



Ecumenical Encounters

Healing Knits Community

Woman, you are set free from your ailment.

Luke 13:12

By the Rev. Dr. Christine L. Nelson, Executive Director

I remember reading a wonderful sermon entitled "The Bent Over Woman." Based on the Luke 13 scripture about the healing of an 18-year illness that debilitated a woman, it made me think about all the many things that incapacitate us. More importantly, as I reread the gospel story, I thought of how some people, people like the religious/ community leader in our story, openly oppose instead of rejoice at such healings. But praise be to God, such contempt does not stop God's healing!

The bent over woman also makes me think of our Daybreak friends, people who struggle mightily day in and day out with mental, physical and developmental disabilities. Betsy's parents helped her develop her skills throughout her life. Working with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Betsy was able to work in food service in a local nursing home. Her parents died leaving a small annuity which combined with her job income enabled Betsy to rent a one-bedroom apartment, provide for her basic needs and her one passion:

crocheting. Though technically "making it," Betsy lived isolated and alone.

Betsy's only family, an uncle living in another state, was referred to the LCCC when he was no longer able to handle Betsy's affairs. The LCCC Homelessness Prevention program took over Betsy's financial management. At about the same time, due to deteriorating health, Betsy lost her job. She was unable to keep up with her rent and



was threatened with eviction. The Homelessness Prevention Coordinator worked to get Betsy approved for public benefits, a process made difficult by the annuity. As the eventually successful negotiations to qualify Betsy for benefits were taking

place, Betsy was introduced to Daybreak.

It wasn't 18 years, but Betsy was slow to acclimate, sitting off to one side with her crocheting. But Daybreak members, volunteers and staff were interested in the beautiful afghans she was crocheting...and in her. One day, Betsy

(Continued on page 5)

| Inside this issue: April 2008 | |
|---|---|
| Susan Gilmore to Speak at Annual Mtg. | 2 |
| Sponsorship Training | 2 |
| J&A News | 3 |
| Stand Up for Jesus | 3 |
| Farm Bill Alert | 3 |
| LCCC Organizes Youth Choir | 3 |
| Health Insurance Update | 3 |
| House Passes Mental Health Bill | 4 |
| Campbell Lectures Stimulate | 4 |
| Permanent Housing Needs Donations | 4 |
| Lay Rep Training Pathways 101 Rescheduled | 5 |
| Gospel Message Heals Community | 5 |
| Soup Kitchen Celebrates the 25th | 6 |
| Conference Bulletin Board | 6 |
| Community Bulletin Board | 7 |
| Conference Tours | 8 |

LCCC CALENDAR OF EVENTS



April 10
Ecumenical Service Award Nominations Due

April 13
Ecumenical Youth Choir Mtg.

April 16
Lay Rep Training Rescheduled

April 20
UCC Choirs in Concert

April 26
★ Relational Sponsorship Training
★ 10th Interfaith Block Party

May 1
National Day of Prayer

May 9
Benefit Fashion Show

May 20
LCCC Annual Meeting

Susan Gilmore to Speak at Annual Meeting

May 20, 2008, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm at First Presbyterian Church, Allentown

Today, the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley focuses resources, financial expertise and volunteer time on four Community Goals:

1. Children are born healthy and enter school ready to learn
2. Youth succeed in school and graduate ready for work or continued education and ready for life
3. Older adults age successfully and remain in their homes and communities and stay connected with family, friends and neighbors
4. Lehigh Valley adults are financially self-sufficient and able to successfully support the children, youth and older adults in their families

Annually, more than \$11 million dollars is generated to support these priorities.

Susan Gilmore became president of United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley in October of 2005. She had spent her last seven years at United Way of America, most recently in the Office of the President as vice president of membership accountability, charged with implementing the stringent new annual membership certification



process for all 1350 United Ways. In addition she served on the team that developed the new "Standards of Excellence" for United Ways interested in maximizing their community impact work.

Prior to going to the national organization, Susan served as campaign director and subsequently executive director of United Way of Amarillo and Canyon Texas. She began her service career as executive director of the Panhandle Plains Council of Camp Fire Boys and Girls.

