

POTTSTOWN CLUSTER OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES
57 N. FRANKLIN STREET
POTTSTOWN, PA 19464

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Pottstown, PA

• Hunger Action Month • Open Your Heart — Fall Fundraiser Dinner • Facilities Update

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NEWSLETTER

A NEWSLETTER DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING A POSITIVE
ATTITUDE, ACTION AND KNOWLEDGE OF OUR MISSION



FALL 2015

SEPTEMBER IS **HUNGER ACTION** MONTH!

Do you know what you are having for dinner tonight? Did your child have breakfast this morning before heading off to school? While these might be easy questions for you to answer, many in our community struggle with these questions for themselves and their families every day.

Food insecurity is a significant issue in our nation, our region and our town. Food insecurity is defined as the lack of access to enough food for an active and healthy life at all times for all household members. Data in Montgomery County, PA, shows that 11% of all Montgomery County residents and 14% of Montgomery County children do not get enough to eat. In recent studies, Pottstown's numbers are consistently higher than the county average. In the first six months of 2015, with your support, we have distributed 313,309 pounds of food to 9,093 individuals through our pantry and provided 6,026 individuals with a prepared lunch or dinner through our community meals program. We have seen similar need in previous years and anticipate providing these much-needed food resources to approximately 20,000 individuals by the year's end.

How are we trying to meet this need? Our **Food Pantry** and **Community Meals** programs help to provide food security to many residents of Pottstown and the surrounding community. In addition, we are working collaboratively with pantries across Montgomery County, through the **Montgomery County Anti-Hunger Network (MAHN)**, to more evenly distribute food resources across the county to those areas that need resources the most. This partnership has helped us to share resources that we at times have in abundance and to receive much-needed additional resources to which our families would otherwise not have access. We have

also started a nutritional education program, the **Wise Shopper Food Program**, to encourage our families to make healthier food choices.

Unfortunately, even with all these resources, the need still remains great. We NEED the continued support of friends like you to increase the food security of our neighbors.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Consider making a monetary donation to support our food services program in September, in recognition of Hunger Action Month. Your financial support provides funding for overall operations of our food services programs and allows us to direct those funds to the exact services or food resources we need.
- Organize a food drive to collect some of our most-needed items. Those items include canned meats, tomato sauce, soup, canned fruit, cereal, pasta, peanut butter and tuna; however, we welcome your contacting Tabatha Smith, Food Services Administrator, at **610.970.5995** or **tsmith@pottstowncluster.org** to explore other needs.
- Tell a friend about your connection to the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities and share this story.

Together, we can make an impact on eliminating hunger in the Pottstown region.



COMMUNITY SUPPLY DRIVE FOR THE CLUSTER OUTREACH CENTER HOSTED BY THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS



Families who have just moved into new homes often enter their homes with next to nothing. The **Cluster Outreach Center** does their best to ensure that families have these basic needs: beds, a table and chair set, sheets, blankets, towels and cleaning supplies. A simple way the community can help provide cleaning supplies is to purchase a new bucket, a sponge and some basic household cleaning items to put in the bucket. This goes far to assist a newly-housed family in keeping their home clean and tidy. You can help too! **The Drop off and Wrap Up Event** will be held on September 12th. Please bring items including blankets, sheets, buckets and cleaning supplies.

For more information on the event please contact DeeAnn Roudy - deannroudy@mail.com

FACILITIES UPDATE

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." JEREMIAH 29:11

In January 2010 the **Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities (PCRC)** purchased the American Legion Post 47 at 57 North Franklin Street after a fifteen-year search. In 2014 we struggled for space in the Outreach Center; we did not think we would grow out of this building so quickly. New private office space was needed for our **Housing Resource Center's (HRC)** Housing Stability Coaches and Housing Locators. They squeezed into our meeting room/board room until the Property Committee, with the help of many volunteers, built new office space by taking away space from the clothing and housewares area and storing all we could on shelving in the basement. During this time the Board of Directors, the UP3 Classes and many other meetings were scheduled in worship centers and other public locations that support the PCRC's mission.

