



celebrating
what's
new!



TM

WeGo Together for Kids

2024 IMPACT REPORT

what was **new** in 2024?

It was a year of growth and outreach at WeGo Together for Kids. These numbers are just a glimpse of the exciting year as the organization nears its 20th anniversary:

16
new
business
partners

10
new
community
partners

540
children
and parents
at new
events

100%
parents
learned
something
new at
Parenting
with
Purpose

30
partner
organizations
trained
in Crisis
Response
Resources

8
new
funders

97
new
families
received
rent
assistance

5
new interns

2
new
employees





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Dear partners, neighbors, and friends,

Happy New Year! As we start another calendar year, we are grateful to reflect back on another remarkable year of partnership and collaboration, while also looking ahead with excitement and anticipation for our continued work together as WeGo Together for Kids.

As we have specifically shared in recent years, we believe one of the greatest beauties of WeGo Together for Kids, is how **this collaboration brings people from such diverse backgrounds together, to seek the good of our community!** In the midst of what seem to be growing divisions in our culture at large, we celebrate this collaboration in which people from diverse backgrounds, multiple generations, different religious faiths, across each sector of society are unified in our desire to love see the flourishing of our community.

Specifically, as a Steering Committee, we celebrate that **we start the year 2025 with more than 50 community partners regularly engaged in our partner meetings and diligently working together** in seven teams and work groups. We are also grateful for the formation of two advisory groups that for several years have been a goal for our Steering Committee and leadership. Our Community Council is now formed and has met twice, ensuring that our broad partnership increasingly hears directly from, and is influenced by, the community members and families we desire to serve alongside. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee has been working hard for just over a year now to ensure we are addressing the most pressing concerns, helping to make West Chicago a place of welcome and inclusivity and providing our partners with training and resources around DEI. We will always be better together!

After you read this report, we invite you to visit the website at www.wegotgetherforkids.com to stay updated and be inspired by more stories of community impact and partnership.

We know there is a great year ahead for WeGo Together for Kids, and we are grateful for all who are a committed part of it.

In gratitude for all involved,

Kyle Reschke, Chair

On behalf of the
WeGo Together for Kids Steering Committee







WeGo Together for Kids supports and enhances the well-being of children and families in West Chicago

MISSION

To support and enhance the health, safety, learning, and social-emotional well-being of children and families through a collaborative, coordinated, and comprehensive approach for the West Chicago community.

VISION

A vibrant and engaged community where children and families reach their full potential.

Dear WeGo Together for Kids partners, funders and friends,

As you'll see in this report, the theme for our 2024 together was **new!**

In a year of remarkable growth, WeGo Together for Kids launched new programs and events, welcomed new partners, engaged new funders and hired new staff.

2024 brought new opportunities to support one another as we faced personal, organizational, community wide and national challenges. It has been wonderful to watch partners rally to offer hope, wisdom and resources to each other.

Some of the new things we tried worked like a dream, others did not. And so in that process, we learned new lessons about how best to serve the West Chicago community.

2025 will likely be a refining year as we strive to serve kids and families in the best ways possible. We will dedicate time to evaluating and tweaking programs, services, events, grants, outreach, partnerships and more. We will need your energy, time, experience, resources and knowledge of West Chicago families in order to best achieve these goals. Thank you in advance for your dedication to this coalition and community.

It continues to be a great honor to lead this effort and work alongside you. West Chicago is a special place and WeGo Together for Kids is a remarkable collaboration.

Molly Beck Dean

Director, WeGo Together for Kids
beckdeanm@metrofamily.org



new programs

2024 brought a flurry of new WeGo Together for Kids programs for the children and families of West Chicago.

In July we began the **Rx Mobile program** at Timberlake Apartments, in partnership with Northwestern Medicine and the Northern Illinois Food Bank. This monthly event provides nutritious, fresh food to an average of 160 families or almost 700 individuals, helping to address food insecurity in the community.

Each month, community partners are invited to come and share resources with attendees. Whether it's home visiting, domestic violence support groups or health care, these partners and resources provide much needed support to families.

The success of the Rx Mobile program is due to the dedication of our volunteers from local businesses, partner organizations and individuals throughout the county who help with every step of the food distribution process.

Starting in the Spring of 2024, we brought families together through events that celebrated community, learning, health and connection at places that many West Chicago families would otherwise not have the ability to visit.

At **WeGo Night at the DuPage Children's Museum**, 275 attendees explored exhibits and discovered local partners' resources.



