Opening Doors To What's Possible
FY20 and FY21 Impact Report

North Lawndale Employment Network
Creating a Community That Works
NLEN was founded in 1999 by the North Lawndale community with leadership support from the Steans Family Foundation to address a vital community need: access to employment opportunities that provide family-sustaining wages. Today, **NLEN serves over 2,000 people annually**, helping them to gain new skills, improve their self-worth, secure jobs, and become financially secure. Through its neighborhood-focused employment initiatives that address root causes of poverty, we work to bridge the racial wealth gap and serves as a driving force for social equity and racial healing on Chicago’s West Side.

**Dear Friends,**

I often refer to the North Lawndale Employment Network’s new workforce campus as my love letter to the community. When embarking on our $11.5MM capital campaign, I envisioned a workforce campus that would serve as a beacon of hope for those looking to better their life situation. Whether it be preparing for and obtaining employment, improving one’s financial health, opening up a checking account, or seeking the restoration of hope - it was important to me that we created a place where everyone who walked through the door was treated with dignity and respect.

I must admit, NLEN’s new workforce campus exceeded my vision. With the support of our donors, funders, and friends, alongside some brilliant architects and skillful construction workers, we have created a beautiful state of the art community wealth building sanctuary, that houses Wintrust Bank, two social enterprises, Sweet Beginnings LLC., and our beelove café; infused with talented and compassionate staff who are also dedicated public servants committed to making an impact on the lives of those we serve.

While approximately 45% of North Lawndale households live below the federal poverty level and 57% of the adults in our community have been justice-involved, we are determined to change this narrative. North Lawndale is a community rich with talented, innovative residents, servant leaders, and generations of families who are resilient and committed to overcoming obstacles and glaring inequities that disproportionately impact our community. Living in poverty and a pandemic creates more challenges than many of us can ever imagine. Yet, we remain steadfast in our commitment to reducing North Lawndale’s unemployment rate of 15.9% by 10% by 2025 as we know that it is key to addressing the persistent and chronic high rates of unemployment, underemployment, and violence in North Lawndale.

NLEN’s workforce campus is a cumulation of the dedication and commitment of most loyal and generous supporters enabling us to double our capacity and serve up to 5,000 residents annually providing them with effective, client-centered, job training and placement leading them to financial liberation. In partnership with the North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council and our amazing employment partners, we will reach our goal!

We do not take for granted that with your support not only did we open the doors to our new workforce campus, but we’ve also opened doors to what’s possible!

On behalf of NLEN’s Board of Directors, staff, and the individuals we serve, I offer my sincerest gratitude to all of you for joining us on this journey as we work to revitalize our community and take a stand for social and economic justice.

**With gratitude,**

*Brenda Palms Barber*  
President & CEO, NLEN and CEO, Sweet Beginnings, LLC
Impact by the Numbers

209
Energy Assistance applications processed totaling $133,406 in direct vendor payments in 2020

967
participants received one-on-one career and financial coaching

500
household bank accounts opened

90
Chromebooks distributed - which helped bridge the neighborhood’s digital divide

$16.88
average starting wage

103
participants went from a negative to a positive net worth in FY ‘21

450
Individuals received Emergency Food Boxes

250
Thanksgiving Meal Bags Distributed in FY22

71
participants placed in jobs

7,000 Individual Coaching Hours
3,000 Job Readiness Training Hours

Better Together

We are proud to work with companies, organizations and institutions that share our commitment to improving the quality of life for our most vulnerable yet hopeful job seekers. Our strategic partners like the North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council, Lincoln Park Zoo, Skills for Chicago-land’s Futures, and CEDA are just a few of our high-impact partners that help to elevate and advance our mission.

U-TURN Permitted: NLEN’s award winning job readiness program that helps returning citizens reintegrate back into the community and secure employment.

Path to Prosperity: a condensed version of the U-Turn Permitted program for individuals who face barriers to employment but who do not have a criminal background.

Moving Forward: provides middle-skills training and job placement within the growing Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL) sector.

