UNITED WAY OF METRO CHICAGO
NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK INITIATIVE

BLUE ISLAND/ ROBBINS NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK



OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

The Blue Island-Robbins Neighborhood Network (BIRNN) is a resident-centered coalition working to improve quality of life in Blue Island and Robbins through partnerships, community engagement, and shared action. Established in 2015, the Network brings together residents, service providers, schools, faith leaders, local government, libraries, health partners, youth organizations, and community-based organizations to address the needs and opportunities of both communities.

Blue Island was established in the 1830s as a way station for travelers. By the mid-19th century, European immigrants began settling in the area in part due to its proximity to stable industrial and railroad jobs. African Americans seeking these same opportunities were excluded from Blue Island, so they incorporated the neighboring village of Robbins in 1917. Robbins is one of the oldest majority-Black municipalities in the United States. The village was also home to the country's first Black-owned airport in the 1930s, Robbins Airport, used as a training ground for the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II.

LEAD AGENCY

Metropolitan Family Services

COMMUNITY VISION

Empowering residents to create lasting systemic change by promoting physical, emotional, and financial well-being

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES: A DUAL APPROACH IN BLUE ISLAND/ROBBINS



NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK IN ACTION

The Blue Island/Robbins Neighborhood Network (BIRNN) focuses on removing barriers that impact the physical, emotional, social, and financial well-being of residents. Through collaboration, the Network connects families to resources, supports youth and adults, promotes health and wellness, strengthens access to food and basic needs, and creates opportunities for residents to be part of community decision-making.

Recent and ongoing efforts include:

- Supporting digital equity through laptop and hotspot distribution events that help families, youth, and adults stay connected.
- Expanding food access and nutrition education through partnerships with local organizations, food providers, and community educators.
- Supporting youth development through leadership, mentoring, workforce readiness, and enrichment programs.
- Strengthening partner collaboration through committees focused on health, education, financial stability, social-emotional wellness, and resident engagement.
- Working with local leaders and partners on long-term community development opportunities, including food access, resilience, and community resource planning.
- Building stronger communication through newsletters, community meetings, partner spotlights, and local storytelling.



"At the heart of the Blue Island-Robbins Neighborhood Network is our commitment to connecting residents with the resources, relationships, and opportunities they need to thrive. Our work is about more than programs. It is about building trust, strengthening partnerships, and making sure residents have a voice in shaping the future of their community. When residents, partners, and local leaders work together, we can create real and lasting change for Blue Island and Robbins."



KENTRIC BENSON
Program Manager,
Blue Island-Robbins
Neighborhood Network
Metropolitan Family Services

JOIN US! Together, we can build neighborhoods like Blue Island/Robbins stronger. Direct your United Way gift to **"Neighborhood Networks"** to be a part of this critical strategy. Learn more at **LIVEUNITEDchicago.org/neighborhood-networks**

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