As President and CEO, Susan leads a staff of 40, works with a board of 30 business, community and government leaders and depends upon the skills of over 3,000 community volunteers.

Susan and her husband Ben live in Easton and have three daughters and two grandchildren.



Mark the Date!

LCCC Annual Meeting
May 20, 2008

1st Presbyterian Church, Allentown
Registration 11:30 am

Relational Sponsorship Training Congregations Mentoring the Homeless

When someone comes to visit us, we say, "Make yourself at home." But how would you make yourself at home in a new apartment if you had been chronically homeless, living under a bridge or in the woods for a year or more?

The LCCC has a US Department of Housing and Urban Development grant to place chronically homeless people in apartments, but those individuals need the support and mentoring that a community of caring people can offer to relearn how to make a home for themselves.

The Relational Sponsorship Program is an opportunity for members of a congregation to work with one of these formerly homeless people as they make this transition; providing friendship, practical assistance, and acceptance.

The Program is designed to pair a team from a congregation with an individual for a renewable, one year commitment, with the LCCC Homeless Supportive Services staff as an ongoing resource.

There will be a Relational Sponsorship Training day on Saturday, **April 26, from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM**, at Hope United Church of Christ, 1031 Flexer Ave., Allentown. To register for the training or obtain more information on Relational Sponsors, please call Holly Brennan at 484-664-7320 or email her at hbrennan@lccconfchurch.org

Overcoming homelessness is more than finding an apartment. Help someone make a home for themselves.



Fashion Show to Benefit LCCC

At 7pm on May 9, 2008, at Emmaus High School, view a benefit fashion show with designs by Emmaus High School Students. See the latest styles and support the LCCC. Tickets are available at the door.



Justice and Advocacy

J&A News

Stand Up for Jesus Link Up for Justice

Let your voice be heard! Join the LCCC's Justice and Advocacy Network. Concerned citizens from area local churches will connect to inform each other about legislative proposals that effect people who are hungry, homeless, suffering with mental illness, and at-risk youth. We invite you to participate by:

- Becoming a congregation's representative
- Attending leadership training
- Sharing and compiling advocacy information
- Sharing denomination advocacy resources

For more information and to sign up contact Rev. Debra Hepburn at j.a@lcccconfchurch.org or email Bob Walden at rwaldenpa@entermail.net.

Health Insurance Update

House Democrats have changed the Cover All Pennsylvanians portion of Governor Rendell's Prescription for Pennsylvania proposal. The new version is the Eachus Amendment. It is not as strong as CAP, but is still a major increase in coverage for the uninsured. Insurance reform is still found in HB2005. Contact your legislator and share your thoughts.

SB1137: With the Eachus Amendment and no other amendments. This bill will enact PA ABC, a new program to provide health insurance coverage to 272,000 Pennsylvanians who have no health insurance today. It is the House Democrats' version of Cover All Pennsylvanians.

HB 2005: The health insurance reform bill. This bill will regulate health insurance premiums for small businesses and stop insurance companies from denying coverage to people with pre-existing medical conditions. In Pennsylvania, health care is in crisis. Insurance premiums are going up at over five times faster than our wages. Pennsylvanians are losing their health insurance at one of the highest rates in the country. All are at risk.



For more information contact:
<http://www.pahealthaccess.org>

Farm Bill Action Alert

Help Wanted

Family with 3 at-risk youth. Diverts money for food to rent after extensive homelessness. Must eliminate prescription meds for bipolar disorder to provide daily bread. To be considered for this position, must work for minimum wage. Benefits will not include health insurance or prescription drug plan. Willingness to live in high rent area and work 80 hours per week to pay housing costs. To be considered for this position . .

I doubt you will ever see an ad like the one above in your local newspaper. For many citizens in this community, this advertisement is written on their minds and in their hearts each and every day. They worry and suffer in silence as legislators and legislation change the direction of their lives.

