



Lehigh County Conference of Churches

Ecumenical Encounters

Volume 23, Number 6

August 2009

ANYONE CAN GET IN ON THE JOY

A sower went out to sow...Mark 4:3

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There is nothing better than a home grown tomato...the taste, the texture, the smell! Eat it right out of the garden, or with a little sugar on top, or between two slices of homemade bread. I'm getting hungry just thinking about it. Did you know the Serb-Croatian word for tomato is paradise?

Yes, there is something about a home grown tomato or a home grown anything. Not only is homegrown full of nutritional vitamins, but the act of helping things grow, the dirt on the hands and the sweat on the brow also produces a sense of satisfaction as delicious as the fruit.

In the spring of 2009, 12 LCCC Daybreak members working with community volunteers formed a Garden Club to beautify and revitalize a dilapidated Allentown center city park adjacent to our building. Some of their activities include planting perennials and tending the garden weekly. One Daybreak member who is

homeless and recovering from a heroin addiction says he enjoys working in the garden because for these few hours spent each week he feels normal.



There is yet another way seed sowing brings joy. I ran into an old friend last week who expressed great thankfulness for the suggestion that she could give the over abundance produced by her garden to Daybreak or the Soup Kitchen. Carol said, "I get such joy at sharing the produce of my garden because Daybreak members get such joy from receiving these simple gifts."

Anyone can get in on the joy. If you would like to donate produce from your harvest come on down! We will greet you with open arms to carry the harvest in and with open hearts to embrace you with our gratitude.

So it is when we sow or share the word of God. The purpose of the parable of the sower is not just a farming lesson or even a sharing lesson, as important as those may be. Sowing the word of

Continued on Page 2

VISIT
LEHIGHCHURCHES.ORG

DONATE NOW THROUGH Network for Good


CALENDAR
OF EVENTS


August 20

Conference of Churches Tour
Come and see us in action.

August 30

CROP WALK
Recruiters Rally
7:00 pm
St. Timothy,
Ott St., Allentown

September 26

Homeless Seminar:
Voices of Hope
8:30 am—3:00 pm
St. John's UCC,
Allentown

Any Can Get in on the Joy***Cont'd***

God with our neighbors means many will hear and accept God's love. God will work in their heart and they will not only become believers but sowers as well! The joy will be unending as God's love keeps being shared.

A family who belongs to a church donated an acre of farmland adjacent to it for congregational and community gardens. The project, known as God's Acre, includes a main boulevard with arches, flower borders, family and individual patches, butterfly gardens and share plots where volunteers are raising food to share. They have claimed a patch of earth for heavenly purposes. It has brought members of the community and congregation together in faith and action as they work together, sharing with one another and the larger community.

A sower went out to sow...anyone can get in on the joy. How about you?

Daybreak Gardeners at Work**Rev. Nelson Goes to Harrisburg**

Thanks to Senator Pat Brown's request our Executive Director, The Rev. Dr. Chris Nelson was honored to serve as Chaplain for the Day at the Pennsylvania Senate in late June. Rev. Nelson said of the experience "It was a moving experience to be able to pray for and before the leaders of

our state, especially in these critical days of budget making. Unfortunately, the budget still isn't passed, so keep praying!"

Together We Can

Our annual *Together We Can* fall fundraiser will be held on **Wednesday, October 14th, 5:30 PM, Asbury United Methodist Church**. This year's focus will be our Aspires program.

Aspires is our mentoring program for youth at-risk of dropping out of school. Aspires partners at-risk youth with caring adults to help them reach the goal of graduating from school.

We have sponsorship opportunities still available. Registration is \$40 per person or \$300 for a table of 8. Please call us at 610-433-6421 for more information.

Join the Party

**CHANGING FAMILY NEEDS?
CHANGE YOUR BENEFICIARY!**

Consider naming the Lehigh County Conference of Churches as a beneficiary of your retirement plan, IRA, or pension. During your life, you retain the ability to access the funds for your needs.

Leave a legacy for future generations.

Announcing New Staff Be Sure to Say Hello!

Abby Goldfarb is our new Volunteer Coordinator. A former Daybreak volunteer, Abby comes to us with many years of social service experience. She is married and has a toddler daughter lovingly known as “Menace”.

Jacqueline Morales is our new Administrative Assistant in our Chew Street office. Jacquie is the proud mother of two young girls. She is a member of Primera de Corintio 13, a Spanish language church in East Allentown. She also serves as their coordinator for outreach ministry—Morada de Amor.

Genie Watson is the Administrative Assistant for our satellite site on Hamilton Street. Genie is a native New Yorker who moved to the Lehigh Valley three years ago. Genie is married with three children ranging in age from three to twenty. She is an active member of Praise Temple Ministries where she leads the Shekinah Glory Girls Club and Dance Troop.

IronPigs Drive

Here at the Conference we always have reasons to be grateful. The Iron Pigs asked the public to join them in the support of worthy causes. Thanks to the Iron Pigs and their fans, on a recent Saturday we received over \$200 in donations of diapers, wipes and baby food.

