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PottstownCluster
OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Nourishing Lives. Strengthening Families.



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Recognizing our supporters
- Third Annual Signature Page
- Getting Ahead program update

For more information visit: www.pottstowncluster.org

NEWSLETTER

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



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PottstownCluster
OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

SUMMER 2013

Dear Friend of the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities,

What does your signature stand for? Your support of our organization is vital to providing food, security, and basic household assistance to many individuals and families who rely on our programs.

Your signature can help us.

For more than forty years, the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities has been providing for the basic needs of vulnerable groups in the Pottstown community. These groups include the homeless, disabled, unemployed, and those who, despite education, cannot find work or a livable income. We provide food security and household assistance to more than 600 families each month. For the past few years, we have seen an average of over 400 new families turn to us each year. Many say they never thought they would need assistance. Summer months bring more families looking for food resources as children, who would otherwise receive breakfast and lunch through the school lunch programs, are at home. At the same time, it is a season when we experience the lowest level of financial donations.

We need friends like you to support our Signature Page campaign. The campaign is a full-page ad in The Mercury displaying the signatures of hundreds of people who have “signed on” their support to our programs. The campaign raises much needed operating funds to support our work, including the purchase of milk for families using our pantry, food for our community meals, and support for the staff who are working with those coming through our doors. With your help, we can continue to provide much needed resources for those counting on our doors being open.

Please sign our Signature Page by returning the enclosed envelope, **with your signature in black ink**, by June 27, 2013. We anticipate the page to be published in mid-July.

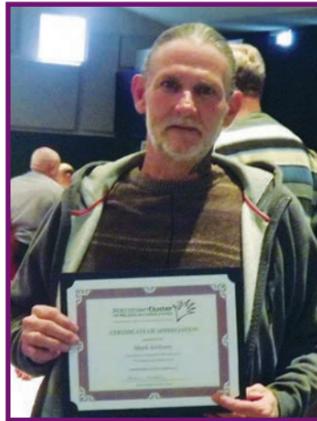
Thank you in advance for “*signing on to serve*” those who are counting on us.

Barbara Wilhelmy
Executive Director

Doreen Duncan

Doreen Duncan
Chair, Signature Page Campaign

SPECIAL THANKS



Mark Jackson receives the Volunteer of the Year award

Each year we like to take time out of our busy schedules to give our Volunteers, Donors and Supporters special thanks for all their hard work and dedication. Because of your time and support, we are able to fulfill our mission and keep our doors open for another year. Our Volunteer Recognition Luncheon was held on April 22nd at Morningstar Fellowship. We acknowledged the following as our Honorees for 2013:

Honorees for 2013:

Volunteer of the Year:	Mark Jackson
Community Meal Supporter of the Year:	Joan and Gene Hohl
Individual Food Donor of the Year:	Rolland Wildermuth
Business Food Donor of the Year:	The Vanguard Group
Dry Goods Supporter of the Year:	St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church
Business Financial Donor of the Year:	Wegmans Market, Collegeville
Religious Community Food Donor of the Year:	St. Aloysius Church
Religious Community Financial Donor of the Year:	St. Aloysius Church

We had 150 in attendance that day and enjoyed the opportunity to say thank you to everyone for their dedication to our work. If you were not able to join us, know that we are grateful for each and every one of you who support any aspect of our work.



LEFT: Members from First Baptist Church who volunteer together at a Community Meal



Guests enjoying the entertainment provided by Chris Poje Productions



Wish Upon a Star
To Benefit the Cluster of Religious Communities
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4TH
Our "Wish Upon a Star" Dinner will be an event you won't want to miss. Please visit our website for information on buying tickets or supporting the event.

Thank you to our golf sponsors and supporters at our 3rd annual golf outing. Visit our website for pictures and more information

COULD YOU SURVIVE IN POVERTY?