One such legislation that can change or even wreck the lives of many citizens if not passed is Farm Bill Reauthorization. IMMEDIATE ACTION is needed to urge Congress to enact H. R. 2419, an \$11.5 billion allotment of funding for the nutrition title over a ten-year period. If enacted, this bill will improve Food Stamp benefits and Food Stamp access. Further, it will increase TEFAP funding to stock shelves in local food banks. Urge Senator Bob Casey and Senator Arlen Specter to finish the task of enacting H.R.2419 The Farm Bill.

To read more about Farm Bill provisions and legislation access the following links: PA Council of Churches www.pachurches.org. Senator Casey's link is: <http://casey.senate.gov/contact.cfm>. Senator Specter's link is <http://specter.senate.gov/index.cf?FuseAction=ContactInfor.Home>

LCCC Forms Ecumenical Youth Choir

Area youth leaders, choir directors, and church representatives are invited to meet with Rev. Hepburn of LCCC and Rick Focht of Grace Lutheran Church on April 13, 2008, 6:00 p.m. at 544 Hamilton Street Mentor Center in Allentown to discuss plans for organizing an Ecumenical Youth Choir. Organizers will discuss forming a choir that will sing, perform, and lead worship at area churches during special events. Please respond to Tweed Vanderhall at tvanderhall@lcccconfchurch.org or call 484-664-7320 by **April 10, 2008**.



House Passes Mental Health Parity Bill

Advocates applauded passage of the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act (H.R. 1424) in the House on March 5. The bill passed with bipartisan support, 268-148. The Senate passed its version, the Mental Health Parity Act of 2007 (S. 558) last September. Both bills require equity in the provision of mental health and substance abuse services under group health plans, although the House bill is more extensive in its reach. For a review of the major differences in the bills see *Human Needs Report*, 10/1/07: <http://www.chn.org/humanneeds/071001c.html>.

The next step is for the House and Senate bills must

be reconciled. This may prove to be a challenge. Some Senate lawmakers oppose going to conference out of a fear that the broader reaching provisions in H.R. 1424 will end up in a final bill and destroy their delicate agreement. The Bush Administration has also signaled opposition to any bill that expands mental health parity benefits beyond what is outlined in the Senate version. Senator Kennedy (D-MA), the leading Democratic sponsor of S. 558, has been in negotiations with his son, Representative Kennedy (D-RI), who introduced H.R. 1424, to resolve this matter. Advocates hope for a speedy and meaningful compromise that places mental health parity on track to becoming law.

Campbell Lectures Excite, Stimulate

Energy and excitement filled the University Center of DeSales University as Dr. John Perkins spoke to a group of community leaders, ministers, lay people, and social service workers at the Campbell Lectures on March 11th. 75 people gathered to learn from Dr. Perkins, a pioneer in the field of faith-based community transformation, his eight principles of Christian community development.

In addition to pastors and lay leaders from churches throughout the region, among those in attendance were representatives from the City of Allentown, the NAACP, the Community Action

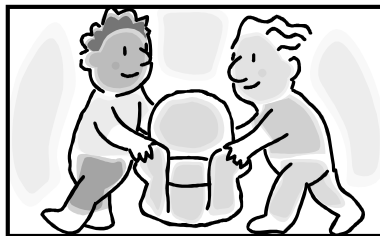
Committee of the Lehigh Valley, and Congregations United for Neighborhood Action.

The mission of the annual Campbell Lectures on Christian Unity is to bring people together to engage in ecumenical education and intellectual dialogue, sharing ministry concerns and trading ideas. An ecumenical worship service reminded everyone that people from different traditions and cultures can pray together, sing together, and even dance as long as God is in the center. The night was a success in every way, leaving the Campbell Committee with the question, "Where do we go from here?"

Permanent Housing for the Chronically Homeless Donations Needed

Spring is just a few days away and many of us will start off the season with some type of spring cleaning around our homes. We are happy to share with you that eight previously homeless men and women will also be getting their homes ready for spring this year. Through your generous donations, we were able to provide beds, sheets, curtains, towels, sofas, kitchen utensils, dinette sets, dishes, pots and pans and many other of the items that are needed to start up a household.