These donations will go a long way to help our young parents in the Aspires program and parents in Pathways.



Go Lehigh Valley
IronPigs!

CALL TO DUTY By Abby Goldfarb

Lily Tomlin once said, “I always wondered why somebody didn't do something about that. Then I realized I was somebody.”

I began at the Lehigh County Conference of Churches as a volunteer almost nine months ago, hopeful that my talents could somehow benefit another person. I joined the Daybreak Community Support Committee, met a number of devoted staff and other volunteers, and learned about the many ministries of LCCC.

What happened after that though was something I was not prepared for. Although I thought of myself as “just a volunteer,” I was treated with appreciation by both those I assisted and those I worked along side. I became inspired by the work that was being done. And what's more, I met other volunteers who were just as excited as I was! In all my volunteering over the years, it was one of the first times I was able to see that the time I was donating was actually doing some good.

Now as the Volunteer Coordinator I intend to duplicate my experience for others who come to the LCCC wondering if they can contribute in some way. And I invite those who do not feel that they can make a difference, any who are frustrated by what they hear in the news and by what they see in their community. Come see the myriad of good works taking place everyday at LCCC. The opportunity to make change happen is right here, and there is a place for each of us.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Aspires Mentor: Assist “at risk” students from the Allentown School District develop their abilities, encourage them to do well in and out of school, provide emotional support, and help set positive goals for their future. Minimum time requirement: three hours per week. Training is provided. Please call for more information 484-664-7320 x17.

Event Volunteers: Assist with special events, including the upcoming Crop Walk and Together We Can benefit. Lend your skills in event planning and fundraising. 484-664-7320 x 16



CROP Hunger Walk 30th Anniversary



The annual CROP Hunger Walk will be held this fall, on October 11. The CROP Hunger Walk is neighbors walking together to take a stand against hunger in our world. Together, walkers raise awareness and funds for international relief and development, as well as local hunger-fighting.

One quarter of the total proceeds of the walk will be shared between the Conference Soup Kitchen and the Ecumenical Food Bank.

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 for children.
- * Each year, the Allentown Ecumenical Food Bank provides food for over 30,000 of our neighbors.

This is great opportunity for church groups to impact their world—here and far away. A special recruiters rally will be held on Sunday, August 30th, 7:00 PM. The meeting will be held at St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, 140 South Ott Street, Allentown. You can still join the CROP Hunger Walk—just fill out the form below.



CROP HUNGER WALK 2009 Sign Up Form

Name of Congregation or Group: _____

Contact Person: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

Plan to pick up materials: Please check choice of location. Materials will be ready on September 8th.

_____ First Presbyterian Church

_____ Lehigh County Conference of Churches

Thank you for your participation!

Please return by August 21st to:
Lehigh County Conference of Churches
534 Chew Street, Allentown, PA 18102
Fax: 610-439-8039 or tsmith@lehighchurches.org

Overcoming Unemployment

By Ryan Knepp, Permanent Employment Program Coordinator

Most likely we all know someone who has been affected by the recession. Perhaps they took a hit in their 401(k) or they had to scale back on a vacation they wanted to take. But the most damaging aspect of this recession has been the rise in unemployment and layoffs that have taken place.

According to the most recent statistics, the Lehigh Valley region has an 8.9% unemployment rate, an increase of more than 3% over the last two years. But the regional unemployment rate is dwarfed by the unemployment rate within the city of Allentown, currently above 13%! With the great amount of need in Allentown comes the opportunity for the Church to meet those needs.

It is impossible for people to live fulfilled, self-sufficient lives when they do not have the income that work provides. With the stress of bills piling up, an extremely competitive job market, and a myriad of other elements, job seekers can lose hope and motivation quickly. This is where the Lehigh County Conference of Churches and area congregations come in. We can offer assistance and hope.

A number of congregations are starting Unemployment Support Groups open to the community as well as their members. These groups allow participants to share their experiences, support each other, receive feedback on their resumes, and network. Find out more information about these local groups by contacting Hope United Church of Christ or St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, both in Allentown.

The Conference of Churches is also meeting the needs of the chronically unemployed through our new Permanent Employment Program (PEP). PEP offers assistance and training to those in the Allentown community who have significant barriers to employment including criminal backgrounds, mental and physical health issues, homelessness, and lack of transportation and/or childcare. PEP has assisted 14 men and women over the past year to prepare them to enter the competitive job market, assisting them with email addresses, resumes, interview clothing, and social/customer service skills through hands-on training and mentoring.

You can help by joining or starting an unemployment group in your or a local church. Or you can assist PEP in providing job assistance or mentoring a trainee through the employment process. For all the ways you can help, contact Ryan Knepp at rknepp@lehighchurches.org. There is hope for those who are unemployed. We have a great opportunity to help them reach their goals.

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.