Sweet Beginnings, LLC: NLEN’s wholly owned subsidiary social enterprise, offers 3-month, full-time transitional jobs in the green industry to citizens returning from incarceration.

LISC CHICAGO Financial Opportunity Center: helps individuals and families reach their economic goals by offering financial and credit-building coaching, self-directed job searches, and access to affordable banking products.

City of Chicago COVID-19 Contact Tracing Corps: an “Earn & Learn” career development program in healthcare occupations for permanent employment upon completion of tracing corps.
NLEN participants’ monthly income increased by $2,739. Increasing monthly net income can be achieved several ways including: access to income-boosting benefits like SNAP, utility assistance, retaining a job over the long-term, and credit building. NLEN had 5,000 visits to the Financial Opportunity Center Resource Room in FY 2021 and FY 2022. Our staff remains committed to helping individuals reach their lifelong goals. We strive to cultivate career paths, improve wages and increase net worth for the residents of North Lawndale.

NLEN participants saw a cumulative 56-point average increase in their credit score.

NLEN distributed over 300 Health and PPE Kits in partnership with the NLCCC in FY 2021.

NLEN distributed $11,850 in Emergency Funds during FY 2021. NLEN quickly responded to the critical needs of our clients and provided emergency cash assistance including rent, utilities, and transportation support for those most in need.

Creating Paths to Employment through Sweet Beginnings, LLC

NLEN’s Social Enterprises are rooted in an asset-based approach to resident wealth creation in the North Lawndale neighborhood. Our Social Enterprise Sweet Beginnings, LLC and our beelove® brand of honey products are creating pathways to employment for participants in transitional jobs.

Our beelove café opened in August 2021 and serves delicious meals and beverages featuring our beelove® honey, and is now a cherished community hub. The most popular items in the café are the Honey Butter Biscuit, 12 or 16 oz. drip coffee and the Maple Praline Biscuit. The most popular beelove® products are the 6 oz. honey jar and the Pure Necessities Collection. Both Sweet Beginnings, LLC and beelove® products were featured in the Block Club Chicago Shop Local 2021 Holiday Gift Guide.
Opening Doors to What’s Possible

Our Social Enterprise Changes Lives and Delivers Quality Products

• 31,314 jars of beelove® honey sold in FY 2021 and 2022
• 100% of participants who completed Sweet Beginnings’ transitional jobs program obtained permanent employment between 2016-2021
• NLEN and Sweet Beginnings have placed over 5,400 job seekers in employment since 2003!

• Harrison I. Steans Peace Garden: A beautiful, tranquil garden that provides respite for staff, clients, and community residents. The Peace Garden features memorial bricks in tribute to loved ones.

• Michael Scott Sr. Event Center: A contemporary event space offering flexible seating, and a state of the art audio, visual and mood lighting system.

• Digital Resource Center: Provides free digital education and training to equip jobseekers with the digital skills needed for life and work. We offer free internet access as well as computers, printers, and fax machines for community use.

• Wifi Towers: Provides community residents within a 1.5 mile radius of our campus access to free broadband.

• LISC Chicago Financial Opportunity Center: Provides financial education and services for North Lawndale Community.
• **Bank of America Sweet Beginnings LLC Operations Center**: 3300 sq. ft. state of the art production facility, representing more than 50% increase in production capacity to expand our transitional jobs program.

• **Wintrust Bank - North Lawndale**: A full service financial institution providing fair and just financial services.

• **beelove café**: A place for community to gather and elevate local food & beverage entrepreneurs.

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**Campus Construction Vendors by the Numbers:**

**MBE: 60% / WBE: 10**

Supporting diverse businesses is a priority for North Lawndale Employment Network, and a key pillar of creating a more equitable Chicago. The construction of our new workforce campus created 84 jobs.

