

THE OPEN LINK



VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

FALL 2016 NEWSLETTER

THE OPEN LINK

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- The Center's Fall Festival Oct. 14 at 12:30 p.m.; \$3 donation.
- "Move and Sleep Right: The Challenge" with Dr. Douglas Pfeiffer at The Center, Oct. 22 10-11 a.m.; FREE.
- Penny Auction Nov. 4 at the East Greenville Firehouse, Doors open at 5:30 p.m.; \$4 adults, \$2 children 4-17).

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Adopt-A-Family Program Kicks Off in Pennsburg

To say The Open Link's main office in Pennsburg gets busy around the holidays is a bit of an understatement, says Counselor Laura Dzugan.

"But it's absolutely a good kind of busy. This will be my tenth Christmas coordinating the Adopt-A-Family and Christmas Room pro-

grams and I still love it. There is no better feeling at the holidays then knowing that each and every one of the kids will have a smile on Christmas morning. It's the one day of the year where these families don't have any worries."

The holiday programs are open to families who

reside in the Upper Perkiomen School District, have children who will be 17 or under as of Christmas and are looking for assistance with Christmas gifts this year. Last year, the program helped 577 kids wake up to gifts under their tree.

The Adopt-A-Family

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Two recipients of our Back-to-School supply campaign stand proudly with their new backpacks at the main office. Everything from pencils to flash drives to calculators came into our office and left in the hands of local kids. Thanks to your generous donations, we handed out hundreds of supplies which will help kids succeed in school!

Message From the Executive Director



Stuart Bush, Ph.D.

"Whether it is office furniture, produce, canned goods, diapers, gift cards, school supplies, holiday gifts, a walk-in freezer or a load of gravel for the parking lot, we love your ongoing generosity! Your in-kind gifts play a crucial role in staunching hunger and lifting spirits!"

Want to Help Your Community? Consider Community Sponsorship!

Gratitude.

I am grateful to you, our Upper Perkiomen community, for your generosity in helping your neighbors flourish.

And the need is real! Did you know that more

than 1100 of our children receive free or reduced price lunch? That is almost 30% of Upper Perk students! Did you know that East Greenville has the second highest level of poverty of 62 munici-

palities in Montgomery County? Did you know that our four boroughs - Pennsburg, Green Lane, East Greenville and Red Hill - are among the ten municipalities with the

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The Open Link staff recently got together to "Take a Stand Against Domestic Violence" to mark Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October. The agency assists approximately 80 victims of domestic violence per year. Pictured, left to right, bottom row: Evet Hexamer, program manager/volunteer coordinator, Laura Dzugan, counselor, Eve Puhalla, GED instructor, Brian Shade, kitchen helper, Monica Oswald, food pantry coordinator. Top row: Wendy Cora, office coordinator, Sheila Grove, employment counselor, Donna Van Valkenburgh, kitchen coordinator, Sheila Ruth, The Center manager, Stuart Bush, executive director, Linda Connell, assistant director and Kelly Chandler, communications manager. Missing from photo is Bridget Langenback, administrative assistant and Scott Basara, bookkeeper.

Super Sponsor Spotlight: Gillespie Electric, Inc.

If you've stepped foot inside the new Upper Perkiomen Valley YMCA in Upper Hanover Township, Kolbe Hall at The Perkiomen School or the newly renovated Weis Market, both in Pennsburg, you've seen Gillespie Electric's work.

But the East Greenville based business has also been hard at work on projects outside the area like radio and television studios and dormitories at Bryn Athyn, Centenary and Lafayette colleges.

David Burkhart, vice president and co-owner, said the business, which employs 46 people, has been steadily growing. While they have been recognized for their work for decades, just last year they earned first- and

second-place merit awards from the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABE) for their electrical work at the local YMCA and the massive 245,000 sq. ft. US Cold Stor-



Gillespie Electric vice president and co-owner David Burkhart.

age facility in Quakertown.

"The last few years we've been able to win more local work," Burkhart said.

"And we're hoping for a bang-up 2017."

Gillespie Electric started with residential electrical work in 1973 but then moved to small commercial in the 80s and 90s. Now it has a large commercial department with full service and automation departments.

The company prides itself on the quality of its work, which keeps longtime customers coming back, Burkhart said.

"We have employees who have the experience to do problem-solving and get the job right. We're known to meet demanding schedules...It's our goal to establish and maintain a reputation for excellence in our

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"It's important to help others in need and try to set an example for our children and employees."

Interested in receiving our newsletters by email? Visit www.theopenlink.org and sign up!