As we place more and more chronically homeless men and women in their own apartments, your donations of these types of items are critical to the program's success. Some of the more pressing needs are:



- Storage space for temporary storage of furniture
- A moving crew of 3 or 4 people, one weekend a month
- Bed sets
- Table and chairs
- Pots and Pans
- Small kitchen appliances
- Televisions
- Home telephones
- Towels
- Clock radios

For information on volunteering or making a donation, call Pathways Housing Case Manager Pam Johnson at 610-433-6421 or email pjohnson@lccconfchurch.org.



Conference Bulletin Board



From left to right: Betty Lou Clauser, Ginny MacDonald, Charles Brannon, Jean Wetzell, and Evelyn Schaffer

LCCC Soup Kitchen Celebrates a Silver Anniversary of Service

Originally envisioned as a temporary measure when it was first opened in 1982 to combat the effects of recession and the movement to release individuals with mental illness from large institutions, the LCCC Soup Kitchen served 9,670 people in its first year. In 2001, 20,916 meals were served. Last year, the number of meals served rose to 34,150. Due to local job cutbacks and the national economy in general as well as the proximity of the Lehigh Valley to the New York City and Philadelphia metro areas, we expect that the need will continue to increase.

Over 150 volunteers, friends and community leaders gathered for lunch last month at St. James AME Zion Church, original home of the LCCC Soup Kitchen, to celebrate 25 years of service to the community. The assemblage heard from Executive Director Emeritus Carol Closson, who was at the helm of the Conference when the Soup Kitchen was conceived. Also speaking were LCCC Executive Director Emeritus Rev. Bill Seaman, who carried on the work of feeding our hungry neighbors in need, and current Executive Director Rev. Dr. Christine Nelson, who has helped to guide the Soup Kitchen through the move to St. Paul's Lutheran Church after the tragic fire at St. James in 2004 and the subsequent 50% increase in the number of meals served.

Current Soup Kitchen Coordinator Charles Brannon received a standing ovation when he was introduced. Charles thanked "a powerful God" for the opportunity to serve.

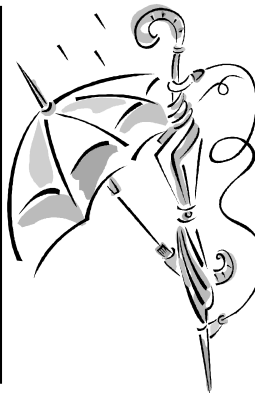
Thanks to Cathey's Creative Catering, Gourmet Catering, and Morgan's Restaurant for providing the meal. Thanks to all of our great Soup Kitchen volunteers for making certain that our hungry neighbors can get at least one hot, nutritious meal every day to ease their burden. And thanks to you for caring.

The InnerCity Faith Collaborative presents 10th Health Fair Block Party



Saturday, April 26, 2008
11am to 3pm
6th and Chew Streets, Allentown

Sponsored by: Union Baptist Church
Bethany EC Church
Allentown Health Bureau



LCCC Needs

FRESH FOOD & MEAT DONATIONS

Pathways:

- Toiletries, such as soap, shampoo, toothpaste and brushes, deodorant, etc.
- Baby food jars and lids
- Furniture
- Moving crews
- Storage space

Daybreak:

- Toiletries
- Volunteers to cook meals Mon-Fri, breakfast, lunch and dinner

Soup Kitchen:

- Volunteers to help serve meals
- Volunteers to **cook** soup kitchen meals (Tues, Wed, Thurs)

Aspires:

- Board games
- Caring adults to mentor

Items for Pathways and Daybreak can be brought to 534 West Chew Street in Allentown. 610-433-6421.

Items for Linkage and Aspires can be dropped off at 544 Hamilton Street in Allentown. 484-664-7320.

Estate Planning

Do you have a financial advisor? Has your advisor provided you with information concerning planned giving? If not, ask why not. Tell your advisor to make charitable giving a part of your estate planning.