On July 16, 2015, the PCRC purchased the property at 61 North Franklin Street, next door to the **Cluster Outreach Center**. This property, built in 1887, was vacant for a number of years. It will be refurbished to provide administrative offices, classroom space for the **Bridges out of Poverty UP3** program, office space for the HRC program, meeting space for the Board and other staff and community meetings needed for the PCRC programs. The **Cluster Outreach Center** will continue to be a positive influence in the community by providing food and clothing to those who need it. Our purchase will provide the needed space to assist individuals in the development of skills necessary to establish a plan for future stability. It will also help individuals and families to stay in affordable housing as they go through transitional periods in their lives. The Board of Directors of the PCRC believes that the purchase of 61 North Franklin Street will not only help the **Cluster Outreach Center** but will once again revive a vacant building to support the revitalization of Pottstown.

This purchase supports our mission statement: *Through interfaith cooperation, the PCRC addresses the basic needs of persons in the Greater Pottstown community while assisting with their spiritual and social needs. Our programs and referrals are coordinated to help individuals make real progress in moving from dependence to productive self-sufficiency.*

Frank Cebular -
President, Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities Board of Directors



DONATIONS ACCEPTED

9AM-12PM OR CALL FOR
OTHER ARRANGEMENTS

Open for Client Services, Monday - Friday 9am - 4pm

57 N. Franklin Street, Pottstown, PA 19464
Phone: 610.970.5995 | Fax: 610.970.6385

WWW.POTTSTOWNCLUSTER.ORG

PottstownCluster
OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Nourishing Lives. Strengthening Families.



Apri il tuo cuore'...

Open Your Heart

A fundraising dinner & concert event featuring timeless classics from opera, light-opera, and musical theater.

4TH ANNUAL FUNDRAISING DINNER & CONCERT

We invite you to attend our
4th Annual
Fundraising Dinner & Concert,
*"Apri il tuo cuore...
Open Your Heart"*,

Friday, October 2, 2015,
from 6:30 – 9:30 PM
at Brookside Country Club,
Pottstown.

The event will showcase some of the area's top musical talent, offering an evening of recognizable favorites from Italian opera, light opera, and American musical theater. The evening will feature fine food and entertainment in an effort to encourage our community to open its heart to those in need. Several rare opportunities will be once again featured in our auction. It will be a night you won't want to miss! Tickets are on sale now for \$65 and include a social hour, dinner and entertainment. *We look forward to sharing another wonderful evening with you!*



On June 10, 2015, the Pottstown Cluster Outreach Center graduated five community investigators from the UP3 Initiative. The investigators have been meeting since February investigating poverty on a micro and macro level and creating a future plan focused on stability. Congratulations, Graduates!

CURRENT CLUSTER NEEDS:

- Canned Meats
- Tomato Sauce
- Soup
- Cereal
- Pasta
- Peanut Butter
- Tuna

"THANK
YOU"

THANKFUL

for our Partnership with Wegmans

June 6th marked a memorable day for the **Pottstown Cluster Outreach Center**. Employees from Wegmans Food Markets throughout Pennsylvania joined as a team to share their expertise to help improve our day-to-day operations in the Food Pantry and Dry Goods Departments at the Cluster Outreach Center.

After spending time at the Cluster Outreach Center, the Wegmans' team brainstormed and came up with some new ideas, equipment and technology to run an efficient operation so we can better serve our clients.

June 5th was installation day. Shelves were installed in the Food Pantry to create more space and ease the flow of traffic; labels were placed in the warehouse for stocking food; bag racks were carefully positioned in both departments; and houseware items were meticulously sorted and arranged.

On June 6th the team presented us with brand-new Carhartt coats and gloves for volunteers to wear while working in the walk-in refrigerator-freezer, baskets for clients to use for shopping, utility carts to stock shelves and two iPads downloaded with applications that calculate the nutritional value of canned foods!

