



# The City of NORMAN

201 West Gray • P.O. Box 370  
Norman, Oklahoma 73069 • 73070

SOCIAL & VOLUNTARY SERVICES COMMISSION  
Phone: 405-366-5404

February 1, 2026

To: City of Norman Finance Committee

Re: Social and Voluntary Service Committee

The Social and Voluntary Services Commission (SVSC) was founded in 1973 as an advisory body to the Norman City Council regarding the evaluation of social services. The SVSC Commission consists of nine members each serving a three-year term. The current members are Marc Bonge', Sandra Duncan, Scott Meier, Fallon Burleson, Heidi Smith, and Jennifer Newell. There are currently three positions that are vacant awaiting appointment by the Mayor. I currently serve as the vice -chair.

Within the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 City of Norman budget, funding for social service agencies was \$275,000, an increase from \$250,000 in 2024. To distribute these funds, a formal application process was held in which qualified interested agencies were required to apply. The application required information regarding the overall mission of the agency, specific project for which funding was being requested, financial information including budget summary and projected budget, copy of most recent audit, their 990 return for the prior year, and a copy of IRS tax exempt status letter. The application also required a list of the current board members and staff members of the agency.

In June of 2025, the Social and Voluntary Services Commission met to review the applications submitted by 32 Norman service agencies. The submitted applications totaled over \$300,000 in requests for funding. Maximum award for the 2025/2026 application cycle was \$10,000. During the review of each application, Commissioners discussed any questions or clarifications that were needed from the applicant. Staff obtained this information from the agencies and forwarded responses to the Commissioners.

After the initial meeting of the commission and prior to the funding meeting, each Commission member evaluated each of the applications independently and determined an appropriate funding level within the allowable total of \$275,000. These results were provided to staff and compiled into a spreadsheet. At the funding meeting the Commission reviewed the compilation of budgets and discussed the criteria that the Commission members applied to each funding proposal. The Commission evaluated multiple subjects including but not limited to possibilities of duplications of efforts, past performance of the agency and potential for other funding sources.

Agency project funding is administered on a reimbursement basis. Payments are made as invoices with appropriate documentation of project execution and receipts are received. Each of the funded agencies is visited a minimum of once during the fiscal year by Commission members. Commission Members have the option of in-person or virtual visits. During visits we inquire about future trends, any special challenges for the organizations and how partnerships with others doing work in this field can be established. The visits are not only to check for contract compliance in expending the funds awarded but also allow commissioners to assess possible needs in our community.

The pandemic had a profound effect on the Norman Non-Profit community. The rise in the cost of goods and services, due to the inflation costs of the last 18 months, has continued to increase programmatic needs. As individuals and established funders have experienced the contraction of the economy, less funding has been made available than in previous years. While understandable, this creates a scarcity of normal operating funds. As agencies can only spend funds on the projects and programs specifically funded this creates a Catch 22 effect. Agencies can have hundreds of thousands of programmatic dollars to spend but struggle to pay rent, utility and administrative costs that enable them to keep the doors open. The SVSC is a funder that allows for, has made known that general operational funding requests are welcome.

The Social and Voluntary Services Commission respectfully requests the consideration of a minimum of \$275,000 in funding to be included within the City of Norman FYE27 Budget.

If you have any questions regarding the Social and Voluntary Services Commission, please do not hesitate to contact me at (405-620-4294) or Tara Reynolds, our City staff liaison.

Regards,



Jennifer Newell  
Vice-Chair, City of Norman SVSC  
3108 Lochinver Drive  
[Nerfer@att.net](mailto:Nerfer@att.net), 405-620-4294

