

WINTER 2014

Pottstown**Cluster**
OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Nourishing Lives. Strengthening Families.



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

NEWSLETTER

For more information visit: www.pottstowncluster.org

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POTTSTOWN HOUSING RESOURCE CENTER OPENS

In January, PCRC began a partnership with **Your Way Home Montgomery County (YWH)** and included the Pottstown Housing Resource Center (HRC) as a program offered at the Cluster Outreach Center. YWH is a new and more effective system to prevent and end homelessness. It is focused on enhancing consumer, provider and funder efficiencies by coordinating services, eliminating duplicative efforts, building capacity and resiliency and weaving together our partners in a comprehensive effort. Homelessness and housing instability are best solved when philanthropy, government, health and

human service providers, law enforcement, housing developers, landlords, consumer advocates and community partners strive to address this complex social problem together. Working together, we will quickly get people into permanent housing and coordinate the resources they need to stay there. We will measure our success by the number of Montgomery County residents for whom homelessness and its effects have been prevented or ended quickly and effectively. Ultimately, our goal is to help families and individuals achieve housing and financial stability as well as food security, better health outcomes, a higher quality of life and lasting independence.

Over 600 calls were received to the YWH Call Center in January. The Call Center is the central door where homeless families and individuals can seek assistance from YWH. Callers are screened through the Call Center and then referred to one of three HRCs in the county, Pottstown being one. PCRC has four staff providing services at the Pottstown HRC. Ryan Keiser, formerly our caseworker, and Jessica Scholl are our new Housing Stability Coaches, and Wendy Gaynor and Susan Riepen are our Housing Locators. Our staff began seeing clients at the HRC on January 16th. Our first client to move in was a single mother with two children. She moved into her first own apartment on January 30th. Our second move in occurred on January 31st, for a single mother of a three-month-old living in a shelter since the beginning of December. She was seen at the HRC on January 23rd and signed a lease and received keys on the 31st. We are excited about the possibilities this program can bring to many families and will continue to share stories of the program on our website.

CALIFORNIA TORTILLA COMES TO OUR COMMUNITY MEAL – ACTS OF KINDNESS: CALIFORNIA TORTILLA STYLE

Merrill Weber

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., asked, “What are you doing to help others?” On Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 20, 2014, Sean Gray, owner of the Royersford California Tortilla, answered that question by generously donating a delicious fresh Mexican dinner to those in need through the Pottstown Cluster’s community meal program. He delivered 100 big burritos, chips, salsa, queso and side salads for those attending the community meal at Christ Episcopal Church, also joining in the prayer and staying for the meal.

When asked to donate, Sean did not think twice, saying he has known hunger first-hand. As a child, he and his siblings depended on meals like this. Today Sean Gray is the owner of three thriving California Tortilla restaurants.

The Pottstown Cluster extends its thanks and appreciation to Sean Gray, local hero. We all have moments in our lives when we need a helping hand. If you are a business owner, you, too, can be a local hero. Call (610) 970-5995 for more information on how you can help.

Five days a week there is a place for those who are hungry to go for a free hot meal in the community. The Pottstown Cluster Outreach organizes the community meal program which takes place at various churches in Pottstown.

COMMUNITY MEALS Lunches 11:45am-12:15pm

- Monday: Christ Episcopal Church
316 High Street
- Wednesday: Salvation Army
137 King Street
- Friday: Emmanuel Lutheran Church
Hanover and Walnut Streets

Dinners 5:00pm

- Tuesday: Trinity Reformed Church
Hanover and King Streets
- Thursday: First Presbyterian Church
750 North Evans Street



HUNGER CHALLENGE

JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST HUNGER: SUPPORT THE FEINSTEIN CHALLENGE

For many years, with the help of all our supporters, the Cluster Outreach Center has provided food resources to families in Pottstown through our Food Pantry and Community Meals programs. Since our move to Franklin Street, we have been fortunate to be able to greatly increase the amount of food we can make available to families. Unfortunately, we also continue to see the need for food assistance rising. Many families experienced cuts in their food stamps at the end of 2013. Others had hardships that made the cost of groceries an increasing challenge. In March and April, PCRC is joining other pantries across the county in raising awareness to the ever-growing issue of hunger in America by participating in the Feinstein Challenge. The Feinstein Foundation challenges food banks across the country to raise awareness to the issue of hunger. The Foundation donates \$1 million across America proportionally to organizations that raise funds and food donations during the challenge. All food donations and cash donations specifically marked for the Feinstein Challenge help us increase food resources for families in Pottstown. Please consider joining PCRC in this challenge and make your donation today. If making a financial donation, be sure to annotate "Feinstein Challenge" on your check .