MemoryFox Spotlight

In August, **WeGo Day at the Farm**, hosted at The Conservation Foundation's McDonald Farm, welcomed 115 students and parents for a day focused on nature, learning, and mental health practices, with activities like forest bathing, scavenger hunts, art and garden cooking.

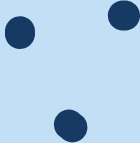
In the fall, the **WeGo Roller Skating night** saw 150 participants enjoying physical activity, raffles, and community connection.

Admission, bus transportation from West Chicago and a meal are provided free of charge at all WGTK Community Events to make them as accessible as possible.

In 2024, we introduced MemoryFox to our partners, helping them capture and share stories that showcase their impact. Through these stories, we've highlighted how our work supports early childhood development, mental health, physical health, family stability, emergency preparedness, and academic achievement.

We will continue using MemoryFox in the coming year and kick off 2025 with a special Memory Fox Campaign.

Scan the QR code at right or click [this link](#) to share your story and help us celebrate the meaningful work happening in our community.



It is a very beautiful place to explore with my son. Thank you very much WeGo Together for Kids for making this trip possible!

- PARENT PARTICIPANT, WEGO DAY AT THE FARM



mental health



Mental Health continued to be a major focus of our work in 2024. In addition to the ongoing work of our two mental health clinicians who serve D33 and D94 students, programming eighth grade students and for parents of teens were added.

Operation Snowball is a program at West Chicago Community High School that teaches students about positive life choices, coping skills and how to respond to difficult situations like bullying. The Mental Health Work Group created **"Snowflake"** for Lemay Middle School 8th graders as a preview to Snowball. A dozen high school students served as the facilitators for the day and almost 30 8th graders participated. The curriculum focused on general mental wellness practices, conflict resolution, healthy relationships and leadership development.



Parenting with Purpose

was a bilingual training for parents of middle school and high school students that taught participants how to promote teen wellness. Topics included healthy relationships, adolescent development, coping skills and dealing with discrimination. From pre and post event surveys, 100% of parents reported feeling more equipped to talk with their teen about mental health after the event.

Advocating for the creation of **708 Community Mental Health Boards** in Wayne and Winfield Townships was another mental health priority. 708 Boards are created by referendum and voted on by the community. They provide grants for mental health, disability and substance use/recovery services. WGTK partners and staff collected signatures to get the referendum on the ballots and took part in community education events aimed at dispersing accurate information and compelling stories. In November, both referendums passed! This will create more than \$1 million per year in grant funding across Wayne and Winfield Townships.

Thanks to the talks, I have many very useful tips in my toolbox that I will use in my daily life, regarding my mental health and that of my children.

- PARENT PARTICIPANT, PARENTING WITH PURPOSE



physical health

After learning about high childhood obesity rates in West Chicago, our Physical Health Work Group added access to physical activity to their list of priorities. Thanks to a grant from Northwestern Medicine, our **Physical Activity Initiative** promotes healthy living by increasing access to knowledge, classes, equipment and facilities. We focused on bringing events to places people live or are already gathering.

Free Family Fitness Nights

alternated between yoga, boxing, and Zumba, providing diverse activities that encouraged families to stay active together. **Play Groups** for the youngest of our WeGo kids took place at Timberlake Apartments and Main Park Apartments, offering games and activities to get kids moving, story time centering on movement and healthy

snacks. These events help foster a sense of community while promoting physical fitness and healthier lifestyles for families of all ages.

Thanks to the Physical Activity Initiative we have seen the return of a **Bike Rodeo** to West Chicago. This event was hosted at the West Chicago Park District and had 100+ attendees. The Bike Rodeo offered helmet distribution and fittings, bike tune ups and small repairs, a riding course for kids to practice their skills, a bike decorating station and the opportunity to engage with local first responders. Many children came to the Bike Rodeo with one shared bike across several kids in the family or with no bike at all. Several bikes were raffled off and one of the winners exclaimed "My very own bike!" when her name was announced.



new staff

In 2024, WGTK welcomed five interns to our work together.

Bryn Wicklas, a Master's of Social Work student, worked with various partners to support families in need with a special project of setting up a referral system at the Neighborhood Food Pantry.

Sandra Barrera, a Master's of Public Health student, joined WGTK as an intern over the summer specializing in the development of resources for maternal health and analyzing data around childhood obesity in West Chicago.

