

POTTSTOWN CLUSTER OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

2020

Annual Report

of

GRATITUDE

Pottstown

POTTSTOWNCLUSTER.ORG

POTTSTOWN CLUSTER OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES



PottstownCluster
OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Nourishing Lives. Strengthening Families.



2020 *Annual Report of* GRATITUDE

**A Message from the Executive Director
Board of Directors
Mission, Services, and Focus
Impact
Updates and Accomplishments
Looking Forward
Financial Report
List of Supporters**

INSIDE



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Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities

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Pottstown PA 19464

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pottstowncluster.org

Dear Friends,

When I look back at 2020, it seems like both yesterday and years ago. We had to pivot quickly to adapt to a pandemic unlike anything in recent history. For the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities, this meant our community had greater need for our help, as well as significant obstacles in their ability to reach-out to us. We immediately shifted how we work in order to serve as many folks as possible.



Barbara Wilhelmy, LCSW
Executive Director

Like most of you, we commissioned our staff to work remote on short notice. For some of our staff – to their credit, this was nearly seamless. For others, it was nearly impossible. We wore masks, we cleaned relentlessly, and we staggered our work hours for those who couldn't be entirely remote. Frankly, it was stressful. But we found great satisfaction in still being able to get the food out of our door, and prevent evictions.

What we also experienced, was greater generosity from our community of support than ever in our history. So, it is with deep and heartfelt gratitude, I thank each of you for being part of the solution and offering us increased giving when we needed it.

Later in this report you will see some large numbers from our housing team in the amount of rental and utility assistance for which we have been responsible. I hope you will consider my perspective as you look at these numbers. We continue to operate with a very lean staff and the greatest portion of these funds have been passed-through to Montgomery County neighbors who were teetering toward being without a place to live. If we had not proven our ability to be effective stewards of these funds, they would not have been awarded to us. We have worked tirelessly to evaluate and disburse funds to those who qualify, as efficiently and effectively as possible.

It remains our mission and our goal to feed hungry neighbors and assure there is a roof over the head of as many vulnerable people as possible. In this, we consider you our community partners and we hope you experience some measure of satisfaction, as we do in assuring these services continue to be provided.

With great gratitude,

Barbara Wilhelmy, LCSW
Executive Director

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Thank you for your faithful board service.

POTTSTOWN CLUSTER OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Mission

Through interfaith cooperation, the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities provides tangible services, support, and spiritual guidance to address the basic needs of persons within and beyond the greater Pottstown area, coordinating our programs



Service and Focus

FOOD SECURITY means that you have the access and resources to obtain safe and healthy food. Many families are forced to choose between food and rent or medication, and depend on the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities to close that gap in order to feed their families. The Pottstown Cluster regularly responds to community need by disbursing food through a public food pantry, community meal program, and redistribution.



HOUSING STABILITY — The Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities provides case management and support in finding safe, affordable, housing for individuals and families facing homelessness or possible eviction. The Pottstown Cluster administers programs that provide rental assistance, eviction prevention, and rapid re-housing to make it possible for families to not only survive, but start to thrive.



To receive updates to stay informed of happenings, and get the e-news delivered to your e-mail inbox, subscribe on our website here:
pottstowncluster.org/clusterchroniclessubscribe.

POTTSTOWN CLUSTER OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

The Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities serves individuals and families living in the greater Pottstown area primarily; we also serve residents across Montgomery County for housing stability services. Food and housing security are foundational needs for members of the community to be able to be productive and healthy.

In 2020 we provided enough food for 779 meals per day and 12,051 pounds of food for community meal programs around Pottstown.

Our rent and utility support programs designed to stabilize vulnerable families and individuals in Montgomery County, avoided or ended homelessness for 320 families.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES IN 2020

In 2020, we saw a great need in our neighbors and community as the negative financial impact of the pandemic took a toll on many. Since the pandemic, more Americans reported that they are living paycheck-to-paycheck, 63 percent, and many are still unemployed. From June of 2019 to June of 2020, the unemployment rate in Montgomery County jumped from 3.4 to 11.4 percent. This kind of crisis puts so many more families at risk with Pottstown's existing poverty rate at 21.7 percent, above the Pennsylvania average of 12.5 percent.



