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NEWS RELEASE

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Elmhurst Public Library Adds Social Worker to Staff

ELMHURST, IL — Providing social services is a growing trend in libraries across the country. For many, the idea is long overdue, given the fact that public libraries are one of the few public spaces open to anyone in a community, based on a principled commitment to openness and inclusivity. As in any community, the Elmhurst Public Library provides a neutral space for community members to come in, gather information, and explore. Earlier this year, Tracey Orick, BSW, CADC became Elmhurst Public Library's full-time Social Services Specialist after the Library spent over a year evaluating the benefits of social workers in a library setting.

Elmhurst Public Library began testing the waters of providing more direct access to social services by arranging internship opportunities for Aurora University students pursuing Social Work degrees in the spring of 2018. So far, five students have participated in internships at EPL. This collaboration has provided students real-world experience while allowing EPL the opportunity to gather valuable information about issues on the minds of our community members.

"The Library is a public building where anyone is welcome to come in and find information or resources to help improve or enhance their lives. Access to Social Services in the Library is a continuation of that philosophy," says Orick.

As a result of a Social Services Needs Assessment conducted in 2018, Elmhurst community members' survey responses revealed that individuals in our community face challenges like unemployment, food insecurity, or domestic violence.

"In my experience," says Orick, "there has been a high percentage of senior citizens who are seeking employment assistance. In most cases, they are looking to re-enter the workforce, usually in a part-time capacity." Orick says the Library could be the first step in tackling an online application process. Beyond that, Orick can refer patrons to nearby centers with resources appropriate to their needs.

Orick and the social work interns can connect patrons with a variety of services for:

- Food
- Mental health
- Housing
- Substance abuse
- Employment
- Social Security
- Benefits
- Domestic issues

The Library's referral-based model allows patrons to consult with Orick on a one-on-one basis in a neutral setting outside the stigma some may feel in a traditional social services setting. "The community can think of me as the first go-to," she says. "Then I can refer them out."

Anyone experiencing temporary or ongoing challenges may meet with Orick during her office hours for one-on-one consultation and referrals on the 2nd floor in Study Room 4.5.

Social Work Office Hours

Monday 2-4 p.m.

Tuesday 6-8 p.m.

Wednesday 6-8 p.m.

Thursday 2-4 p.m. and 6-8 p.m.

Saturday 10 a.m.-12 p.m. and 1-3 p.m.

Contact

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Appointments recommended, but not required.