Fall Festival to Bring Spooktacular Fun to The Center

You're never too old to dress up, and at The Center, Oct. 14, you may even win fun prizes if you do!

Join us at 12:30 p.m. at 517 Jefferson Street, East Greenville, for our fall festival. We'll be serving a deli-

cious lunch, followed by homemade desserts, fellowship and entertainment.

Prizes will be given out in different categories for those who choose to dress up, but costumes aren't required. A \$3 donation per

person is requested.

Come join your friends for a ghoulish good time!

Please call 215-679-6550 or email volunteers@theopenlink.org for more information.





Valued Volunteer: Carol Bracalente

As the marketing communications manager for Red Hill and Quakertown dental offices, you may have seen Carol Bracalente out and about in the Upper Perkiomen Valley. Aside from her work, though, Bracalente is passionate about two things – animals and making a difference in people's lives.

"I've been with The Open Link (TOL) for two years," she said, explaining she first heard about the organization from some of the staff at her office and through the Upper Perkiomen Valley Chamber of Commerce.

"I saw a post that the food pantry needed volunteers. Knowing there was a need in the community, I wanted to help."

Bracalente said she approached her employer,

Dr. Michael Bonomo, to discuss volunteering.

Bonomo, she said, quickly decided the office would allow her to donate her time to TOL. Bracalente said Bonomo has a strong passion for giving back and encourages his staff to do the same.

The Coopersburg resident volunteers whenever needed in the pantry, where she helps clients shop for essentials from the choice offerings.

Bracalente also routinely helps share the work of TOL through Red Hill Dental's Facebook page. She said she feels strongly about volunteering.

"I appreciate the time and commitment that the volunteers have for the organization. Everyone is busy with their jobs and lives but still come to-

gether to help their community and people in need," she explained. "I am also amazed at the dedication of the staff and the services they are able to provide."

She's also been working alongside Paws with Patience, a local pet therapy group, for more than 13 years.

"Volunteering provides an opportunity to meet incredible people and to give back to the community or to great organizations. It is a wonderful feeling to help and give my time, to see and hear expressions of gratitude and to see a smile."

For more information on contributing your time and talents to TOL, call Volunteer Coordinator/Program Manager Evet Hexamer at 215.679.6550 or email volunteers@theopenlink.org.

Join Us for Community Lunch at The Center

If you haven't stopped by The Center, 517 Jefferson St., East Greenville for lunch, you don't know what you've been missing!

You can get a hot, nutritious, delicious lunch for only \$2. Give us a try, you won't be disappointed! Call 215.679.6550 to make your reservation.





Follow us for
up-to-date
prize info!

Penny Auction

50/50 Raffle * Baked Goods * Great Prizes

Friday, November 4, 2016

Doors Open at 5:30 PM | Bidding Begins at 6:45 PM

East Greenville Fire House, 401 Washington St., East Greenville, PA 18041

Admission

\$4 for Adults • \$2 for Children • Free for Children 3 & Under

Proceeds benefit The Open Link

For more information or to get involved, please call The Open Link
at 215.679.4112 or email volunteers@theopenlink.org.



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lowest per capita income in the county? Did you know that the number of residents aged 70-79 will triple from 2010-2040?

And we are meeting the need in many ways!

"Contacting The Open Link was the best thing I've ever done. They guided me and helped me out of an awful, abusive relationship." ~ Jessica

Jessica, a longtime Upper Merion Valley resident, was in an abusive marriage when she was referred to The Open Link. She not only needed assistance getting out of that situation, but also in gaining her independence. Today, she lives on her own and is getting help with con-

tinued counseling and food through our community food pantry.

"I look forward to my Meals on Wheels visits! They give you food that's good and good for you...They're like family to me." ~ Jean

Last year, 70 community volunteers distributed 20,000 meals to homebound seniors. The gift of independence! Every day at The Center your donations provide older neighbors a welcoming environment. Inside they enjoy activities to stay active and healthy.

We are grateful to you because you help The Open Link help our neighbors in many ways!

Time and Talent! Each year over 300 volunteers donate more than

10,000 hours to The Open Link. That is the equivalent of 5 full-time people which translates into a more than 50% increase in people-power to support our small dedicated staff. And the help comes in so many ways including: drivers for Meals on Wheels and medical appointments, front desk/reception at both of our locations, data input, leading exercise, teaching, tutoring, food pantry, property maintenance, fundraisers, and membership on our board of directors and various committees. We truly could not do it without you!

Treasure! Did you know that only 40% of our funding comes from county, state and federal governments? The vast majority of our funding

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WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE? *Domestic violence is the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another.*



1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have been physically abused by an intimate partner.