IMPACT

2020 UPDATES

OUR COVID-19 CRISIS RESPONSE

Throughout the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities, as an organization providing essential services for vulnerable populations, remained open and committed to providing food security and housing stability to at-risk neighbors and families. As unemployment increased at a record-setting pace and we saw an uptick in the number of people and families who needed our services, we remained on the frontline of the pandemic working through uncertain times with limited staff and volunteers due to social distancing requirements. We adapted to serve our clients while maintaining safe practices to protect clients, staff, and volunteers. It was the help and support from our dedicated employees, volunteers, board, donors, delegates, and community that allowed us to:

- Continue to keep our community food pantry open and operating safely;
- Offer safe ways to receive food through our food pantry: remote online ordering and prepacked food box pickup;
- Support and protect our most vulnerable by delivering food to older adults and high-risk individuals;
- Respond to increased community need by working with partners to coordinate food security efforts throughout the Pottstown area and provide families with additional food resources;
- Stabilize vulnerable families and prevent homelessness by offering, COVID-19 Emergency Rent and Utility Assistance, eviction prevention and social service supports through our Pottstown Housing Resource Center (HRC);
- Renovate and making building modifications to ensure our buildings were safe and we were reducing the risk of exposure to COVID-19.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2020 UPDATES

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

OUR COVID-19 CRISIS RESPONSE

Working Together to Help Our Neighbors in Need

In 2020 as businesses closed and families experienced increased lost wages and layoffs, our community came together. During any crisis, it's easy to turn inwards and focus on our own needs. However, in 2020 many community members and businesses quickly and generously stepped in to support our mission as we worked to provide food security and housing stability to local families in need during a critical time. 2020 has been an important reminder of the power of community and the fact that working together is our community strength in Pottstown.



"Those we serve struggle with hunger and many do not even know where their next meal will come from, in usual circumstances. Before COVID 19, about 11 percent of the Montgomery County population was considered food insecure, meaning they didn't have consistent access to sufficient food. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic drastically and quickly increased this percentage. Our employees and volunteers have worked vigorously this past year to ensure our neighbors struggling with hunger did not have to worry about how they would feed themselves or their families," said Victoria Bumstead, PCRC Outreach Center Director.

#COVID CARINGCOMMUNITY

2020 *Annual Report of*
GRATITUDE

2020 UPDATES

OUR COVID-19 CRISIS RESPONSE

Working Together to Help Our Neighbors in Need

In 2020, our volunteers and employees were busy helping us meet demand by packing food boxes, distributing food, and restocking shelves to ensure our neighbors struggling with hunger did not have to worry about how they were going to feed themselves or their families. We also received many other offers of support such as volunteers wanting to help with storage space – both dry and refrigerator, and transportation assistance to move food. These offers of support are reflections of a deep commitment to our mission and local neighbors, families, and children in need of food and housing assistance during a critical time. To all who helped and reached out to us – thank you as always, for your faithful commitment to the work we do.

The Pottstown Cluster also greatly appreciates all those who worked with us to offer more opportunities to bring food to vulnerable families. Through our joint efforts, we encouraged the least number of trips for people to have to take outside of their home. We partnered with the Pottstown and Pottsgrove School districts to provide additional household food at local school sites, preventing a need for those families to leave their homes more than once to get food. Additionally, we worked with The ACLAMO through their "Todos Comemos" project and partnered with The Ricketts Center to help feed families and provide food for our community's most vulnerable.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Families should focus on health and growth, not hunger.

2020 UPDATES

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

HOUSING SECURITY

Housing Resource Center

Our housing resource team works from a Housing First model. The goal is to get individuals and families who are at-risk of homelessness or possible eviction into permanent housing and coordinate the resources they need to maintain that housing.

In 2020, our Housing Resource Center team shifted during the pandemic to find ways to reach their population and provide housing resources, housing-focused case management, and financial assistance. The team successfully secured housing for 37 households through our Rapid Rehousing Program and provided 105 households with social services and financial assistance in 2020.

Emergency Rent and Utility Coalition (ERUC)

In 2020, many found themselves in a tight spot as rent and utility bills were due and income was scarce because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, Montgomery County officials announced on September 4, 2020, the Your Way Home Emergency Rent & Utility Coalition (ERUC) to offer relief for Montgomery County households negatively affected by COVID-19 in the form of rental and utility assistance. This resolution allocated approximately \$5.9 million from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES ACT, to the Your Way Home Emergency Rent and Utility Coalition.

The Pottstown Cluster, as a part of the coalition, was contracted to work with 150 households during the September 1 – December 30, 2020, contract period. As of December 30, 2020, the Pottstown Cluster's rent and utility support programs provided rent and utility assistance to 320 households.