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**2020 Awards and Recognitions:**

- Founding President, Brenda Palms Barber named one of five inaugural Elevate Prize Fellows
- NLEN selected one of six Pritzker Traubert Foundation Chicago Prize Finalists
- NLEN received the Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago’s Community First® Award for Economic Development

**2021 Awards and Recognitions:**

- NLEN received Chicago Jobs Council Field Builder Award
- Founding President, Brenda Palms Barber received Mercy Housing Spirit of Mercy Award
- Founding President, Brenda Palms Barber named Chicago Crain’s 2021 Notable Black Leaders and Executives

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**Robert R. McCormick Foundation Public Plaza**: Fully designed and landscaped plaza, featuring honeybee friendly native plants sponsored by Lincoln Park Zoo.

**Robert R. McCormick Rooftop Apiary**: Sweet Beginnings LLC’s worker bees live in uniquely designed beehives.

**Campus Training Rooms**: NLEN offers three training rooms that include top of the line audio and visual equipment to provide full video conferencing.

NLEN is grateful to our experienced team of partners who helped develop our new campus, including IFF, Wheeler Kearns Architects, Ujamaa Construction, Barack Ferrazzano Kirschbaum & Nagelberg LLP, Taft, Open Door Advisors, and the 24th Ward Aldermanic Office.
### 2020 Statement of Activities (Year ended June 30, 2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REVENUE:</th>
<th>Without Donor Restrictions</th>
<th>With Donor Restrictions</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grants and Contributions</td>
<td>1,874,216</td>
<td>2,506,504</td>
<td>4,380,720</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government-funded programs</td>
<td>493,739</td>
<td>403,739</td>
<td>897,478</td>
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<td>Special Events</td>
<td>486,889</td>
<td>486,889</td>
<td>973,778</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Revenue</td>
<td>399,512</td>
<td>399,512</td>
<td>799,024</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Assets Released from restrictions</td>
<td>2,136,033</td>
<td>(2,136,033)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL REVENUE</strong></td>
<td>5,300,389</td>
<td>370,471</td>
<td>5,670,860</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPENSES:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Expenses</td>
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<td>3,862,278</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management and General</td>
<td>722,165</td>
<td>722,165</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>969,678</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENSES</strong></td>
<td>5,554,121</td>
<td>5,554,121</td>
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| Change in net assets before non-operating | (253,732) | 370,471 | 116,739 |
| Excess of Revenue over expenses | (253,732) | 370,471 | 116,739 |

### 2020 Statement of Financial Position (Year ended June 30, 2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSETS:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Receivables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Assets</td>
<td>399,512</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fixed Assets</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
<td>5,934,694</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</th>
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<td>Accounts Payable</td>
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<td>Other Current Liabilities</td>
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<td>Long term Liabilities</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NET ASSETS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Without donor restrictions</td>
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<tr>
<td>With donor restrictions</td>
<td>4,551,917</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL NET ASSETS</strong></td>
<td>4,422,718</td>
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| TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS | 5,934,694 | |

### 2021 Statement of Activities (Year ended June 30, 2021)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REVENUE:</th>
<th>Without Donor Restrictions</th>
<th>With Donor Restrictions</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grants and Contributions</td>
<td>1,686,811</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government-funded programs</td>
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<td>1,713,161</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Events</td>
<td>300,905</td>
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<td>300,905</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Revenue</td>
<td>322,824</td>
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<td>322,824</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Assets Released from restrictions</td>
<td>2,242,593</td>
<td>(2,242,593)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL REVENUE</strong></td>
<td>6,266,294</td>
<td>2,395,752</td>
<td>8,662,046</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPENSES:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Program Expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management and General</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>81,898</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENSES</strong></td>
<td>8,635,011</td>
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| Change in net assets before non-operating | (2,368,717) | 2,395,752 | 27,035 |
| Excess of Revenue over expenses | (2,368,717) | 2,395,752 | 27,035 |

### 2021 Statement of Financial Position (Year ended June 30, 2021)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSETS:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Receivables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Assets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fixed Assets</td>
<td>1,590,789</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
<td>8,873,350</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts Payable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Current Liabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long term Liabilities</td>
<td>6,673,193</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES</strong></td>
<td>7,639,532</td>
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<tr>
<th>NET ASSETS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Without donor restrictions</td>
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<tr>
<td>With donor restrictions</td>
<td>967,265</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL NET ASSETS</strong></td>
<td>1,233,818</td>
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| TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS | 8,873,350 | |

*Actuals are unaudited and subject to change.

