

Lehigh County Conference of Churches

Addressing Hunger, Homelessness, Mental Health, At-Risk Youth, and Christian Unity



Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?

James 2:15-16

Living the Faith in Difficult Economic Times

2008-2009 Annual Report

Letter From the Executive Director
The Rev. Dr. Christine L. Nelson

Lehigh County Conference of Churches

“It’s the economy stupid!” Remember that quote? Many will say it is still all about the dollars, *but people of faith know life is about grace* ---the grace God extends to us which we in turn share with one another. It has been a great year for grace! We truly have been living the faith in difficult economic times.

Though the number of people seeking all kinds of help has at times overwhelmed us, our donors, volunteers and community supporters and partners have risen to the need providing things as small as toiletries and as big as double mattresses, but most importantly offering hope and the knowledge that someone cares.

Here are a few of the successes you have helped bring about:

- Addition of a Volunteer Coordinator via the Together We Will Campaign helped us more quickly identify your talents and place you in the ministry of your choice. She also helped us catalogue your contributions: Over 2,000 hours in the first three months of the year at a value of well over \$40,000.
- 20 formerly chronically homeless persons turned the key in the lock of their first real home in years.
- The Interfaith In Action Committee’s *Weigh In Against Hunger* community-wide food drive involved 50 congregations contributing 22.5 tons of food to area soup kitchens, emergency pantries and Second Harvest Food Bank.
- Significant new dollars from United Way launched a new outreach at just the right time for people who have a history of difficulty finding jobs. PEP has had 54 referrals, 8 of 9 participants have completed assessment and training, with 1 of 4 eligible participants placed. 11 community partners have agreed to accept prospects for job interviews.
- A resurgence in congregations wanting to live the gospel by feeding hungry people inspired 6 congregations to begin community ministries at Daybreak and the Soup Kitchen.
- With the help of the PA Children’s Summer Food Program we were able to meet the burgeoning 60% increase of hungry children eating at the Soup Kitchen.
- Not only did Aspires Mentoring grow from 35 to 50 youth but through a partnership with AMEN another 80 young people’s lives were touched via Midnight Basketball.
- 8 of 9 chronically homeless persons living under the Linden St. Bridge were humanely moved to appropriate permanent housing as Homeless Supportive Services’ work with the City of Allentown and the 10 Year Plan bore fruit.
- Launching of the Justice and Advocacy network and website, <http://ja.pppjr.org>, brings together 25 area congregations to make our combined voices hear on poverty issues.
- Our impact in the community continues to grow as our Executive Director was asked to be part of a community-wide recession task force and many of our staff serve on community initiatives.

Thank you for the many ways in which working together we can do far more than any of us can do alone for God and for good.

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

PARTNERING TO SAVE A LIFE

David knew that he had been losing weight and feeling run down, but when a niece of his saw him for the first time in a while, she was so concerned that she forced him to seek medical attention. He was diagnosed with full-blown AIDS. While hospitalized for two weeks, David lost his part-time job and his roommate told him that he was no longer welcome.

David arrived at the door of Linkage Coordinator Ben Stephens with eyes red with tears. He was homeless, with no financial resources, spending nights at the Allentown Rescue Mission.

First, Ben linked David with the Lehigh Valley Hospital AIDS Activities Office which filed for expedited Social Security Disability benefits for David. Ben allowed David to use the Conference as a mailing address so that he could file for Medical Assistance and Food Stamps. And Ben's ongoing good relationship with the Mission meant that David could continue sleeping there during this difficult time.

David became a member of Daybreak where he could get hot, nourishing meals and have a safe place to stay during the day. Eventually, Pathways, in partnership with the AIDS program at the hospital, found David a permanent place to stay.

Through it all, David kept a positive attitude. By being persistent, and with the help of the LCCC and our partners he was able to find the support that he needed.

Yadah is a Hebrew verb with a root meaning "the extended hand, to throw out the hand"; therefore, "to worship with extended hand." Extend your hand to the

LORD and to your community by volunteering at the Lehigh County Conference of Churches.



CHRISTIAN UNITY

Faith under girds everything that we do. As the key ecumenical organization in the Lehigh Valley, the community of faith relies on the Lehigh County Conference of Churches for leadership in the provision of social services and in advocating for change in community and societal systems that keep people in poverty. Our faith calls us to action, under girding all of the activities of the Conference, equipping our 143 member congregations as partners in living out their faith in word and deed.