Sandy Soto, Anahi Simental, and Jocelyn Cruz are Bachelor of Social Work interns that have focused their time on our educational center partners District 94, District 33, and Educare West DuPage. They've led small groups for students focusing on social-emotional skills and special education, helped with holiday giving programs, and presented mindfulness activities to students and parents.

All of our awesome interns are a big help at WeGo Together for Kids events, showing up ready to support the families we serve.

In April of 2024 we were thrilled to introduce **Veronica Caballero** as our new Housing Navigator on staff.

Veronica brings previous experience in housing assistance and a strong commitment to supporting individuals and families in securing stable homes. She provides critical help with security deposit assistance, rent support, and resources for eviction prevention, homelessness, and other housing-related needs.

"My job as the housing navigator is to help the community of West Chicago with resources."

Veronica's expertise and passion for serving the community have already made a significant impact, and we are excited about the continued contributions she will bring to our mission.

Later in the year, we welcomed Jennifer Rodriguez as the Early Childhood Manager.

Jennifer focuses on supporting families with children aged 0-8 by fostering partnerships and leading initiatives like The Basics DuPage, which encourages parents to engage in five simple practices to give their children a strong start in life.

"My inspiration for wanting to work in early childhood stems from being a mother myself. I started my career in early childhood when I was a first-time mom and truly that drive to become the best mom I could be," Jennifer shares.

Jennifer's passion and dedication have already made a meaningful impact in West Chicago.





early childhood

In 2024, the Early Childhood Work Group set a goal to address the lack of awareness and access to early childhood resources among families in West Chicago. Recognizing that many families in the community are not connected to the critical programs and support services available to them, the group aimed to bridge this gap by creating **Early Childhood pop-up events** which were hosted at Educare West DuPage, Timberlake Apartments, the West Chicago Library District and Casa Michoacan. These pop-up events provided families with a convenient and accessible way to learn about and connect with early childhood service providers. By ensuring that more families are informed and supported, the Early Childhood Work Group is working to create a more equitable and inclusive environment for all young children in the area.

Additionally, the Early Childhood Work Group also focused on addressing the critical issue of limited transportation opportunities in West Chicago. For those families that do have vehicles, some struggle with unreliable cars they can't afford to fix, leaving them without a reliable means of getting their children to school or important appointments.



Thanks to a grant funded by Bright & Early DuPage, the **WGTK Car Repair Program** was created. This initiative provides loans to help West Chicago families with children ages 0-8 cover the cost of necessary vehicle repairs. This program is a small part of a much larger issue, however the organization is committed to doing what it can to help.

Lastly, we were so excited to bring **The Basics DuPage** to West Chicago families in 2024. The Basics are five simple but powerful things that parents, caregivers and the community can do with young children to ensure that they have a strong foundation to succeed in life. Our focus has been on equipping community partners who directly serve families by providing partners with education and resources on The Basics Principles. We are exploring implementing The Basics artwork throughout the city to increase visibility and awareness. To support these efforts, all West Chicago families who have children ages 0-5 have the amazing opportunity to sign up for The Basics Insights text messaging program where they receive two FREE text messages each week with developmentally appropriate, science-based facts and tips on how they can help their child to learn and grow. Stay tuned as we continue to work together to create a community where every child can thrive and succeed in life!





stable families

The goal of our Stable Families result area is that West Chicago families have access to the resources they need to meet their basic needs and life goals. Currently our efforts fall into categories - housing and food access:

Housing

Having a stable home is the foundation for a family's well-being. This year, we provided rent assistance to 97 families, helping them stay in their homes during challenging times. Through the guidance of our Housing Navigator, Veronica Caballero, families received not only financial support but also access to eviction prevention resources and connections to housing services from our partners.

Our goal is to ensure every family in West Chicago feels secure and supported, and we're proud of the progress we've made in creating stability for those who need it most.

Food Access

Having access to healthy food is essential for families to thrive. Through our work in the Food Access Work Group, we've been able to help many West Chicago families get the food they need.



From ongoing efforts at our established pantries, to a new Rx Mobile distribution, to providing food bags for food insecure patients at Access Community Health Network's West Chicago location hundreds of families receive food assistance.

Bryn Wicklas, WGTK intern, shares, "During my time focusing on the food access initiative with WGTK, I was reminded of a fundamental theory in the field of social work: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. In order for individuals to feel motivated to accomplish higher-level needs, first their basic needs must be met. It was inspiring to see the large number of West Chicago families receiving food distributions, and I was honored to create a community resource guide for the Neighborhood Food Pantry. This guide helped them connect families with services that go beyond food access."