When asked about poverty and people who live in poverty, many of us look through our own economic lens and wonder why people receiving public assistance don't make the choice to get an education, get a job, own a home, own a car, manage money, and so on, to be self-sustaining. Rather, a person's shortcomings are highlighted and assumptions made that lead to frustration and anger that they aren't making the "right" choices, are choosing not to "get ahead," and deserve the deficiencies such as a lifestyle perpetuates.

"Bridges out of Poverty," written by Ruby K. Payne, PhD, Philip E. DeVol, and Terie Dreussi Smith, offers clarity on the economic and social cultures of poverty, middle class, and wealth by defining the 16 "hidden rules" of each. How are people living in poverty to learn to manage money when they never have any? Financial security is rooted in the middle class, and the middle class assumes everyone should know the expectations. Money for people living in poverty is means spending on entertainment, family, and friends. Poverty robs people of the ability to plan, also known as "tyranny of the moment," and survival is the driving force. The future is abstract as each faces the concrete needs of today, needs that need solved today.

Amy Rossman, Programs Manager, has recently completed certification as a trainer for "Bridges out of Poverty" to assist the Pottstown Cluster and its partners in establishing a common language and understanding about the culture of poverty. The economic lens of the middle class is relative and holds "hidden rules" unbeknownst to people living in poverty, the same as the middle class is unaware of the "hidden rules" of poverty; however, the people at the decision making table for people in poverty are those from the middle and wealthy classes projecting from their lens and not the lens of the people for whom the decisions are being made.

Take a moment to consider the "hidden rules" in your neighborhood, workplace, church/house of worship, etc.

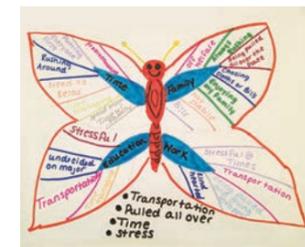
Could you survive in poverty? **Check each item that applies:** I know how to...

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> find the best rummage sales. | <input type="checkbox"/> manage without electricity and a phone. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> locate grocery stores' garbage bins that have thrown-away food. | <input type="checkbox"/> entertain friends with just my personality and stories. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bail someone out of jail. | <input type="checkbox"/> get by when I don't have money to pay the bills. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> physically fight and defend myself. | <input type="checkbox"/> move in half a day. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> get a gun, even if I have a police record. | <input type="checkbox"/> get and use food stamps. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> keep my clothes from being stolen at the laundromat | <input type="checkbox"/> find free medical clinics. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sniff out problems in a used car. | <input type="checkbox"/> get around without a car. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> live without a checking account. | <input type="checkbox"/> use a knife as scissors |

In collaboration with "Bridges out of Poverty," the Cluster is also spearheading "Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World," written by Philip DeVol for individuals living in poverty. This program is led by Amy Rossman, Programs Manager, and Ryan Keiser, Caseworker, who have been trained as certified facilitators. Each of the 16-week workshops investigates poverty and its effects and allows the "investigators" the time to create self-sustaining future plans for themselves, if they choose.

Many of the investigators are from generational poverty, two or more generations receiving public assistance, rather than situational poverty, poverty resulting from a "situation" such as death, disaster, and illness. The type of poverty affects one's economic lens and knowledge of the "hidden rules" needed to become self-sufficient. As the length of time increases, these views and lack of knowledge of the "hidden rules" become imbedded in the culture. "Pockets of poverty" are seen in the Pottstown community with pawn shops, rent-to-own businesses, corner stores, check cashing, laundromats, dollar stores, and temp services.

"Getting Ahead..." begins with co-investigation into the understanding of poverty and "where I am" between the facilitators and investigators. One of the investigators provided the illustrations of her life now and feeling torn in many directions. Poverty is systemic and much more than only the choices a person makes for himself. Poverty is affected by choices made by agencies, communities, governments, etc. Throughout the 16 weeks, a community assessment, the "hidden rules," Theory of Change, and future stories will be established and resources built to successfully "get ahead." If you are interested in joining us on this journey, you can view our blog at pccrgainitiative@blogspot.com.



My Life now (left) and what I want my life to be (below).