"If you think you're too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito in the room."

Anita Roddick

The Hungry Are Fed

Hunger...striving to be the hands of God's grace

**2008 Highlights:
Soup Kitchen and Daybreak**

- 60,716 meals combined served free of charge to the hungry, the homeless, people with disabilities, the working poor, and the impoverished elderly
- 1,718 meals served to children in the Soup kitchen, nearly 300 more than in 2007. In the summer months alone, 62% more meals served to children than in the summer of 2007.
- 36 congregations and community groups assisted in preparing and serving meals, keeping costs down and addressing hunger in the community first hand.



As I volunteer more, the longer that I do it, I realize that I'm getting back so much more than I'm giving. And I'm learning so much more about Christ through other people than I ever learned in any other facet of my life.

Elizabeth Benke, Soup Kitchen Volunteer



Homelessness...striving to be the feet of God's grace

.. I can tell you that the stories are the same everyday. We have clients coming in with nowhere to go, no money, jobless and the shelters are full with waiting lists. We even try to find shelters out of the area. I have single moms with children crying, not knowing what to do. It is getting harder and harder every day as rents continue to rise and there is no shelter space. We have more families doubling up until the landlord finds out and threatens to evict them all. So families are jumping from one family member or friend to another, living in cramped conditions, hoping a shelter spot opens up.

Deanne Malacsics, Pathways Director



The Homeless Are Sheltered

2008 Highlights: Homelessness Programs

- Linkage, Homeless Supportive Services, and Pathways participate significantly in the Commission to End Chronic Homelessness in Allentown. The Commission's first year report noted that lack of legal identification was a significant barrier to permanent housing. In response, Linkage assisted 182 homeless men and women obtain ID.
- Homelessness was avoided for 166 families in 2008 who received Pathways rental assistance.
- 20 chronically homeless men and women have their own apartments thanks to Pathways' HUD-funded tenant-based rental assistance program.

Mental Health...striving to be the face of God's grace

David was a member of the first Conference of Churches Permanent Employment Program (PEP) training class. David, who joined Daybreak in 2003, is in treatment for anxiety and depression. When Daybreak informed members of the opportunity to find work through PEP, David was eager to sign up. He first attended several classroom sessions during which his interests, basic job skills, and barriers to employment were assessed. David learned appropriate work culture, interview skills and resume writing. He then spent several weeks training hands-on in the Daybreak commercial kitchen learning proper food handling techniques, learning to cook for large groups, and practicing customer service skills.

During this training period, David received a stipend equivalent to minimum wage, reinforcing that work has its rewards.

David has completed his training. His resume has been circulated to various major area employers who are friends of the Conference of Churches and who have agreed to receive the resumes of PEP participants. David is looking forward to his first job and, in the meantime, enjoys his newfound love of cooking.



The Strangers Are Welcomed

2008 Highlights: Daybreak

- Provided education, self-sufficiency, socialization, and vocational programs for 313 men and women being treated for mental illness, chemical dependencies, or HIV/AIDS; the homeless; the impoverished elderly; and transients.
- 37 members undertook 3,610 hours of pre-vocational volunteer service.
- Every Daybreak member developed a person-centered goal plan that identified barriers related to housing, economics, nutrition, life-skills, and/or health status.

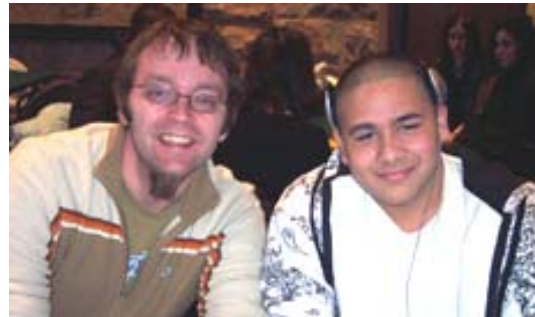
At-Risk Youth...striving to be the heart of God's grace

2008 has been a year of growth and change for Aspires Mentoring. Aspires now has three components:

- Aspires Year Round is our original community-based Aspires program that joins a teen with a mentor for a multi-year mentoring relationship. They meet weekly and choose their own activities and schedule.
- Very Important Parents is a site-based program focusing on teens who are parents. This weekly program consists of educational programs, a peer support group and one-on-one mentoring.
- Partners In Progress is an after school program focusing on tutoring students in Math and English, encouraging students to become self-aware through one-on-one mentoring.

