



Lehigh County Conference of Churches

February 2010

HOMELESSNESS AT HOME

Faith in Action

Peggy was chronically homeless, living on the streets of Allentown for four years. The Linkage Street Outreach and Homeless Supportive Services programs of the Conference began working with Peggy three years ago. Like many of the homeless, a failed personal support structure and poverty brought Peggy to homelessness.

Today, the Conference provides Peggy with Intensive Case Management, Representative Payee Services, and Rental Assistance for an apartment. Recently, Peggy had a conversation with Episcopal Church of the Mediator's Pastor Maria Tjeltveit, chair of the Support Committee for the Linkage and Homeless Supportive Services programs.



Peggy at the Soup Kitchen Christmas Party

Pastor Maria: Where did you live during the four years that you were homeless?

Peggy: Different places. Back in what they call the "boondocks" of Allentown. Under a bridge.

Pastor Maria: Were you ever scared?

Peggy: Yes. Very. I would try to stay around other people. To feel a little bit safer.

Pastor Maria: What are some of the really hard things about being homeless?

Peggy: Not showering. The way people look at you. I just felt really bad about myself.

Pastor Maria: Have your daughter and your best friend seen your apartment yet?

Peggy: Yes. And they LOVED it. It's a small apartment and they loved it. I just recently got a kitten to keep me company. When it was snowing and I was shoveling the snow off my steps, she kept sticking her paw in the snow. I say, "Get inside." She keeps me company and keeps me going.

Pastor Maria: Now you are doing some volunteer work?

Peggy: I am a volunteer at the Soup Kitchen (*Trinity Episcopal Church, Bethlehem*). I work with the homeless and point them in the direction where others pointed me to. I get to help people to help themselves, which helps me too.

Studies show that for every year that a chronically homeless persons remains in permanent housing, a community saves over \$30,000 in emergency services. The Conference has provided intensive case management to over 150 chronically homeless men and women since 2004. Over 90 are in stable housing. **We can say with confidence that the work of the Conference with people like Peggy saves our community over \$2,700,000 annually. Most importantly, it saves peoples' lives. Just ask Peggy!**

HELPING PEOPLE MAKE A HOME THROUGH RENTAL ASSISTANCE STIMULUS FUNDING



During the last quarter of 2009, the Pathways housing and referral service of the Conference became the first program in Lehigh County to serve individuals and families that were homeless or threatened with homelessness through American Recovery Act Homelessness Prevention/Rapid Re-housing stimulus funding. We anticipate that over the next two years, as many as 138 households will keep or find a home through this funding stream that comes to the Conference through both Allentown and Lehigh County.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION: Designed to keep individuals and families who are threatened with eviction in their apartments, recipients must demonstrate that they will have sufficient income to maintain their housing once assistance ends.

Jean is a single mom working at a fast food restaurant. Her hours were cut back as the restaurant was remodeling. Jean fell behind in her rent and her electric bill. The landlord was in the process of evicting her.



Jean qualified for rental assistance and Pathways helped her get on a budget with PPL. Her case manager learned that she had no beds and very little furniture, so Pathways is scheduling a day to bring her donated furniture and various household items.

Pathways Director Deanne Malacsics followed up with Jean recently and was pleased to learn that Jean had signed her son up for Head Start and that she is scheduled to take the placement test for Lehigh Carbon Community College. Jean's hours are back to full time, she will be able to maintain rent on her own, and she's opening a savings account.

Visit Pathways at 544 Hamilton Street from 9:30 am to noon, Monday through Friday, to set up an appointment.

RAPID RE-HOUSING: Individuals and families who are already homeless can qualify for medium to long term rental assistance.

Pathways' first Rapid Re-housing client is a homeless teenage mom referred to us by Rooster Valentin, Homeless Liaison for the Allentown School District. Amy is working, going to school, and hopping from one friend's home to another. The despair on her face was plain to see.

The first step Pathways took was to arrange a meeting with the Conference's Aspires Mentoring Coordinator for VIP (Very Important Parents), providing mentoring and life-skills training to pregnant and parenting teens. We could see that Amy needed to know she was not the only person in her situation and she needed support.

Amy came to us with an apartment she loved that she had found herself. The landlord was concerned because Amy was so young. Her case manager reassured the landlord that Pathways was going to be working with Amy for the next couple of months and that Amy was developing a support system for herself.

The apartment was a great find, heat included. As soon as the apartment is inspected, Pathways will move her in and assist her with furnishings. As the thought of renting an apartment became a reality, you could see the changes in Amy. She is more willing and open to suggestions. She is enrolled in VIP mentoring. Amy is starting to trust in herself and in her future.

FAITH, FELLOWSHIP, FUN AND FUNDRAISING

Our Ecumenical Season Begins

WHERE IS GOD IN TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES?

Noontime Lenten Services and Discussions

February 17 and March 31: Traditional half-hour worship

- Zion's reformed UCC, Hamilton Street, Allentown
- Worship at noon followed by a light lunch

February 24, March 3, 10, 17 & 24: Discussions at the Allentown Brew Works

- Arrive at noon for a set-fee light lunch
- Presentations will include "Where is God in Our Troubled Cities?" & "If Your Company Does Good, Will Your Company Do Well?" Discussions will be led by prominent local church, civic & business leaders



SOUP KITCHEN ART AUCTION

- **Friday Evening, March 19, 6:00 - 8:00 PM**
- **Baum School of Art, 501 Linden St., Allentown**
- Unique Individual Art and Eclectic Gift Baskets
- Greeting by Sue Highet, Event Organizer
- Keynote Speaker Allentown Mayor Ed Pawlowski
- Music by Satori, Hors D'oeuvres by Gala Catering
- Donation \$20 in Advance, \$25 at the Door
- For info & to register: 610-433-6421 or events@lehighchurches.org

CAMPBELL LECTURES ON CHRISTIAN UNITY

- **Thursday, March 25, 2:30 - 8:30 PM, DeSales University, Center Valley**
- Lecturer Dr. John Crossin, Executive Director Washington Theological Consortium

Campbell Essay Contest: Undergraduate students are invited to submit a 600-1200 word unpublished essay on the topic "**What does it mean to be religious and spiritual in study, work, and play?**" Entries are due by March 1st. Three \$100 prizes will be awarded and winners will present their essays at the Lectures. For contest rules and to submit essays, email events@lehighchurches.org.

HUNGER AT HOME: BREAD FOR THE WORLD WORKSHOP

Saturday, March 27, 8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

First Presbyterian Church, Allentown

Featured Speaker: The Rev. Dr. Bob Edgar, Executive Director of Common Cause, Former US Congressman and General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA.



Donation \$10 Adult, \$5 Student. For info or to register visit www.ppjr.org.

Consider naming the Conference as a beneficiary of your pension plan, IRA, or retirement plan. During your life, you retain the ability to access the funds for your personal needs. In the years thereafter, your gift will address the needs of your community.

Call Ira Faro, Development Senior Director, at (610) 433-6421.

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

February 2010

Non-Profit Organization
U. S. Postage Paid
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UPCOMING EVENTS

LENTEN SERVICES AND DISCUSSIONS

Every Wednesday at Noon Beginning February 17th

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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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