3/3/2022
**FY20 and FY21 Donors**

**Corporate and Foundation Donors**  
We are grateful for our corporate and foundation investors who generously provide much needed and dependable, ongoing support

- AARP
- Advocate Charitable Foundation
- Allstate Insurance Company
- AmazonSmile
- American Endowment Foundation
- Ann & Robert Lurie Hospital
- Annie E Casey Foundation
- Anonymous
- Applegate & Thorne-Thomsen
- Aramark Services
- Ariel Investments
- Associated Bank
- ATEI Illinois
- Bank of America Charitable Foundation
- Barker Welfare Foundation
- BMO Harris Bank
- Boeing
- Bonneur Development
- Capital One
- Capital One LLC
- Carli R. Hendrickson Family Foundation
- CFTD
- Chicago Cares
- Chicago Community Trust
- Children’s First Fund
- Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership
- Chicago Department of Family & Support Services (DFSS)
- CineCares Foundation
- Compass MSP
- Concrete Collective
- Country Financial
- Crown Family Philanthropies
- Damron Corporation
- Deloitte Services LP
- Eagan & Company
- Exelon Business Services
- F.H. Paschen, Inc.
- Facebook
- Fidelity Charitable
- Fifth Third Bank
- FrontFore
- Foundation for Homan Square
- Four Seasons Chicago
- Fronstream
- Fry Foundation
- GCM Grosvenor
- GiveGab
- Global Business Services
- Greater Horizons
- Greater Twin Cities United Way
- Green Thumb Industries
- Grosvenor Capital Management, L.P.
- Habitual Innovations, Inc.
- Heart Foundation
- Heartland Alliance
- Hunter Family Foundation
- Huntington Foundation
- I & G Foundation
- IFF, Inc.
- HeartMedia
- Inland Bank
- Jackson National Life Company
- JP Morgan Charitable Giving Fund
- JP Morgan Chase Foundation
- Lincoln Park Zoo
- LISC Chicago
- MacArthur Foundation
- Massachusetts Inst. of Tech
- Matera Realty Group, Inc.
- McCormick-Frillon Foundation
- Mr. B. Foundation
- Navy Pier, Inc.
- New Covenant Community Development Corp.
- Old St. Patrick’s Church
- One Chicago Fund
- Open Doors Advisors, Inc.
- p3 mediworx
- Paul M Angeli Family Foundation
- Peoples Gas
- Phoenix Pat Punt Fund
- PNC Bank
- PolicyLink
- Polk Bros Foundation
- Prizker Traubert Foundation
- Professional Women’s Club
- Prosperity Now
- Robin Emanuel & Amy Rule
- Richard H Driehaus Foundation
- Robert R. McCormick Foundation
- Sarah Bernstein
- School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- Schwab Charitable Fund
- Sinai Community Institute
- Skills for Chicagoland’s Future
- State Farm
- Steans Family Foundation
- Sweet Beginnings
- Taft Stettinius & Hollister
- The Benevolence Community Impact Fund
- The Blackhawks Giving Fund
- The Bluhm Family Charitable Foundation
- The Boeing Company
- The Cara Program
- The Chicago Community Foundation
- The Coleman Foundation
- The Joyce Foundation
- The Judy Family Foundation
- The San Francisco Foundation
- The Trust for Public Land
- TransTech IT Services
- Treasurer of the State of Illinois
- Unico Real Estate Westfield (URW)

**United Way of Metropolitan Chicago**  
US Bank
Vanguard Charitable
Victory Gardens Theater
Walter Family Foundation
Weinberg Foundation
West Monroe Partners Comm. Impact Fund
West Side United
William Blair & Company
Wintrust Financial
Wix.com
Women Employed Institute
Wyn-Win Communications
Yogini, LLC
YourCause

**Individual Donors**  
We are grateful for the individuals who invest in North Lawndale Employment Network. Your support strengthens our community by transforming the lives of our most vulnerable and hopeful jobseekers. Every effort has been made to list donors and respect anonymous contributions as requested. Please forgive any errors and notify NLEN with changes by calling 773.265.7944.