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Awarded</u>
Abbott House	Client Assistance	\$5,000.00
ABLE	Fire sprinkler system	\$10,000.00
Aging Services	Special Assistance, utilities, housekeeping	\$7,500.00
Among Friends	Scholarships	\$9,600.00
Antioch Church	Assistant Director salary for tutor program	\$6,000.00
Assistance League	Operation School Bell shoes	\$5,000.00
Beacon Project	food pantry program	\$10,000.00
Big Brothers Big Sisters	21 matches	\$10,000.00
Bridges	Student Utility Bills	\$9,600.00
Care A Vans	Car, general liability, and payroll insurance	\$10,000.00
CASA	Gas cards, gifts, meals, activities	\$9,000.00
Catholic Charities	Sanctuary Day Shelter	\$10,000.00
CCFI	Therapist Salaries	\$10,000.00
City Care	Administrative & operational oversight	\$10,000.00
Food & Shelter	Food/Operational Cost of Share Center	\$10,000.00
Fostering Futures	Beds	\$9,000.00
Full Circle	Scholarships	\$8,500.00
Healthy Living Norman	Fitness Instructor Salaries	\$3,500.00
HeartLine	211 Staff, software, outreach	\$10,000.00
Infant Crises	Baby Mobile Program	\$10,000.00
Legal Aid	Office rent	\$10,000.00
Little Read Wagon	Books, activity books, reading glasses	\$7,500.00
Loveworks	After school program salary, insurance	\$7,992.00
McFarlin	Food pantry toilet paper	\$9,360.00
Meals on Wheels	Meals	\$10,000.00
Mission Norman	Scale, mailbox, warehouse position	\$9,000.00
Salvation Army	Salaries	\$10,000.00
Share & Grow	Zoom, prizes, equipment, location rentals, admin cost, office supplies	\$1,000.00
St Francis	Storage Unit, deliveries	\$9,948.00
Thunderbird Clubhouse	Staff healthcare	\$10,000.00
Transition House	Apartment flooring	\$7,500.00
Virtue Center	family support group/parenting classes for Family Pathways program	\$10,000.00
<b><u>Total</u></b>		<b><u>\$275,000.00</u></b>



Social & Voluntary Services  
Commission

# Agency Letters

City Council provides annual funding to the Social & Voluntary Services Commission to award as grants to 501(c)3's serving Norman. This funding has a large impact on the agencies and our community.

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## **City Care**

City Care began in 1996 as a grassroots response to homelessness in Oklahoma City. What started with serving breakfast to neighbors in need has grown into a comprehensive continuum of care, including low-barrier shelters, complimentary transportation, street outreach, permanent supportive housing, and plans for a medical respite center. Our mission is to restore dignity through shelter, housing, and connection, ensuring that everyone has access to a safe place to sleep, regardless of their circumstances.

In partnership with the City of Norman, City Care assumed operations of Norman's low-barrier shelter in early 2025. The Cleveland County Point-in-Time Count recorded 216 people experiencing homelessness that January, over half of whom were unsheltered, and 40% of whom were chronically homeless. Since opening, our team has provided over 9,000 nights of rest to 282 unique guests, with 13 individuals successfully transitioning out of homelessness into permanent housing through the support of our Housing Navigation team.

The City of Norman has been a vital partner in this work, and we are honored to be among this year's Social Voluntary Services Commission (SVSC) grant recipients. This \$10,000 award will support the essential leadership and operational infrastructure needed to continue serving some of Norman's most vulnerable residents. We respectfully ask the Council to consider continued and expanded investment in community-based service providers like City Care, whose shared mission is to meet the urgent and complex needs of our neighbors with dignity and compassion.



Every year, thousands of children in Oklahoma are removed from their homes because of evidence of abuse and neglect. They are uprooted from the only family they've known, taken out of school and away from friends. In short, their worlds are turned upside down. Going through the child welfare system is scary and no child should do it alone.

The mission of South Central CASA of Oklahoma is to recruit, screen, train, and support members of the community to advocate for the best interests of children who have been made wards of the court in Cleveland, McClain, and Garvin Counties.

CASA volunteers are appointed by judges to watch over and speak up for abused and neglected children to make sure they don't get lost in the overburdened legal and social service systems or languish in the foster care system. CASA volunteers stay with each child until he or she is placed in a safe, permanent home and the case is closed. For many abused children, their CASA volunteer is the one constant in their lives and often, the one adult who cares only for them.

The SVSC funds have had a tremendous impact for our program over the years. Our CASA volunteers play a vital role in the court system, advocating for children and ensuring their voices are heard. They dedicate countless hours each month working with everyone involved in a case and visiting with children to help them reach a safe and permanent home as quickly as possible, all as volunteers.

Thanks to SVSC funding, we can support these dedicated individuals in meaningful ways. We provide gas cards to help them travel to visit children or transport them to visits with parents and siblings, counseling appointments, or other essential services. In 2024 alone, our volunteers drove over 41,000 miles on their own time to protect and support the children we serve.