One notable change in West Chicago's food ecosystem this year was the ending of the distribution at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church. Started at the beginning of the pandemic in response to increased need and the closing of some local food pantries due to health concerns, this drive thru distribution served hundreds of families each month. Coordinated by People's Resource Center and staff by volunteers from Lutheran Churches and community groups throughout the metro area, it was a labor of love week after week.



new partners

AIM - Center for
Independent Living

Behavioral
Perspective Inc

The Conservation
Foundation

DuPage Children's
Museum

DVSA Communities

Giving DuPage

Girls Scouts of
Greater Chicago

The Kitchen Table

Morton Arboretum

Northeast
Family Services

In 2024, we officially welcomed **10 new partners** to WeGo Together for Kids.

Their missions and foci of work varies from people with disabilities to nature conservation to support of victims of domestic violence and much more.

These new organizations have jumped right into the partnership serving on work groups, attending partner meetings, hosting events, sharing resources and leading programming.





community engagement

For 2024, our Community Engagement focused on bringing more West Chicago voices to decision making tables and getting out into the community to connect with kids and families.

The **WeGo Together for Kids Community Council** is composed of West Chicago parents and students and was created to provide valuable input to WGTK's goals and programming, bring attention to critical issues in West Chicago, and encourage participation in WGTK programs and services. The first meeting of the Community Council took place in September. The Community Council meetings have been an excellent way to engage with community members, gather feedback, and build a stronger network of support.



I like these events the community hosts because it brings the kids close to their friends outside of school. I also like to interact and meet with other parents of the community. I like that it also creates memories with my kids.

- PARENT PARTICIPANT

WGTK had the opportunity to engage with the community through several exciting events this year, including Blooming Fest, Trunk or Treat, and Frosty Fest. These events are critical to connect with the community, spread the word about our programs, and create memories with local families.

At the City of West Chicago's **Blooming Fest**, WGTK coordinated the "Kid Zone", an area of the event dedicated to children and families filled with interactive activities, partners with programs and resources to share and a variety of entertainers.

During **Trunk or Treat** at the West Chicago Public Library District, WGTK shined with an Inside Out 2 themed car trunk. We were interviewed by the local student-led newspaper, where we shared a memorable moment: "We packed 900 bags of popcorn with our flyers attached, and we literally just gave out the last one," said WGTK Communications Manager Andrea Garcia in the last five minutes of the event.

Finally, WGTK took part in the City of West Chicago's **Frosty Fest**, where we set up a winter themed photo booth and table with resources at Lisenas Gorditas in downtown West Chicago. This event gave us a chance to connect with the community in a festive setting, distributing flyers and spreading holiday cheer.



new records

- The 2024 Back to School event broke records for impact and outreach!





1,300
filled
backpacks
distributed

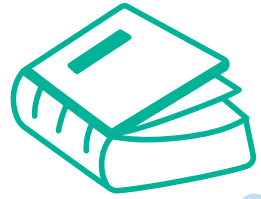
2,000
community
members
attended

zones
including
health, safety,
entertainment
& more!

36
business
partners
(meet them on page 24!)



academic achievement



The academic achievement of our West Chicago students and their parents remained a priority for our work together, especially in the area of literacy. Classes for adults wanting to learn English continued to be offered throughout the community. WGTK partners came together to help with literacy events at two of our local schools.

Gary Literacy & Math Night

In May, Gary Elementary School's first Literacy & Math Night focused on preventing the "summer slide" in children's reading and math skills. The event featured a book giveaway, where children selected books to take home, encouraging summer reading. Families also enjoyed learning fun, interactive games that they could take home, each designed to reinforce literacy and math skills.

A special highlight was the presence of therapy dogs, where children had the opportunity to read aloud to the dogs in a relaxed, supportive environment. This unique experience allowed kids to practice their reading in a fun and stress-free setting.

Leman Literacy Night

In November, the annual Literacy Event was held at Leman Middle School. A variety of community partners came together to offer resources, educational activities, and fun experiences for families.

Kids enjoyed a bookmark making station, the book fair and activities like learning how to juggle and face painting. WGTK interns taught a session on mindfulness and Healthy West Chicago taught families how to make healthy drinks to keep their immune systems strong. There were also raffles with great prizes, free vision screenings for students, and plenty of resources families could take home to help support their children's learning.