Winston Churchill

Help at the Pharmacy



Lehigh County residents can receive a Prescription Discount Card that provides from 20% to 50% off the pharmacy's regular price on all commonly prescribed medications. **Everyone is eligible. There are no income or age requirements. One card covers the entire family.**

The Lehigh County Prescription Discount Card program also offers mail service, savings on injectible drugs, and information on health topics, drug information and drug interaction. For additional information, call (610) 782-3200 or visit www.lehighcounty.org.


Justice and Advocacy

Homelessness: Voices of Hope
Saturday, September 26, 2009
8:30 AM—3:00 PM
 St. John's United Church of Christ
 36 South Sixth Street, Allentown, PA 18101

Homelessness: Voices of Hope

Our fall seminar will focus on homelessness and public policy, including an overview of the circumstances that contribute to homelessness in the Lehigh Valley. Program participants will include homeless people. There will also be workshops that present opportunities for local congregations to be engaged in preventing or reducing the trauma of homelessness.

Keynote Presentation: Paul Lucia of Presbyterian Committee on Self-Development of People

Panel Discussion (morning session):

- * Who is homeless in the Lehigh Valley?

Panel Discussion (afternoon session):

- * Responding to the Trauma of Homelessness: Children, Veterans, Victims of Domestic Violence

Workshops:

- * Voices of Hope: newspaper published by Lehigh Valley persons who are or have been homeless, Friends of St. Paul Lutheran Church
- * Homelessness Networking and Public Policy: LCCC Advocacy Network
- * How You and Your congregation Can Reach Out to Homeless Persons—LCCC Homeless Supportive Services and Pathways staff
- * Measurable Community Progress Toward Ending Homelessness—leaders from the Allentown Plan to End Chronic Homelessness and the Bi-County Housing Summit

Registration: Free—Donations accepted. Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided. Pre-registration is appreciated but not required.

Sponsored by the Lehigh County Conference of Churches Justice & Advocacy Committee.

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Registration for *Homelessness: Voices of Hope*

Name: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Please fax or return to: Lehigh County Conference of Churches
 534 Chew Street, Allentown, PA 18102
 Fax: 610-439-8039
 info@lehighchurches.org



Conference Bulletin Board



GODSPELL

St. Thomas More Summer Theater Magic presents *Godspell*— a call to hear the Gospel, to heed the Gospel, to live the Gospel. Profits to benefit homeless families at the Sixth Street Shelter.

Performance Dates and Times: Aug 20-23
7:30 pm Thursday to Saturday (Aug 20-22)
2:30 pm Sunday (Aug 23)

Box Office Hours & Location:

Tuesdays, August 4, 11, Thursdays, August 6, 13
Monday-Tuesday-Wednesday, August 17-18-19
All 6:00 PM until 8:00 PM

Location: Foyer of St. Thomas More School
Gym, 1040 Flexer Ave, Allentown, PA

Caribbean & American Gospel Fest

August 22, 10 am to 7 pm
Free Admission & Lunch

Location: Stevens Park
(Corner of 6th ST & Tilghman ST)

Featuring:

Campbell Sisters from Canada
The Five Blind Boys of Mississippi

Sponsor: Soul Winners Pentecostal Church
610-250-0954

Save the Date

Second Annual Lehigh Valley Housing Summit

Thursday, September 24, 2009
7:30 am—12:30 pm
Holiday Inn Allentown

Sponsors:
Lehigh County, Northampton County
and CACLV

Save the Date

Christmas Peace Pilgrimage 50th Anniversary December 12

Recall the journey of Mary & Joseph from
Nazareth to Bethlehem.

Speaker: Rev. Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr.
Pastor Emeritus of Riverside Church &
President of Healing of the Nations Foundation

For more information, see www.peacewalk.org

Daybreak Needs:

- * Coffee
- * Cereal
- * Juice
- * Paper products
- * Bingo prizes
- * Groups to cook and serve a meal

HELP!



Pathways Needs:

- * Soap
- * Shampoo
- * Toothpaste
- * Toothbrushes
- * Razors
- * Diapers – sizes 4 & 5

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

August 2009

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Allentown, PA

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August 2009

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*The Rev. Dr. Christine L. Nelson,
Executive Director*

*Ira Faro,
Development Senior Director*

*Tom Smith,
Operations Director*

*Tom Walker,
Human Services Director*

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

AUGUST EVENTS

CONFERENCE TOUR

August 20

11:30AM – 12:45 PM

Conference of Churches, 534 Chew ST, Allentown

Call (610) 433-6421 to register

**CROP HUNGER WALK
RECRUITERS' RALLY**

Sunday, August 30, 7:00 pm

St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, 140 S Ott St, Allentown

**JUSTICE & ADVOCACY FALL GATHERING
HOMELESSNESS: VOICES OF HOPE**

September 26

8:30 am—3:00 pm

St. John's UCC, 36 S 6th Street, Allentown

United Way of the
Greater Lehigh Valley



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