needed and advocacy he needed to regain employment and stable housing? When Lamont stopped by the office; we saw the amazing answer.
A Story of Success: MALIK

Malik had had stable housing through much of high school and was fortunate to be involved in an after-school program. When he graduated, he got a job working in a facility for adults with disabilities. Shortly after graduation, he lost his housing due to a difficult family situation and, with nowhere to live, he began sleeping on the trains. Eventually, he heard about Connections’ Our House, where in September 2015 he became one of our first residents.

While living at Our House, Malik focused heavily on employment and financial security. He went through training to be a security guard, obtained the PERC card needed to apply for such jobs, and found employment as a guard in one of the dormitories at Northwestern University. At the same time, he worked closely with a financial literacy tutor and began to pro-actively build up his credit rating.

Hoping to get better (not overnight) hours, Malik was recently job-hunting, when Found Kitchen & Social House in Evanston approached Connections looking for employees. Malik applied and is now working full-time at Found in a job with a good wage, a schedule that works well for him, and great potential for advancement.
Thank You!

Connections for the Homeless

www.connect2home.org