Contact Development Director Ira Faro or Executive Director Rev. Dr. Christine Nelson at 610.433.6421 for information.

Community Bulletin Board

WELL DONE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS

We celebrate the life of the **Very Reverend Eugene Vansuch** who died March 23rd. The former pastor of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Bethlehem, for many years Rev. Vansuch represented the Orthodox Brotherhood of Clergy on the Judiciary Executives Committee organized by the LCCC. His love of the Orthodox Church and ability to communicate its unique contribution to local Christian unity efforts moved local ecumenical efforts forward.

We give thanks for the ministry of **Barbara W. Murphy**, M.S.W., who has announced her retirement, effective July 1, as Executive Director of Catholic Charities, Roman Catholic Diocese of Allentown. Ms. Murphy is credited with raising the professional status of Catholic Charities to the highest level while delivering compassionate services. She will be succeeded by Helen P. Kelleher, Assistant Director of Professional Services, Catholic Charities.

Latino Leadership Alliance Scholarship Opportunities

The Latino Leadership Alliance of the Lehigh Valley is offering \$500 scholarships to Latino students in Lehigh and Northampton counties who are graduating from high school and going on to college or who are already enrolled in college.

Applications are due April 15, 2008 and can be downloaded from the Web site, www.llalv.org by clicking on the Important Documents tab.

The scholarships will be awarded at the LLALV's Nuestro Futuro Breakfast on June 12, 2008. For more information about scholarships, please contact:

Renee Saleh at 610-395-0534 or via e-mail at rlsaleh@ptd.net

Lisette Lahoz at 610-434-6890 x 222 or via e-mail at llahoz@latinosforhealthycommunities.org.

Dealing with the Dynamics of Compulsive Gambling in Our Community

A valuable one-day seminar led by an internationally acclaimed instructor.

**Saturday, April 26, 2008
8 am to 4 pm**

First Presbyterian Church, 2344 Center Street,
Bethlehem, PA

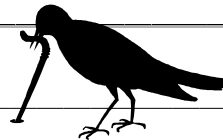
For more information
call 610-866-2075
Sponsored by Share the Power

Ecumenical Service Award Nominations Due

The Conference is accepting nominations for the **2008 Ecumenical Service Awards until April 10th** from these categories:

- Youth – age 21 and under
- Adults
- Faith based groups and organizations that bring Christians together.

Call the Conference office at 610-433-6421 or email lccc@lccconfchurch.org for more information. Access the nomination form at www.lccconfchurch.org.



UCC CHOIRS IN CONCERT AND HYMN SING

The Five Star ACT Churches is sponsoring a musical event on Sunday, April 20, at 4:00 PM, at Emmanuel UCC, 1547 Chew Street, Allentown. Come and hear these Allentown center city churches' choirs: Dubbs, Emmanuel, St. John's, and St. Peter's as they present an afternoon of wonderful music. A free will offering will be taken and refreshments will be served after the program.

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER SERVICE May 1, 2008, Hamilton Mall

The National Day of Prayer Service is scheduled for May 1st on Hamilton Mall. For more information or to offer support contact Kari Holmes at 206-424-2740 or email her at kari@ontimeministries.org.

Lehigh County Conference of Churches
534 Chew Street
Allentown, PA 18102

April 2008

Non-Profit Organization

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*Tom Smith,
Operations Director*

*Tom Walker,
Human Services Director*

*The Rev. Debra Hepburn,
Ecumenical Director*

*Carol Closson,
The Rev. William Seaman,
Executive Directors Emeritus*

United Way of the
Greater Lehigh Valley



Conference Tours

You are invited to take a tour of the LCCC ministries on the third Thursday of each month at 534 Chew Street, Allentown. Enjoy a free meal at the Daybreak drop-in center and consider how you may volunteer to do ministry with like-minded folk.

April 17, 11:30 am-1:00 pm

May 15, 11:30 am-1:00 pm

To register for the tour, please call
the main office at 610-433-6421.

RSVP: One week prior to each event.



Lehigh County Conference
of Churches

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www.lccconfchurch.org