HOUSING
SECURITY



2020 UPDATES

Emergency Rent and Utility Coalition (ERUC)

“I think it is really remarkable in the last year that the Cluster has taken advantage of programs that have kept, literally, hundreds of people safely housed during the pandemic by providing extensive rental assistance that was administered quickly, efficiently, and to the benefit of both those tenants and landlords in the community that otherwise would have been in deep trouble. It was remarkable in that it happened very quickly – on the turn of a dime...” -Bob Larkin, PCRC Board Member



Households who received financial relief were Montgomery County households at or below 100 percent of area median income with a rent arrears and/or an eviction notice and/or a utility arrears and self-reported a COVID-19 hardship with no alternative means to pay the rent and/or utility arrears.

Camille Sneed, shares a two-bedroom apartment with her 15-year-old son Malachi. Camille represents just one of the nearly 660 household in Montgomery County who qualified for and received 2020 COVID-19 Emergency Rent and Utility Coalition Relief funds.

Camille has health issues that limit her work as a nursing assistant in long term care homes to just a few days a week sometimes less. Her bills and the pressure have piled up. When asked what her fears are in regards to her bills and the COVID-19 pandemic, she responded

“Keeping up with rent and all the bills all at once because it is just me. Only my income pays all of the bills. I don’t have support, it’s really just me.” Sneed feared losing her home and exposure to COVID-19.

Camille has hope after being referred to the Emergency Rent and Utility Coalition and receiving rental support, she stated, “Because of this help, I will be able to save some money and get the remainder of my bills paid. It is a lifesaver for me and my son.”

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2020 UPDATES

The Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities Supportive Services Center at Wainman House

In July 2015, the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities purchased the former Wainman mansion, built in 1887 at 61 N. Franklin Street. Renovation projects needed to achieve occupancy and preserve the building's exterior were completed in 2020. The new Supportive Services Center at Wainman House was occupied in 2020; initially two floors, then fully occupied in November in 2020. The Wainman House represents years of giving, repairing, and remodeling to provide work space for the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities to serve neighbors in need and collaborate with the community.



Welcome to the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities Supportive Services Center at Wainman House

“This new space will allow us to provide essential programs with several community partners, bringing supplemental education and support services to those we serve – services that have not been readily available to residents in our area, but which will be possible in this new space,” said Barbara Wilhelmy, Executive Director of the Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities.

2020 UPDATES

Thank You for Sponsoring Our Supportive Services Center at Wainman House

Foundational Sponsors

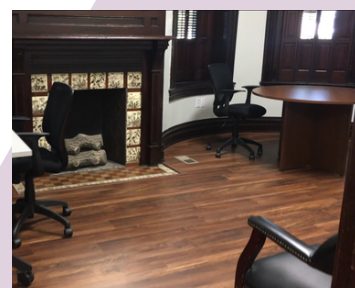
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Victory Bank and Joseph Major
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Great gratitude to Frank Cebular and Mike Behe for many hours of labor in renovating this beautiful historic house to create a new home for the Pottstown Cluster.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2020 UPDATES

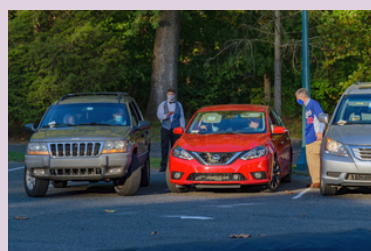
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

"You GOTTA Have Heart"

The Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities community came together for the 9th annual "You Gotta Have Heart" fundraiser on Thursday, October 15 at The SunnyBrook Ballroom Drive-in movie theatre as well as online. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this year's annual event featured both drive-in theater and online live-streaming choices for guests to hear from some of our many friends and learn more about how the Pottstown Cluster is meeting individuals' basic needs and transforming lives in the greater Pottstown community and beyond.

Once again, we were honored to welcome State Representative Joe Ciresi as our Master of Ceremonies for the evening. The event featured a celebration of service as we honored our Community Meals site volunteers for not only making meals possible, but also keeping this vital service operating during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Guests also enjoyed dinner and an evening of inspirational stories, entertainment, FUNraising, and more during this safe and socially distanced on-site live-stream Cluster Premiere.



2020 UPDATES

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

"You GOTTA Have Heart"

We are grateful to our 2020 presenting sponsors: Scott and Susan Bentley Fund, Karl and Mary Ann Glocker, Brownback's United Church of Christ; along with all our other annual event sponsors listed below.

All proceeds supported the Pottstown Cluster's mission to provide tangible services, support, and spiritual guidance to address the basic needs of persons within and beyond the greater Pottstown area. "You Gotta Have Heart" donations also supported the Pottstown Cluster in The Amazing Raise giving challenge that brings together the Tri-County region's nonprofit community to help raise much needed funds.