These funds also allow us to offer small comforts and moments of joy to the children. Volunteers can take kids out for a treat, an ice cream at Braum's, a meal at McDonald's or Chick-fil-A, to help build trust and talk about their lives in a relaxed setting. We're also able to provide gift cards to places like HeyDay or local bowling alleys, giving siblings separated in placement the chance to reconnect and enjoy time together during sibling visits.

In addition, SVSC funds help us provide Christmas and birthday gifts to the children and celebrate two of the most important days in their lives: adoption day and reunification day. A simple card and a small gift make these milestones even more special. They are moments they remember and cherish for years to come.

We are so grateful for the support SVSC has provided. These funds make it possible for us to offer not only advocacy, but also compassion, connection, and joy to the children and families we serve.



Norman Care-A-Vans is building a community of support and care with unhoused folks in Norman, one ride at time. More than just a ride, our drivers develop relationships with riders by lending an ear to their stories, introducing them to services in the area, and offering material support such as home-cooked meals, camping supplies, and harm reduction kits. Our ultimate goal is not just to get our riders from point A to point B, but to build a world where we are all able to care for one another, no strings attached, no matter what.

SVSC's funds support our work by covering a significant portion of our insurance expenses. By helping us cover these costs, we have \$10,000—mostly from small-dollar donors in our community—available to support our programs: free rides, free meals, and free life-saving supplies.



The Mission of Among Friends Activity Center is to provide a safe and friendly place for adults with disabilities to have fun, learn, and develop friendships, offering opportunities and hope for a better life. Among Friends accomplishes our Mission by providing our members a wide variety of daily activities consisting of games, music, movies, puzzles, group video games, arcade games, lifelong learning activities, fun group discussions, karaoke, dance party, cooking classes, interactive culture lessons, painting, arts & crafts, and exercise. Among Friends, via replicated annual research, finds on average 99% of families and 100% of members feel our organization has led to our people experiencing improved/maintained happiness and quality of life.

Among Friends is proud of our ability to be open for 35 hours a week at an affordable price point for most of our families. Our plans are the least expensive option available as similar agencies across the Oklahoma City metro want over two times our highest cost. Despite being one of the most affordable options available, 25% of members and their families need some form of scholarship. SVSC, for the last four years, have provided \$9,600 to Among Friends to support our families who need help with membership dues.

Families being helped include a man who lives with his father who can no longer work due to medical conditions and his mother, who works when she can who is also battling her own major health issues. This member loves sports discussions and any board or dice game we offer. Another family involves a woman who lives with her single-mother aunt and her daughter who struggle to make ends meet. This member loves music, arts & crafts, and dancing with friends. Another family involves a man whose mom is a public-school

teacher. The scholarship for her son not only allows her son to keep his full days at Among Friends but also allows her to keep working knowing her son is in a safe environment. This member enjoys having conversations with anyone willing to talk to him. Another family on scholarship involves a mother and son who are on a very fixed small income. His scholarship allows him to video game with his “gamer bros” while also allowing him to participate in other games and social activities.

The picture provided with this document shows a party Among Friends hosted for a member on his birthday. Present were many members, OU students, and families of members. Six members pictured are on partial or full scholarship that is provided by SVSC. Without SVSC, these members at best would have limited days at Among Friends and at worst would return to the boredom, isolation, and depression they experienced before coming to Among Friends. Our organization has always turned those negative actions into positive emotions through shared experiences with their member friends. SVSC makes this possible for those members with limited financial means.

## Healthy Living Norman

Healthy Living Norman's mission is to promote opportunities for physical activity, social engagement, and lifelong learning at Norman's Adult Wellness & Education Center. Thanks to support from organizations like the City of Norman's Social & Voluntary Services Commission, we are able to provide a wide variety of fitness and recreational activities, art and cooking classes, support groups, health presentations and screenings, and social events in a safe and welcoming environment.

Specifically, funding from the SVSC grant program helps us provide more than 275 senior adult fitness classes attended by more than 3350 people age 50 and older each month. Eighty-six percent of members surveyed said participating in group fitness classes helps them stay physically active.