Domestic violence hotlines nationwide receive approximately 20,800 calls on a typical day.

142 women were murdered in their workplace by a former or current intimate partner between the years of 2003 and 2008.

Victims of domestic violence lose a total of 8 million days of paid work each year.

Every 9 seconds in the US a woman is assaulted or beaten.

The cost of domestic violence exceeds \$8.3 billion annually.

WHY IT MATTERS: *Domestic violence affects all people in every community, regardless of age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender, race, religion, or nationality. Domestic violence can result in physical injury, psychological trauma, and even death. The consequences of domestic violence can cross generations and last a lifetime.*

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program matches adopters with specific families who submit their children's wishlists after completing an application. Registration recently opened for the program.

More than 50 adopters have already stepped up to help area families.

"It's been great," Dzugan said. "If we need more we put the word out and the community always comes through."

Orientation dates for families wishing to be matched with adopters are currently scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 12 at 6 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 15 at 10 a.m. and Friday, Oct. 21 at 9

a.m., with pre-registration required.

The Christmas Room is another program for families in need who, for one reason or another, missed the Adopt-A-Family registration. The Christmas Room is filled with a wide variety of items, many of them toys, which have been donated to help those families make the holiday a memorable one.

Dzugan said it's fun for her to watch the parents' and grandparents' faces as they pick out gifts for their little ones but it's also very fulfilling for the volunteers who help with the event.

"The volunteers absolutely love

it. They put their Santa buttons on, walk around with the parents and help bag up the toys. The whole building is cheery because it's Christmas all day long!"

"We've had people tell us they wouldn't know what to do if we didn't have this [program]. It can become stressful and almost a burden for parents because other kids are getting gifts and they don't know how they can do the same for their kids."

For more information on the Adopt-A-Family or Christmas Room programs, call 215.679.4112 or email laurad@theopenlink.org.

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comes from you, our neighbors.

Your generosity includes in-kind donations. Whether it is office furniture, produce, canned goods, diapers, gift cards, school supplies, holiday gifts, a walk-in freezer or a load of gravel for the parking lot, we love your ongoing generosity! Your in-kind gifts play a crucial role in staunching hunger and lifting spirits!

Last, but not least, we are grateful for your cash donations. Our single largest source of cash donations comes through our annual Community Sponsorship campaign which is just underway. Last year we were able to raise more than \$60,000 through our 33 community sponsors including local businesses, churches and civic organizations.

I ask that you and your organization become a Community Sponsor for 2017. We have the full range of Sponsorship opportunities ranging from Copper Sponsorships starting at \$250 to our Diamond Sponsorship at \$7500+/year. As a token of our gratitude for your sponsorship, we will provide public recognition of your efforts to support your neighbors in need throughout 2017.

Thank you for all you do!

TOL Food Pantry Needs Thanksgiving 2016

- \$10 gift cards to Weis or Redner's for turkeys. (We run short on freezer space but do accept turkeys.)
- Canned yams
- Canned gravy
- Canned cranberry sauce
- Boxed stuffing
- Boxed mashed potatoes
- Canned corn
- Canned mixed fruit
- Canned pumpkin



Main Office

452 Penn St.
Pennsburg, PA. 18073
Phone: 215-679-4112
Fax: 215-679-9795
Email: info@theopenlink.org

The Center

517 Jefferson St.
East Greenville, PA. 18041
Phone: 215-679-6550

www.theopenlink.org

“Opening Doors, Linking Communities, Helping Neighbors Flourish.”

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work, fair and competitive prices and for a superior degree of responsibility and competence on the part of every member of the company.”

What’s also important to Burkhart, whose father, Bill Gillespie, started the business in 1973, is giving back to the community. And one way he does that is by sponsoring The Open Link (TOL) annually. Gillespie Electric is a platinum sponsor for 2016.

“We want to continue helping TOL offer various programs to families in the community that we live and work in,” Burkhart said. “It’s important to help others in need and try to set an example for our children and employees.”

Burkhart said while it’s difficult to choose one program he appreciates the most, he feels good about helping the organization provide Meals on Wheels to seniors, the food pantry for those who struggle to feed their families, and for Christmas and Back-to-School programs for families who need a helping hand.

Thank you, Gillespie Electric, for your investment in TOL and our community!

For more information on Gillespie Electric, Inc., visit their website, www.gillespie-electric.com, their Facebook page or call 215-679-8091.

Did You Know...

You can support The Open Link every time you shop on Amazon? Or that giving is as easy as the click of a mouse? To find out more, visit:



The Open Link is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax-deductible.