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April 2021 Newsletter

Stories of Hope:

LET'S START THE NEWSLETTER WITH A SMILE!

Animal control buys purple unicorn for dog that stole it from Dollar General

by CNN March 27, 2021



The cutest thief was rewarded after he continued to steal a purple unicorn from a Dollar Store
<https://nbc-2.com/news/weird/2021/03/27/animal-control-buys-purple-unicorn-for-dog-that-stole-it-from-dollar-general/>

One family's weekly trips to fill Chicago's Love Fridges are a reminder of our capacity to care for one another

By HEIDI STEVENS, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, MAR 02, 2021



Annie Swingen, from left, her son, Ellis, 10, and her husband, Lee Swingen, fill a Love Fridge with food in Little Village on Feb. 27, 2021. Direct Effect Charities, founded by Michelle DiGiacomo, counts on volunteers to shop and fill the fridges around the city. The public is welcome to take and to contribute food. (Abel Uribe / Chicago Tribune)

In normal times, Michelle DiGiacomo spends a lot of the year planning around Santa...DiGiacomo partners with Chicago Public Schools to collect letters from kids whose families can't afford to buy gifts at Christmas. She distributes the letters to some kindhearted helpers, who fan out across the city and shop for gifts, which the kids then receive at school.

The pandemic wreaked havoc on that tradition, obviously. Closed schools meant no place to collect the letters and no place to distribute the gifts...It's one of this pandemic's cruelest twists: Even as our communities' needs are growing, many of our traditional ways of meeting them are roadblocked.

Undaunted, DiGiacomo invited her loyal donors to purchase grocery store gift cards in lieu of gifts from Santa, which she pledged to hand out to school principals and otherwise use to fill the growing food insecurity caused by COVID-19 lockdowns and layoffs.

She said she collected around \$25,000 in gift cards.

"That's when I found out about Love Fridge," she told me.

Love Fridges are [community refrigerators](#) that dot Chicago neighborhoods, offering free, fresh food to anyone who needs it. The brainchild of Chicago musician Ramon "Radius" Norwood, Love Fridges started popping up around the city last summer, and now there are more than 20, from Avondale to Back of the Yards to Pilsen to Englewood. (Find one at thelovefridge.com/locations.) [To read more:](#)

2 college students harness TikTok to collect bras and tampons, combat period poverty *By [ZAREEN SYED](#) PIONEER PRESS, FEB 27, 2021*



A few months into lockdown, two best friends set out on a simple mission: Donate bras and tampons to women who need them. But with the help of TikTok and a flair for organizing, what started as a pandemic project...became a fully functioning nonprofit with volunteers across 42 states.

Alexa Mohsenzadeh and Jenica Baron launched Her Drive in June 2020, a Chicago-based organization that provides bras as well as menstrual care and general hygiene products to combat period and hygiene poverty.

"I think as we looked into period poverty, just hearing about it in high school, how girls would resort to using plastic bags instead of pads or would try to wash their underwear using clean water but wouldn't be able to, we became really passionate about it," said Baron, who is a public health student at Tulane University...

The social-media-savvy 19-year-olds organized their first Chicagoland drive in July and proceeded as any proper millennial would. To get the word out, Mohsenzadeh creatively clipped together some pictures and videos they'd shot, accompanied by a remix version of the Ritt Momney song "Put Your Records On," and posted the footage on [Her Drive's TikTok account](#). In the video, they asked their followers to donate spare bras. The response was spectacular.

Inspired by a man outside Starbucks who needed money, Chicago artist turns T-shirts into funds for Streetwise vendors

By [HEIDI STEVENS](#) CHICAGO TRIBUNE, MAR 12, 2021



*Scott Marvel works in his Norwood Park basement screen printing new orders.
(Brian Cassella / Chicago Tribune)*

Most mornings, sometimes as early as 5 a.m., Scott Marvel descends into his crappy (his word), unfinished basement on the Northwest Side of Chicago and screen prints T-shirts.

It's a labor of love, born of the simple desire to help.

Six years ago, Marvel was talking to a man outside Starbucks who needed money. He and Marvel knew each other — it was Marvel's usual Starbucks and the man's usual corner to ask for spare change.

"It's a good spot to stand," Marvel said. "You just spent \$5 on coffee, you can probably spare a few cents."

The man mentioned to Marvel that he had a job interview the following week.

Marvel, who had a basement full of T-shirts waiting to be screen printed, offered to bring the man a bunch. He thought the man could use some clean, new shirts for interviews or work. The man thought Marvel wanted to give them to him to sell, as a way to make money.