Older adults are experiencing positive outcomes in physical activity, mental well-being, learning new skills, and connecting with others thanks to the programs and services offered at the wellness center. One member said, "It gets me out of the house and committed to staying physically fit after having been recently widowed. It's good for me mentally and physically."

We are dedicated to our role in being good stewards of the City of Norman's resources for the betterment of our community. Together, we are successfully supporting healthy aging and helping reduce isolation among older adults in Norman. We are thankful to the SVSC for the financial support to help sustain Healthy Living Norman's programming at the AWE.



A simple story time at Norman Sooner Wash to entertain children waiting with their parents was the catalyst for the July 2020 development of Little Read Wagon. In the past five years, LRW has evolved from that initial story time to numerous programs and services designed to deliver books directly to people who need them. Our target population includes all ages needing or wanting access to books. We seek out low income, disability, minority, rural, un-housed, urban, veteran, English language learner and senior citizen populations at all reading levels mindful as well of the need for materials for illiterate clients.

Little Read Wagon has given out 70,000 books as of June 30th; 2953 of those books were distributed at Sooner Wash. Stocking one bookshelf at Sooner Wash morphed into stocking book carts and bookshelves at multiple child-centered outlets and community partners. CCFI clients chose 4528 books to keep as their own, 250 books were donated to the teen library at Children's Recovery Center as well as 50 books to Bethesda in 2024. Book carts and free libraries are replenished as needed. One hundred fifty books were given to ReSTORE Habitat for Humanity to restock their free library. Community members hid 495 books in Norman parks for our #look4abook program. One hundred books were donated to a Kennedy fifth grade classroom and 150 books were chosen at Kennedy parent conferences. Little Read Wagon attends numerous free community events providing free choice book access to all attendees. Red Dirt Collective hosts four well attended Mutual Aid Fairs in Norman annually. Little Read Wagon participates in each distributing 1292 books last year. Lisa Gerard, our founder, offers story time as herself or dressed as a familiar book character at Norman Public libraries, Red Bud Farm School, Veterans Center, Food and Shelter, SunHive Collective and Baby Pantry events. LRW stocks book carts monthly at the consolidated Head Start program housed at Crossroads Youth and Family Services to encourage building at-home libraries for our youngest citizens. LRW delivered 1324 books to Head Start students in Cleveland County. A diverse group of people attend the events where LRW is present necessitating a large selection of titles and genres be available. Grandparents and parents look for books for children as well as themselves.

Many have shared their personal school struggles hoping that the books chosen will prevent their children from experiencing the same. Clients whose lives are difficult look for books that allow them to escape. Caregivers choose books for their clients who are unable to attend. Regular returning clients request books on specific topics. Children are delighted to choose their own books and are thrilled to learn they can keep their choices! Funding through the Social and Voluntary Services Commission has played a significant role allowing LRW to expand our programs and services. Our goal is to bridge the literacy gap

caused by poverty in Norman by encouraging a love for reading and thus learning.  
Consistent support from SVSC has allowed us to advance this goal.



At Antioch Community Church of Norman, our mission is to work for the peace and prosperity of our city. The Snack and Study program is one of the most tangible ways we live this out—by providing a safe, welcoming space where vulnerable children can receive tutoring, encouragement, and a healthy meal at no cost to their families.

Each week, 60 Norman elementary students arrive after school to be greeted by caring volunteers who know them by name. They receive a healthy snack, one-on-one homework help, engaging activities, and a nutritious dinner. Beyond academics and nutrition, we provide winter coats and well-fitting shoes, ensuring children have what they need to feel safe and cared for.

When speaking with teachers at Kennedy Elementary, where most of our participants come from, teachers specifically reported that children in their classes were in need of personal attention and care from a safe adult, and tutoring support to help keep grades up. Snack and study is able to meet these needs for the students, working alongside teachers and parents to work on individual student goals.

The City of Norman's \$6,000 grant will have a profound impact on the 2025-2026 school year. These funds will allow us to hire additional staff support, ensuring that we can maintain high standards for our program. Additional staff support will help us maintain high-quality meals, recruit and train specialized volunteers, and sustain personalized academic support.

We know that after-school hours are among the most vulnerable times for unsupervised children. Without this program, many of our students would be home alone, missing meals, and falling further behind in school. The City's investment has ensured that instead, they are thriving—nourished physically, academically, and emotionally.