For the parents, informative sessions led by District 33 Family Liaisons offered practical tools, resources, and tips to support their children's academic success.

It was an exciting night full of learning, connection, and support for both students and parents.



emergency preparedness

To live out our commitment to Emergency Preparedness, WeGo Together for Kids hosted two important events in 2024.

In February, more than 30 individuals from partner organizations were trained on **Crisis Response** resources in DuPage County. Information on 988, mobile crisis response and the Crisis Center was shared. Partners had the opportunity to ask questions particular to our West Chicago context. After the training, attendees shared they felt more equipped to share resources and help families in times of crisis.

Due to the two large fires at an apartment complex in recent years, important lessons were learned about residents' lack of knowledge around fire safety. Several WGTK partners came together to create a **Fire Safety Event** at Main Park Apartments. Residents were given information and resources to help prevent fire emergencies and what to do in case one should occur. Activities around fire safety were provided for children and, of course, a highlight was getting to sit in the West Chicago Fire Department's brush truck.

Because of our commitment to support West Chicago families who lost their homes in the November 2023 apartment complex fire, case management support and the replacement of household goods and clothing continued into the summer of 2024. This work could not have happened without the financial support from more than 50 individuals and businesses and the tireless efforts of the staff of Puente del Pueblo, Casa Michoacan, District 33 and District 94. Thank you!



community partners



We are thrilled to have more than **70 partners** on our roster for 2024, including 10 new partners! In 2024, 40 partners were engaged in one or more of our work groups, committees and planning teams. Organizations gather in-person or on Zoom the first Thursday of each month for partner meetings. This is a time of networking, learning, dreaming and fun. We are more together than any of us could ever be alone.

Access Community Health Network

AIM - Center for Independent Living

Behavioral Perspective Inc.

Boy Scouts of America

Casa Michoacan

Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE)

City of West Chicago

City of West Chicago (police)

DayOne Pact, Child and Family Connections DuPage

DuPage and Chicago South Suburbs Habitat for Humanity

DuPage Children's Museum

Dupage County

DuPage County - Giving DuPage

DuPage County Health Department

DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform

DuPage Health Coalition

DVSA Communities

Easterseals

Educare West DuPage

Evangelical Child & Family Agency

Family Focus

FSS of Metropolitan Family Services

Girl Scouts

Glen Arbor Church

H.A.S.

H.O.M.E. DuPage

Healthy West Chicago

Hopeful Beginnings

Literacy DuPage

Loaves & Fishes Community Services

Metropolitan Family Services

Morton Arboretum

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

National Hispanic Suicide Prevention Network

Neighborhood Food Pantries

New Hope United Methodist

Northeast Family Services

Northern Illinois Food Bank

Northwestern Memorial Healthcare

Outreach

Peace Jam

People Made Visible/Gallery 200

People's Resource Center

Puente del Pueblo

Representative Maura Hirschauer's office

Republic Bank

SCARCE

Senator Karina Villa's office

St. Andrew Lutheran Church

Teen Parent Connection

The Conservation Foundation

The Garden Works Project

The Kitchen Table

Timber Lake Apartments

United Way of Metro Chicago

University of Illinois Extension

VNA Health Care

Wayne Township

Wayne/Winfield Area Youth/Family Services (WAYS)

West Chicago City Museum

West Chicago Community High School District 94

West Chicago Elementary School District 33

West Chicago Fire Protection District

West Chicago Park District

West Chicago Public Library District

Western DuPage Chamber of Commerce

Western DuPage Special Recreation Association

Wheaton Bible Church

Wheaton College/ CODA Music Program

Winfield Township

World Relief Chicagoland

Youth Outlook

YWCA of Metro Chicago



At each partner meeting we deepen our knowledge of at least one (but often several) of our community partners. This morning I was delighted by the many services that VNA healthcare offers.

Additionally, in getting to know the neighbors at my table, it turned out one offered just the services that my organization is seeking for an upcoming event. Community partnerships matter!

– COMMUNITY PARTNER



new funders

WeGo Together for Kids' mission is only forwarded because of the amazing funders who believe in this vision for the children of West Chicago. In 2024, we welcomed several new funders through grants and contributions which increased our reach, creativity and impact. Thank you to all of these entities who supported WGTK in 2024.