That got Marvel thinking: He had been designing T-shirts for years — a side gig, in addition to his full-time job as president of Daily Planet Productions, a Chicago-based video production company. What if he made a bunch of extras on the weekends and then drove around every Monday handing them to people who are homeless so they could sell them and keep the money?

After a few conversations with friends and business contacts and the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Marvel decided to partner with StreetWise, the organization that supports Chicagoans who are homeless through jobs selling StreetWise magazine and other services.

Thus, [GiveaShirt](#) was born.

To read full story, click on this link: [Chicago T-shirt artist raises money for StreetWise by screen printing musicians' designs - Chicago Tribune](#)

Hope-Filled Organizations:



Empowering Youth – Strengthening Communities

Heart Haven Outreach, better known as H2O, is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that serves middle & high school teens in the greater Bolingbrook and Romeoville area who are experiencing challenging times. Through a variety of time-tested and research-based programs, we pursue our mission of “reaching out to the hearts of youth and facilitating life transformation.”

We are a Christian-based organization that believes healthy development is both balanced and multidimensional, including physical, social, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual components. We reach out to youth and their families by building caring and supportive relationships, offering teaching that equips and empowers, and partnering with the community at large. Our services are available to all without discrimination.



A group of H2O students on an outing.

Our Mission: To transform the lives of (at risk) struggling teens through caring relationships and programs that support healthy development on an emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual level.

Our Vision: To reach out to the heart of every hurting, lost or at risk teen in our communities by building caring relationships and offering opportunities for life transformation. By doing so, we hope to build better schools and a healthier community. To learn more about H2O go to: [Heart Haven OutReach | Empowering Youth. Strengthening Communities](#)

the
**LOVE
FRIDGE**
chicago

[The Love Fridge Chicago](#)



Community-sustained refrigerators powered by kindness, generosity, and love

Our Mission: The Love Fridge is a Chicago mutual aid group grounded in food, working to place community refrigerators across the city. We are powered by kindness, generosity, love, and the belief that being able to feed yourself is a right, not a privilege. Our goal is to nourish our communities while combating food scarcity and food waste, and working with other like-minded community partners.

What Is Mutual Aid? Mutual aid is not a form of charity, but a guiding principle for practicing reciprocal and collective care. Mutual aid networks provide a way to meet the basic needs of the community while allowing each other to contribute what we can to the common good. Put simply, we look out for one another in any way that we are able to.

Click on this link to view a 4 minute video: [‘Love Fridge’ helping communities share food, spread love | WGN-TV](#)

Prayers & Spirituality:

Submitted by a Wisconsin man who is a member of the Bahai faith community:

”O God! Refresh and gladden my spirit. Purify my heart. Illumine my powers.
I lay all my affairs in Thy hand. Thou art my Guide and my Refuge.
I will no longer be sorrowful and grieved; I will be a happy and joyful being.
O God! I will no longer be full of anxiety, nor will I let trouble harass me.
I will not dwell on the unpleasant things of life.
O God! Thou art more friend to me than I am to myself. I dedicate myself to Thee, O Lord.
—‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The same person who submitted the prayer above from the Bahai faith, also submitted his own prayer which he tries to say often. My paraphrase of his prayer is:

“Dear God, as we walk together through the challenges of life,
please keep your arm around my shoulder,
and your hand over my mouth.”

The Arts:

Emmane Beasha: A Ten Year Old Girl With a Beautiful Voice Bringing Joy to Millions And a Smile to Your Face



To watch a five minute video, click on this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjecfrF6ZOU>

FAMILY WELLBEING: PRIORITY #1

New Measurements of Progress

Family Well-Being is the highest priority for those who responded to our January 2021 Survey.

People are most concerned about having opportunities, choices, and hope for themselves and their families as we all move into the future.

Unfortunately, very many people think and feel that the opportunities, choices, and hope for themselves and their families have been greatly diminished in the last 30 plus years.

One of the suggestions to improve the quality of life for people is to create a new and broader basis for measuring what is important to us. This newer broader measurement system would include the traditional economic measurements of Gross National Product (GNP) and how the stock market is doing. But it would also look at a more diverse and meaningful range of measurements to determine if we are moving toward a more hopeful society which will markedly improve the quality of lives for individuals and families.

There are several new indexes being used to measure more of these elements.

One of the most successful new efforts is happening in Canada which started using this approach after the Great Recession hit the world in 2008-09.



To Read more click on <https://hopefromthebottomup.com/future>

Share this Newsletter!

If you find this Newsletter to be a positive contribution to promote Hope and positive changes for now and in the future, please consider forwarding this Newsletter to people you think would enjoy it and who may want to share their hopeful stories and programs for future Newsletters.

Thank You