- **Jose A. Zayza**
- Rebecca Abel
- Phil Adams
- Betty Allen Green
- Negin Almassi
- Laura Alpen
- Jacob Amest
- Adrienne Anderson
- Alaina Anderson
- Pon Angara
- Anonymous
- Kate Ansorge
- Ryan Apple
- Ann Marie Arden
- Helen & Michael Arkes
- Daniel Asil
- Carroll Banas Stapleton
- Daniel Barrera
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- Reri Barrett
- Michael Baskin
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- Barbara Bates
- Vanessa Bates
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- Linda Boyer
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- Elizabeth Braun
- Angie Brorovitch
- Rodney Brown
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- Kwasi and Jessica Butler
- Kaleb Butler
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- Melissa Cameron
- Michael Capuzzi
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- Majora Carter
- Elizabeth Castleman
- Evan Cauble Johnson
- Paul Cellsa
- Marina Centeno
- LeOne’ Champion
- Jerry and Bobbie Chatman
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- Ellen-Blair Chube
- Karen Cinzio
- Michelle Clark
- Karen Ciscou
- Chevonne Cole
- Chris Conley
- Tiana Conley
- Lydia Connolly
- Charles Corongan
- Patricia Cosentino
- Bruce Cox
- Darren Cox
- Pearlatha Cox
- Terri Cox
- Laura and Brian Coy
- Nakhsia Crosey
- Mia Dadian
- Bart Darfler
- David and Mary Davenport
- Bernida Davenport McWhite
- Shelley Davis
- Melinda Deegan
- Robert Deegan
- Dennis Deer
- Doris Delgado
- Teresa Devereaux
- Lauren DevYoung
- Malinda Distefano
- Samantha Dobyns
- Betty D’Onofrio
- Michael Dorries
- Noreen Drewes
- Kate Dumbleton
- Sarah Duncan
- S Dunn
- Mary Dyar

Photo: Tom Harris
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Dr. Michael A. McAfee, PolicyLink
Vice President
Sarah M. Bernstein, Barack, Ferrazzano, Kirschbaum & Nagelberg LLP
Secretary
Gregory Faulkner, Trice Construction Company
Treasurer
Alaina M. Anderson, William Blair & Company
Finance Chair
Dave Davenport, MotherG: A CompassMSP Company

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Cheryl Bendtsen, Allstate Insurance Company
Chris Conley, Two Bit Ventures
Tiana Conley, Mars
Anthony Scott, Wintrust Bank – North Lawndale
Michael Kramer, Advisor, Formerly The Boeing Company
Brenda Palms Barber, President & CEO, NLEN and CEO, Sweet Beginnings, LLC

About
The North Lawndale Employment Network (NLEN) is a workforce development organization bridging the racial wealth gap for our under- and unemployed residents of the North Lawndale neighborhood and surrounding communities. Our clients include citizens returning from incarceration and others who face the day-to-day hardships of living without enough income to support themselves and their families. To create jobs, and build community wealth, NLEN launched, NLEN launched two social impact enterprises, Sweet Beginnings and the beelove café.

Mission
The North Lawndale Employment Network’s mission is to improve the earnings potential of North Lawndale residents through innovative employment initiatives that lead to economic advancement and an improved quality of life.
North Lawndale Employment Network
1111 S. Homan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60624
773.638.1825
nlen.org | beelovebuzz.com | thebeelovecafe.com

@NLEN_jobs facebook.com/nlen @NLEN_jobs/

North Lawndale Employment Network
Creating a Community That Works