

## Neighbors Program

### 2023 End of Year Report

2023 has marked a return to normalcy at Central Mission with a year of growth and new partnerships. **Central Mission is open from 8:00 -11:00 a.m. every Thursday** and has provided the following services during the year:

<b>Service Provided</b>	<i>Meals</i>	<i>Bus Passes</i>	<i>Clothing</i>	<i>Hygiene Items</i>	<i>Backpacks</i>	<i>Sleeping Bags</i>
<b>Number of Times Distributed</b>	4,018	1,363	1,998	2,985 (estimate)	191	35

While these are our core services, we have also established new partnerships and provided other services that you will read about below. We aim to be responsive to our neighbors and have the flexibility to meet with people one-on-one between the hours of 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. to help them seek resources or connect with other organizations. **We've helped neighbors find jobs, reunite with family, get medical appointments, and apply for housing.**



We hosted **ice cream socials** from July to September and served an average of 25 neighbors each week. It was a great time for connection and a break from the heat. A generous donation from HEB enabled us to buy the ice cream and supplies that put smiles on our neighbors' faces.

#### **Launched a Support Group for Neighbors**

At 10:00 am every Thursday we offer a support group for people experiencing homelessness. This is a time for neighbors to connect with each other and have a place where they can be heard and supported. We have also woven in cross-cultural celebrations, advocacy and guest speakers, and a field trip to the Capitol.

#### **Volunteer Development and Celebration**

Our volunteers are the **heart and soul** of Central Mission; we couldn't operate the program without them. Volunteers have given over 1,000 hours of their time, and donors have contributed over \$5,000 in food supplies for Central Mission. This year we developed a volunteer application, screening, and orientation process, from which we received 27 new applications. Throughout the year we've held volunteer trainings and meetings, and in September we went to the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary to recruit/train volunteers.

In October, we hosted our first **Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon at Stubb's** to celebrate all the dedication of our volunteers at CPC. We will continue to recruit, celebrate, and do our best to retain the hard-working, big-hearted volunteers who make Central Mission what it is.

### **Advocacy and Community Collaboration**

This year we raised the profile of the Neighbors Program and Central Presbyterian Church in the community.

We speak up about the needs of our unhoused neighbors and actively participate in the call for systems change. This year we joined the Board of the Religious Coalition to Assist the Homeless, restarted the Downtown Cluster Meetings with partners, participated in Homelessness Awareness Day at the Capitol, testified before the City Council about the need for shelter, held a press conference at CPC about the Salvation Army closure, and met with Representative Vikki Goodwin at the Capitol about homelessness.



### ***Impact of Advocacy***

Our leadership has helped move issues forward in Austin. We spoke up alongside our neighbors when **there otherwise might not have been a voice**. Some of our outcomes include:

- Successfully advocated for new shelter and for the two homeless system leads in Austin to work toward a coordinated shelter-entry system.
- Held a press conference on the Salvation Army shelter closure and gave neighbors a voice. This helped influence the decision to delay the shelter's closure so that more neighbors could find shelter or housing.
- Got print and television coverage four times throughout the year and raised awareness about our work, about the need for shelter, and about the unmet needs of our neighbors.
- Brought policy ideas for addressing homelessness statewide to Rep. Vikki Goodwin.

### **Community Partners**

Though we're a small program, we've maximized our time and capacity by bringing other partners in to serve our neighbors during Central Mission. A few of our key partnerships are with Central Health, Maximizing Hope, Austin Public Health, Vocal-TX, and the Integral Care/Homeless Outreach Street Team. We partner with Covenant Presbyterian Church through the **Better Together Grant from Mission Presbytery**, and we received generous donations from the **R-O Construction Company, HEB, and Bombas**.

### **Internship Program**

This year we started an internship program through the University of Texas and the Trinity Center. Having an intern helped us expand capacity and offer case management to neighbors.

### **Neighbors Program Sustainability**

Thanks to the work of the CPC Neighbors Team, we've moved to a system that funds the Neighbors Program solely through donations to the Neighbors Fund. Funding no longer comes from the church's General Fund; all donations to the Neighbors Fund go to program expenses.

**Please consider making a donation to the Neighbors Fund so we can continue this important work in the community and provide valuable services to our neighbors without homes in 2024! Thank you.**