In celebration, we opened our doors to the community so we could share our excitement! The Wegmans' team handed out grilled hot dogs, soda, chips and dessert to everyone who came. Children decorated their own cookies with colorful icing and sprinkles and took home a prize.



We are very grateful for this support and generosity and would like to thank the team for their hard work and for believing in what we do at the Cluster Outreach Center. Thank you, Dan Carnevale, Maneesh Chudasama, Dan Culhane, Jackie Decloe, Kelly Ducsek, Mark Edwards, Amanda Foreacre, Jake Fox, Kenzie Krause and Justin Massari!

WISE FOOD SHOPPER PROGRAM

The **Wise Food Shopper** program sponsored two classes for children ages 8-10 on August 11 and August 13. Entitled *"Fun with Healthy Snacks,"* the class used fun activities and hands-on food preparation to learn the importance of making nutritious choices for between-meal munching. A total of 20 children prepared Banana and Peanut Butter Pinwheels and Fizzy Juice. Food tasting was a hit with everyone. Each child went home with a pack of useful snack-making tools including a children's cookbook.



Wise Food Shopper

NOTE FROM A CLIENT WORKING WITH OUR HOUSING RESOURCE CENTER STAFF

The Pottstown Housing Resource Center has provided housing assistance to over 180 families since we began this program in 2014. Each family situation is unique and offers its own challenges; however, we are privileged to be a part of helping families get back on their feet. The following is a note from one such family:



Jenn,

I was just driving and thinking about my life and my wife and kids and how grateful I am for everything you have done for us. And hi, Wendy, didn't forget about you. LOL! But seriously, 6 months ago I was hopeless. Stability, a house and job were a dream and a fairytale. I got 100% clean the day I moved in on 12/24/14. You provided an opportunity and a starting point to build my life on. It was very stressful being homeless and living with a bunch of addicts and not knowing how or where to start or being overwhelmed with too much to fix at once: house, job, sobriety, family, bills, etc. The house was the huge break and push I needed. What you offered was the building block of my life. The house got our family back together. There are not enough words to express my gratitude, so I strive to let my actions do the speaking. I've done more drugs, been to more prisons, and lost more kids than most of your clients ever will. And I was on track for losing more. You believed in me more than I did, gave me a chance, and never judged me. Thank you, Jenn, for all the support and encouragement.

Daniel Trejo

THE DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

I have the opportunity once a month to gather for a Delegate Assembly Meeting in the various houses of worship spread throughout the region. It is my privilege to sit with Delegates that have served community meals, raised funds, gathered food and clothing and volunteered at the Outreach Center for decades. This diverse company of people continues to find new ways to make a difference in the lives of others. This call to serve our community is rooted in God's concern for the poor and vulnerable. God sees, hears and responds to the cries of poor and vulnerable people. The Scriptures portray the Lord as upholding the cause of those who are oppressed and providing for hungry and poor people. God's concern for people is clearly exhibited in the monthly Delegate meetings as each Delegate explores and moves toward meeting needs so that all who are in need experience a share in God's provision.

As I write this article, Mary Etta Mest who has led the Delegate Assembly for the last 4 ½ years is stepping down. Mary Etta has given her time in a most unreserved way to knit together people of many different faiths. She has been in many ways the single greatest force in Pottstown to bring together what otherwise has been a very divided religious community. The results of her efforts will continue to bless the people of Pottstown for years to come. It is our hope that the unity that we share in meeting human needs will increase even as the needs continue to increase. Thank you, Mary Etta Mest. You have served well.

PSALM 41:1, 13 (ESV) — *Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him; 13Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.*

There are continuing and growing opportunities to serve the Cluster Outreach Center through the Delegate Assembly. If you would like to represent your worship center or organization at these monthly meetings or simply receive the information from these meetings, please contact the **Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities** for more information.

For the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities, Rick Knarr Lead, Chaplain