"I think you are doing a great job with the program. I enjoy coming each week and feel the students are being very cooperative and open to learning new things and ways to do things with their children. So far for me the experience has been nothing but pleasant and I look forward to the next session. "

Colleen Haycock, VIP Mentor



Youth Are Mentored

2008 Highlights: Aspires Mentoring

- Aspires grows from 35 to over 50 students thanks in part to significant new funding from United Way
- Aspires partners with AMEN to provide mentoring for 80 participants of Midnight Basketball in the City of Allentown.
- Since the 2000/2001 school year, every Aspires student mentored through his/her senior year has graduated from high school. Half have gone on to higher education.

Christian Unity...striving to be the heart of God's grace

The Lehigh County Conference of Churches is 143 member congregations and faith-based affiliates strong. We are a community of faith and it is our faith that calls us to action.

- The Campbell Lectures on Christian Unity brought in Dr. Ian Douglas to focus our thoughts on "God's Mission and Differences in Ecumenical Perspective."
- Noontime Lenten Services with our partner Zion's Reformed UCC called our community to "Lift Every Voice in Difficult Economic Times."
- In the seminar the LCCC co-sponsored with Bread for the World, local and national hunger issues were addressed via an Offering of Letters campaign.
- Special focuses this year included racism, healthcare, interfaith service projects and the launching of justice and advocacy network website. Visit <http://ja.pprj.org>.



"Especially in the past several decades, faith-based and community organizations have played a vital role in identifying social problems, bringing them to public attention, and providing services to the disadvantaged."

Innovations in Effective Compassion
US Dept. of Health and Human Services



Future Plans...provoking one another to love and good deeds

Yes, living in these tough economic times is challenging, but we have the most valuable gift to give: faith. Many express to us that God is all that has enabled them to make it through. As the author of Hebrews expresses, let's keep "provoking one another to love and good deeds." Below are some needs we hope to address as partners with you in God's service:

- Stimulus money from the City of Allentown (\$435,000+) will enable us to help twice as many people find or retain their apartments. We anticipate 300 families will benefit over the course of the next two years.
- 25 people who long struggled to find and keep a job will be re-trained, motivated and placed in meaningful employment. You could be their mentor or employer.
- 65 youth can have the joy of expanding their vision of what they can make of themselves as we enlarge our Aspires Mentoring program. Mentoring anyone?



- We have hired a consultant to help us scope out appropriate ways to grow and expand. When you receive a survey, please respond.
- Continuing our leadership in assisting chronically homeless persons to find a new path, we will persist in being the driving force to expand the 10 Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness into a bi-county endeavor.
- Advocacy: Addressing basic human needs is good. Advocating to address root causes of poverty and all its insidious effects is godly. Bring your concerns and energy and network with partner congregations to bring about real, long lasting change.

Lehigh County Conference of Churches

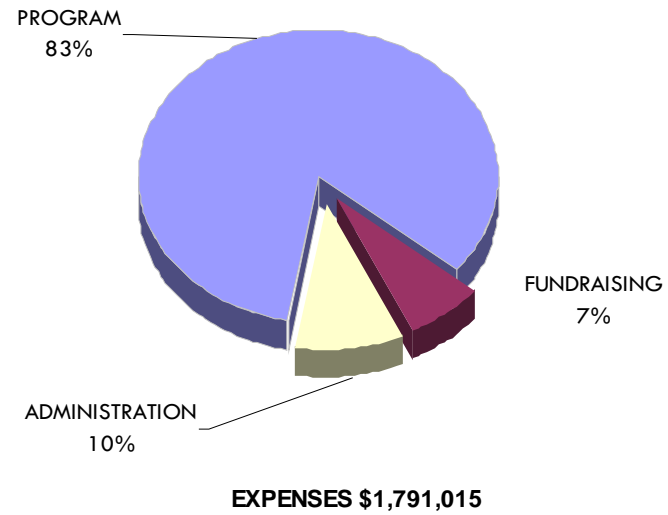
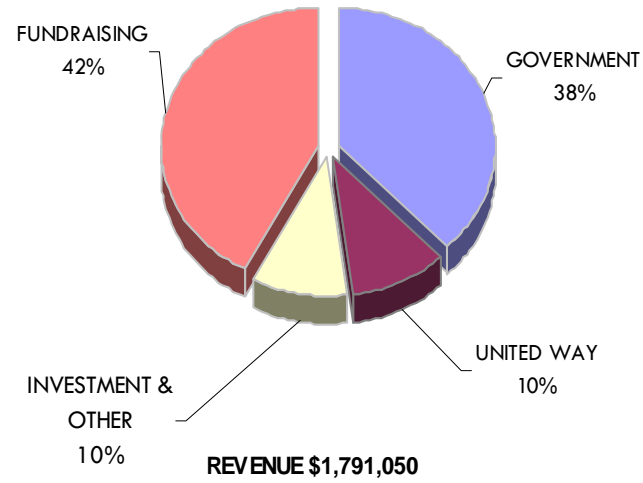
Let us hold fast to the confession of hope without wavering, for the One who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds...but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:23-25

