



Lehigh County Conference of Churches

July 2009

God Bless the Child Who's Got His Own

Faith in Action

When Billie Holiday wrote and sang those lines, she may have been reflecting on a childhood that is all too common, even today, even in our Lehigh Valley. Her mother was teenage single parent who moved her from city to city. For the most part, Billie's father was absent. She lived in poverty and was the victim of repeated abuse, a truant who never finished school.



Aspires Picnic June 2009

Billie was singing for tips in a jazz club in Harlem when John Hammond, one of the great mentors of the music business, discovered her and arranged for her to record with Benny Goodman. Soon the whole world knew of Billie's talent.

A prolific mentor, Holiday wasn't Hammond's only discovery. Hammond is credited with either discovering or advancing the careers of artists as diverse as Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Pete Seeger, Aretha Franklin, Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen and Bruce Springsteen. How different would our world be if Hammond hadn't seen the value of these artists, hadn't encouraged and supported them? And if Billie Holiday's story had a tragic ending, the fact is that Hammond gave her an opportunity that she might not otherwise have had - the opportunity to succeed.

The caring adults who serve as mentors in our Aspires Mentoring programs are the John Hammonds of our community. They see value in the child who comes from a single parent household, as are 85% of households in one Allentown census tract. They see a future for children who complete their public education in a city where 41% of 18 to 24 year-olds failed to complete high school in that same tract.

On June 23, Aspires held its annual awards picnic at Cedar Beach. Aspires Coordinator Gema Carvalho, the Aspires Support Committee, protégés, mentors, families, and friends gathered to celebrate summer, the end of the school year, and the achievements of Aspires students and graduates. In some ways, those achievements are startling. ***Of the 13 Aspires seniors who graduated this year, at least 8 will go on to a trade school or college.***

You can be a part of the rewarding Aspires experience. Call Aspires Coordinator Gema Carvalho at 484-664-7320 to learn how you can be a blessing to a child.

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PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE IN HARD TIMES

Daybreak's motto is: People Helping People. You'd be right in thinking that Daybreak isn't just about Daybreak staff being of service to the 50 or more men and women who come to Daybreak every day. Peer support has never been more important than in these difficult economic times. And it's not unusual that Daybreak members help us as much as we help them.

For instance, Daybreak members are helping beautify Daybreak and Alliance Hall inside and out under the direction of Master Gardeners.

Let us be grateful to people who make us happy. They are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom. *Marcel Proust*

Daybreak serves three meals a day, five days a week, with the help of teams of from four to six men and women who volunteer through their church, place of business, or community group. Some come to Daybreak once a month for two or three hours, some two or three times a year. All are welcome. Call Gladys the Volunteer Coordinator at 610-820-5049 to find out how you can become a part of the Daybreak experience.



30th ANNIVERSARY OF CROP WALK



The Allentown CROP WALK 2009 is scheduled for ***Sunday, October 11!***
A recruiters' meeting will be held August 30th, 6:00 PM, at St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, Ott Street, Allentown. We hope you and your congregation will participate in this important event.

Food for Thought –CROP walkers help worldwide and locally:

- 186 million Africans are malnourished, including 35 million children.
- In 2008, the Lehigh County Conference of Churches Soup Kitchen served 36,109 meals, 1,700 meals were served to children.
- Each year, the Allentown Ecumenical Food Bank provides food for over 30,000 of our neighbors.

One quarter of the total proceeds of the walk will be shared between the Conference Soup Kitchen and the Ecumenical Food Bank. Around the world, CROP Hunger Walks help to provide tools of hope that empower people to meet their own needs. From seeds and tools, to wells and water systems, to technical training and micro-enterprise loans, the key is people working together to stop hunger in their lives and their communities.



RENTAL ASSISTANCE STIMULUS FUNDING TO ARRIVE IN THE FALL

Congratulations to all involved in the successful effort to bring over \$660, 000 in federal stimulus funding over the next couple of years to the Conference through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. These federal stimulus dollars for rental assistance and related activities will arrive in the Lehigh Valley this fall to help ordinary individuals and families who are homeless or about to be homeless.

Persons who can demonstrate the ability to maintain stability in housing given short-term or medium-term cash assistance with rent or utility payments but who otherwise would become homeless without such assistance will qualify. This includes people in emergency shelters, on the street, in transitional housing, and people in arrears in rent or utility payments. Mortgage holders needing help to forestall foreclosure are not eligible for this funding and should contact the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley for assistance.

This funding coupled with our regular allocation of Lehigh County and FEMA rental assistance dollars will enable us to assist nearly twice the number of households as we normally do over the next two or three years.

This rental assistance funding comes in two forms:

1. **Homelessness Prevention** is designed to prevent homelessness by supporting households in their homes, helping with rental and/or utility arrears, providing the breathing room necessary to get back on their feet.
2. **Rapid Rehousing** funding will be used to move households in emergency shelters and transitional housing directly into rental apartments as they work to gather the resources necessary to achieve self-sufficiency in permanent housing.

We stress that this funding will not be available until at least September. We are in the process of working with the City of Allentown and Lehigh County, through which these funds will flow, to learn the terms and conditions of these grants. We'll announce the availability of funding in our newsletters and on our website: www.lehighchurches.org. Stay tuned!

"One hundred years from now, no one will remember what house you lived in, what car you drove, maybe not even what you did for a living. What they will remember is the legacy you left for generations to come."

Help us feed the hungry and shelter the homeless for years to come!
Remember the Lehigh County Conference of Churches in your will.
Make the Lehigh County Conference of Churches beneficiary of your IRA.

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

July 2009

Non-Profit Organization

U. S. Postage Paid

Permit #1409

Allentown, PA

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

UPCOMING EVENTS

Healthcare Forum with US Rep. Dent

July 6, 3:00 PM, Zion's Reformed UCC, 620 W Hamilton Street, Allentown

CROP Walk Recruiter Gathering

August 30, 6:00 PM, St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, Allentown



Justice & Advocacy Homelessness Workshop

September 26, 9:00 AM — 3:00 PM

Visit our Website at: www.lehighchurches.org

Click the **“Donate Now”** button.

Donations may be made as a one-time gift or monthly.

Lehigh County Conference of Churches

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