On behalf of every child, parent, teacher, and volunteer touched by this program, we offer our deepest gratitude. Your support is more than financial—it's a statement that the City of Norman believes every child deserves safety, opportunity, and a chance to succeed. We are honored to partner with you in building a stronger, healthier community for all.

Thank you for your investment in Snack & Study.





The Mission, formerly known as Mission Norman, exists to meet the needs of the hungry and homeless in our community. The Mission has two distinct programs: the Hope Food Pantry and the Positive Solutions Transitional Housing Program.

The Hope Food Pantry serves approximately 600 families per month. In July 2025, The Mission distributed approximately 97,750 pounds of food to our neighbors. Each family is given the opportunity to shop once each month to select the foods that their family prefers. The Mission also provides some education about healthy food choices, special topics for seniors, and information about other social services.

The Positive Solutions Transitional Housing Program provides rent-free housing for homeless families with children. The residents participate in case management meetings, family night activities, life skill-building meetings, and budgeting sessions. They are encouraged to save money so that they start from a strong position when they graduate from the program.

The SVSC grant money will have a tremendous impact on these programs. The grant will be used to provide equipment in the pantry warehouse so that we can adequately track the food coming in. The grant will also be used to provide staffing for the pantry to ensure that it runs efficiently and delivers an exceptional client experience. Part of the grant money will be used to purchase a multi-box mailbox so that the transitional housing residents each have their own mailbox instead of needing to come into the main Mission building to get their mail.

The Mission is grateful to the City of Norman for allocating these funds to be used to meet the needs of hurting people. Thank you for trusting us to use these funds wisely.



Thunderbird Clubhouse is a community-based service organization that provides adults a holistic, relationship-based, and cost-effective way to recover from mental illness. The goal of Clubhouse is to provide a community for clients with mental illness, called members, to rediscover their talents, strengths and abilities. Clubhouse has five main programs: Employment, Housing, Education, Wellness, and Socialization.

Since the onset of COVID, Thunderbird Clubhouse has increased its programs and services and have taken on extra responsibilities to help people with housing insecurity in our community. However, much of the funding they received or will be receiving to expand services does not include funding for staffing costs. For this reason, Clubhouse is asking employees to do more or additional work, yet they do not have many resources to help fund overhead costs needed to do this work. Part of the promise that Clubhouse makes to their dedicated employees is the benefit of healthcare. Keeping one's self healthy is expensive, and Clubhouse does not want to leave their employees with the extra burden of healthcare costs or debts. Clubhouse could not carry out the mission of our agency without competent and devoted staff members. We appreciate the SVSC commission and the City of Norman for helping the members of Thunderbird Clubhouse with their recovery goals.



At Meals on Wheels of Norman, our mission is simple yet powerful: *to provide a nutritious meal to Norman's senior, disabled, or ill residents who are in need.* For more than 53 years, we have worked to ensure that some of the most vulnerable members of our community are not forgotten, going beyond food to deliver comfort, dignity, and connection.

One of the most important ways we fulfill this mission is through our **free meal program**. Currently, 64 clients receive meals at no cost, removing a barrier that might otherwise force them to choose between food, medicine, or other essentials. Each meal costs just \$4.25 to prepare and deliver, but the value to those who receive it is immeasurable. For many, this service represents not only their only hot meal of the day, but also the peace of mind that someone will check in on them daily.

The impact of this program is both immediate and long-lasting:

- **Nutrition and health** – Every meal is designed to be balanced and nourishing, supporting the health of seniors and those living with disabilities or illness.
- **Independence and dignity** – By receiving meals at home, our clients can remain in their own homes longer, maintaining independence while reducing hospitalizations and health complications linked to food insecurity.
- **Connection and care** – Volunteers do more than deliver food. They offer a friendly face and a caring presence, helping to combat loneliness and isolation, which are as dangerous to health as poor nutrition.

The generosity of our community makes this work possible. Each dollar directly impacts lives here in Norman, ensuring no senior or vulnerable neighbor is left behind.

Meals on Wheels of Norman is not just about feeding people—it's about strengthening the fabric of our community. Every meal delivered represents hope, compassion, and the promise that someone cares.