The event can be viewed online

at: pottstowncluster.org/2020yghheventvideo



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Scott and Susan Bentley Fund
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The SunnyBrook Ballroom
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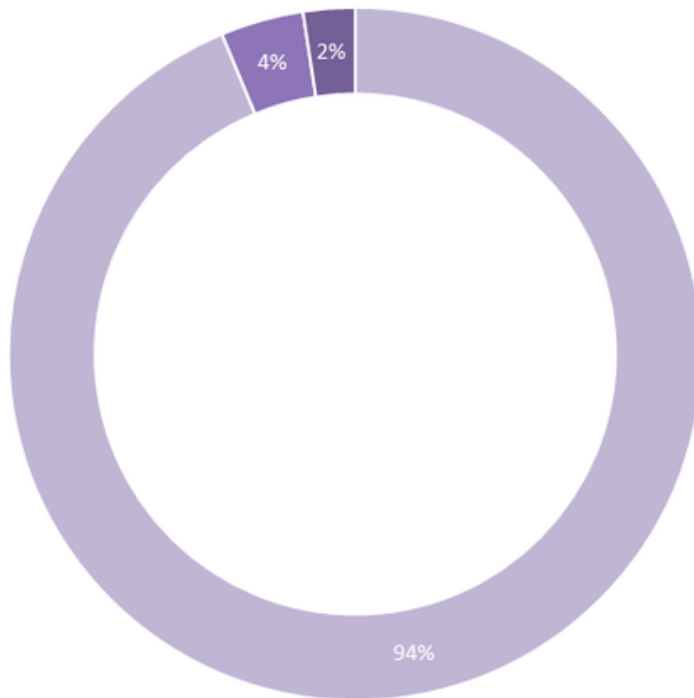
2020 EXPENSES

■ Program Services
\$3,600,619

■ Fundraising
\$148,765

■ Administrative
\$92,798

TOTAL: \$3,842,182



2020 REVENUE

■ Government Supported Programs:
\$2,518,636

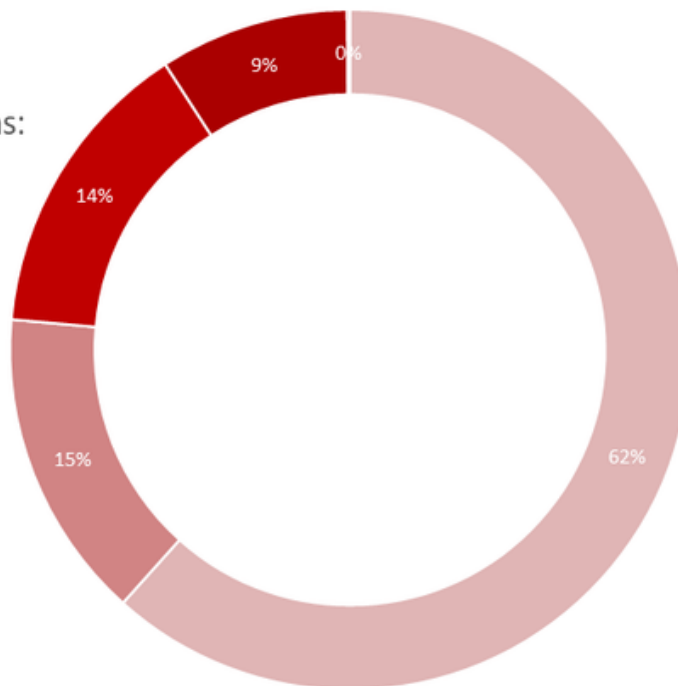
■ GIK:
\$604,012

■ Individuals and Organizations:
\$589,511

■ Grants:
\$368,270

■ Misc.:
\$5,480

TOTAL: \$4,085,909



Expanding the Food Security Safety Net

We look forward to introducing a new delivery service as more flexible option to accommodate people with different needs such as those who are house-bound or have circumstances that preclude in-person pick-up.



LOOKING FORWARD

Supportive Services with Added Flexibility and Reliability



We look forward to expanding our education and supportive services, some of which had been paused in 2020 due to the pandemic. We are redesigning support programs to allow both in-person and online educational opportunities that provide safe support regardless of the status of current or future health crises.

Supporters

The Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities thanks our donors listed below for their support of our mission through their generous contributions. There are anonymous donors in every category of giving. If you have made a gift through a third party, like United Way or your employer, there is often a delay in the Pottstown Cluster receiving these funds. We are not always notified of the original donor. If you have additional information for us, please reach-out to Jacqui Good at jgood@pottstowncluster.org, or call 610-970-5995. We are grateful to all our donors and apologize in advance for any inadvertent omissions or inaccuracies. Know that we value each and every donor at every level of support. Please let us know if our records are incorrect.

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