*** Birth to 5 Illinois**

*** DuPage County Health Department**

DuPage Foundation

DuPage Foundation's Bright & Early DuPage Initiative

*** Henrietta Lange Burk Fund**

*** Illinois Department of Human Services**

*** Northwestern Medicine**

*** SBB Research Group**

Siemer Institute

*** Strategic Prevention Grant**

West Chicago Park District Foundation

*** UNICO Foundation**

United Way Metro Chicago

(indicates a new funder in 2024)*

This year we welcomed many new area businesses as sponsors of the WeGo Together for Kids **Back to School Event**.

The following businesses gifted the event with school supplies, financial contributions and volunteers. Several businesses also hosted WGTK Giving Trees in December with gifts benefiting West Chicago Community High School students. Thank you for your dedication to the kids of West Chicago!

(indicates a new business partner in 2024)*

Atlas Chicken *

Avient *

Ball Horticulture *

Bank of America

Buck Services

Budget Appliance and Mattress *

Casey's *

Chris Mechanical Services

Costa Ivone Injury Lawyers *

Costco - Bloomingdale

DS Containers *

Dynamic Utilities Solutions

Elgin Sweepers

Epsilon

FNBC Bank & Trust

Form Tech

FXI

Graham Packaging

Hawthorne's Backyard

Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh

Integrated Pain Management *

IOC Construction

Ivy Hall *

Jelsert

Jewel Osco (Aurora) *

Land Care

Nationwide

Owens & Minor *

Realty of Chicago *

Sandi Llano and Associates

SEWA International Chicago Chapter

Sign a Rama West Chicago *

Target - St. Charles

Tata Consultancy Services *

Whole Foods (Hinsdale) *

Wiant House *

new business partners



2024 Steering Committee

Brittney Walker
District 94

Dave Sabathne
Western DuPage Chamber of Commerce

Gina Radun
West Chicago Park District

Joshua Simmons
United Way of Metro Chicago

Kara Murphy (Co-chair)
DuPage Health Coalition

Kyle Reschke (Chair)
Wheaton Bible Church

Mila Tsgalis
DuPage County Health Department

Robyn Arms
West Chicago Police Department

Sarah Norton
District 33

Suzanne Baber
Teen Parent Connection

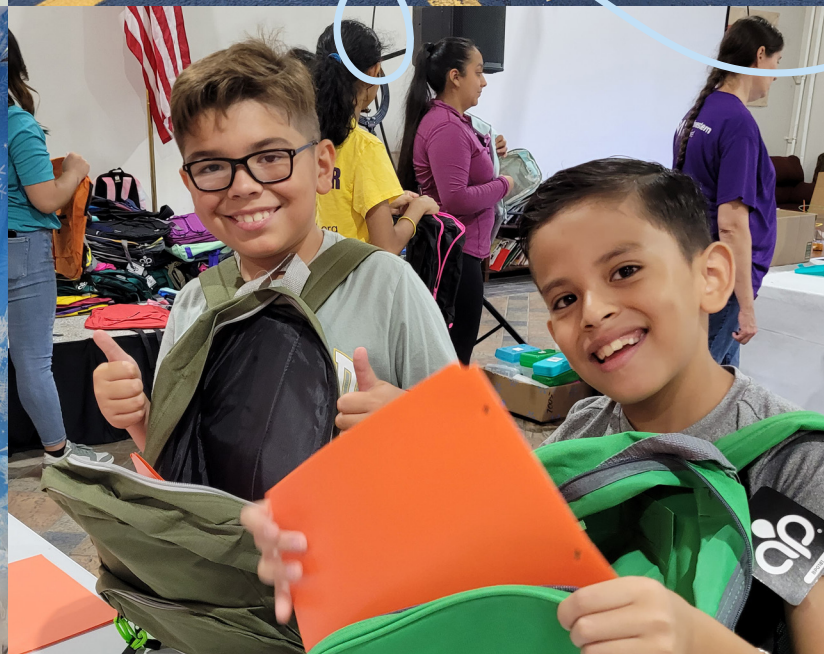
Allison Delgado
Metropolitan Family Services

Sonny de Rama
VNA Health Care



I commit my time and energy to WGTK Steering Committee because I love the families who make West Chicago their home, because I respect my partners and find inspiration in their efforts, and because my heart and head both tell me that WGTK enriches the lives of those who are touched by our programs and services. I just know we will get further faster if we work together, so I show up to watch it happen!

- STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER



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[@wegotogetherforkids](https://www.instagram.com/wegottogetherforkids)