**Lehigh County Conference of Churches
Audited Revenue & Expenses for Fiscal Year 2007-2008**

REVENUE STATEMENT		EXPENSE STATEMENT	
FUNDRAISING REVENUE			
Contributions	\$468,400	PROGRAM EXPENSE	
Grants	213,833	Daybreak	\$278,897
Special Events	<u>51,060</u>	Homelessness Supportive Services	212,680
	\$733,293	Pathways	253,681
United Way	\$61,721	Soup Kitchen	193,147
		Linkage	66,868
		Homelessness Prevention	52,897
GOVERNMENT REVENUE			
Federal Grants	\$220,174	Pharmaceutical Assistance	34,618
FEMA	32,181	Aspires	32,223
Lehigh County	236,187	Ecumenism	<u>119,864</u>
Allentown CDBG	<u>44,000</u>		
	\$532,542	Management & General	\$143,599
INVESTMENT & OTHER			
Program Revenue	\$27,833	Fund Raising	\$96,578
Investment & Other	38,351		
Campaign Dollars	<u>133,519</u>		
	\$199,703		
		Total Expenses	\$1,485,052
Total Revenue	\$1,527,259		

Proposed Revenue & Expenses FY 2009-2010



Our Vision . . . Striving to be the face, feet, hands, and heart of God's grace in the Lehigh Valley, leading the faith community in feeding, clothing, healing, housing, and uniting God's children.

Our Mission . . . Responding to the call of Jesus Christ, the mission of the Lehigh County Conference of Churches is to unite communities of faith as ecumenical partners. Putting our faith into action, we minister to and advocate for those in need and encourage all to reach their full potential

Lehigh County Conference of Churches

STAFF

Rev. Dr. Christine L. Nelson, Executive Director
Ira Faro, Development Senior Director
Rev. Debra Hepburn, Ecumenical Director
Tom Smith, Operations Director
Tom Walker, Human Services Director

Aspires

Gema Carvalho, Coordinator

Administration

Sherri Albro, Accounting Manager
Brian Best, Information Services Coordinator
Gigi Pacheco, Admin Office Assistant
James Holley, Janitor

Daybreak

Christine Morrison, Director
Susan Unger, Vocational Coordinator
Gladys Swoyer, Community Service Coordinator
Kevin Beck, Kitchen & Volunteer Coordinator
Vianca Corazon, Kitchen Assistant
Ryan Knepp, PEP Coordinator

Homelessness Prevention

Sheri Lopez, Coordinator

Homeless Supportive Services

Darcy Bush, Intensive Case Manager
Jennifer Messler, Intensive Case Manager

Linkage

Ben Stephens, Coordinator

Pathways

Deanne Malacsics, Director
Sharon Mullay, Housing Case Manager
Margaret Sunny, Housing Case Manager
Deb Pavan, HUD Housing Case Manager

Soup Kitchen

Charles Brannon, Coordinator

2008 - 2009

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President, Rev. Thomas Thomas
Vice-President, Richard Focht, Esq.
Secretary, Eunice Schermerhorn
Treasurer, Theresa Racek
John Acanfora
Elizabeth Benke
Heidi Butler
The Rt. Rev. M. Blair Couch
Mary Ann Gibbons
Bruce Keller
Pastor Steven Lozada
Ken Mohr
Henry Moore
Rev. Charles Olmeda
Rev. William Ragan, Jr.
Renee Saleh
Sonya Siegfried
Rev. Msgr. Joseph Sobiesiak
Dr. Erika Sutherland



Lehigh County Conference of Churches
534 Chew Street, Allentown, PA 18102
Tel: 610-433-6421 Fax: 610-439-8039
www.lehighchurches.org