NEW STRATEGY FOR OUR FOOD SUPPLY

This year we are piloting a nutrition education program in our food pantry, based on a successful model called **"The Green Light Pantry"** operating in the Kensington section of Philadelphia. We plan to begin labeling our food according to its nutritional value and working with families to improve their nutritional choices. As the program develops, we will share information on our website. If you have an interest in helping with this project, please contact Sherrie Fazekas, Food Services Manager, at sfazekas@pottstowncluster.org or by phone at **610.970.5995**.



HOLIDAY PROGRAMS

Each year the Cluster Outreach Center organizes a Holiday Program for the residents of Pottstown. We had another successful year with over 400 children receiving gifts and over 200 families receiving food boxes. Life brings so many challenges for everyone, but during the holiday season our staff, volunteers and donors have this heartwarming opportunity to experience the joy and gratitude that this program brings to so many families.

Thanks to our new staff member, Kelli DeSieno, Intake/Dry Goods Assistant, twenty-nine additional families participated in our "Adopt a Family" Program, due to the generosity of 17 donors. It is so hard to imagine the difficulties that some families are forced to endure. One particular family brought us to tears. A single mother and her two teenage children had just recently moved out of their home because the daughter was being sexual abused. They left in the middle of the night with only what they could carry. They moved in with friends, but after just a few weeks, they were being evicted because the landlord said they were using too much water! This hard-working mother was so grateful for the gifts for her children who had just been through so much. Kelli volunteered at the Cluster for two years and with compassion understands the needs of our clients which made this Program such a huge success.

Special thanks to all the churches, businesses and families that donated gifts to our program and touched so many lives during this season.

CURRENT CLUSTER NEEDS:

- Regular baby formula
- Canned pasta
- Oatmeal
- Jelly
- Canned fruit





THE GETTING AHEAD INITIATIVE HAS A NEW NAME AND LOOK



The Pottstown Cluster Outreach Center is excited to introduce the **Understanding Poverty to Plan and Persevere (UP3)** initiative, the new name and look for what has been formerly known as the Getting Ahead Initiative. The initiative incorporating the "Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin' By World" curriculum began in

February 2013 and has graduated 14 motivated individuals striving to withstand the effects of poverty. A few of the graduates have become active volunteers at the outreach center to "give back" to the community and continue to develop social capital and the getting-ahead relationships needed to expand their social resources. Each investigator during the workshop completes a self-assessment of resources. Poverty is not comprised solely of a lack of financial resources. It involves impoverishment in many other areas, including physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social needs. The outreach center offers the opportunity for graduates to build upon those resources that are imperative for a client's growth and success.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW CASEWORKER

The Pottstown Cluster Outreach Center wants to extend a warm welcome to Monique Degivenchy, the new caseworker. Monique has relocated to the area from Elizabeth, New Jersey, and has many years of experience working with survivors of domestic violence, people struggling with homelessness and poverty. Monique's diverse background will be an asset to the outreach center working with people who are struggling with comparable circumstances and are in need of a compassionate presence and guidance. Monique will also be assisting with the UP3 initiative. Welcome Monique!

CLUSTER Coming Events

Information: www.pottstowncluster.org

DON'T MISS THE SPRING GOLF FUNDRAISER AT OUR NEW SITE! SPRING HOLLOW GOLF COURSE

SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 2014

In addition to a great afternoon of golf, participants and guests will be treated to some great musical entertainment by Jeff Kercher and some great anecdotes from Frank Lemaster, former all-pro linebacker for the Philadelphia Eagles!

The shotgun start, scramble event will tee off at 1 PM Saturday April 26, 2014 at Spring Hollow Golf Course.

The registration fee (\$110/golfer) includes golf, prizes, lunch, cocktail reception and dinner. Reception/dinner only tickets can be purchased for \$35.

Tee Off Time 1:00PM

See our website for Golfer Registration

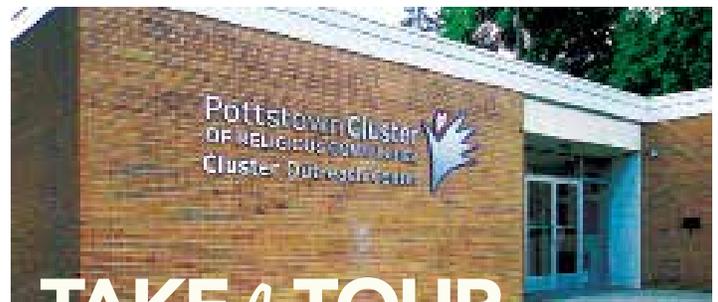
SAVE THE DATE!

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2014

Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities Fundraising Dinner

BEE-LIEVE! at the **BEREAN BIBLE CHURCH**

Dinner by **BAUSE CATERED EVENTS**



TAKE a TOUR

Take a tour of our building located at 57 N. Franklin Street Pottstown, PA 19464, for information call 610-970-5995

Hours of operation are Monday-Friday 9:00am-4:00pm

Be sure to visit our new website www.PottstownCluster.org