

THE OPEN LINK



VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

SUMMER 2017 NEWSLETTER

THE OPEN LINK

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Ice Cream Social at The Center on July 27, 12-2 p.m. FREE.
- Back-to-School Supply Giveaway, beginning Aug. 7 at The Open Link's Main Office. By appointment.
- Red Hill Jazz Band performance at The Center, August 17, 1 p.m. \$3 donation. RSVP to 215.679.6550.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Message from the Executive Director 2
- Watermelon Day and Hydration Program at The Center 2
- Super Sponsor Spotlight 3
- Valued Volunteer 4
- Food Pantry Needs Summer 2017 7

“I Finally Did It!”: Pennsburg Mom Graduates With Her Daughter

All the elation and celebration that came with her daughter's graduation from Upper Perk High School this past month was doubly sweet for Denise Amos. She recently graduated as well, at the age of 44, with her high school equivalency (HSE) diploma.

She said it literally feels like her life is an open road now.

“We shall see where that road takes me. Just knowing I can do whatever I choose, it's a wonderful feeling!” she said.

Amos, of Pennsburg, took high school equivalency (HSE) classes at The Open Link (TOL) and was the agency's first graduate of the HiSET program.

So why didn't she get

her diploma decades ago?

“I thought hanging out with my friends was more important than going to school. I quit the day I turned 16. Needless to say, my mother wasn't happy!” Amos said.

“I wanted to go back and get my GED for many years, but didn't until I

(Continued on page 7)



Denise Amos with her diploma recently issued by the PA Department of Education. Adults and teens say having a local site for free classes and testing makes graduating an attainable goal.

*Message From
the Executive
Director*



Stuart Bush, Ph.D.

Apprenticeships Present Unique Opportunities for Students

I love it when a plan comes together!

For the past year The Open Link has significantly increased participation and success in our high school equivalency (HSE) program, formerly our GED program. And that success is bearing fruit for both the students and local employers!

The Open Link became the first HiSET® high school equivalency testing

center in Montgomery County last summer. This accomplishment made it possible for the first time in the Upper Perkiomen Valley for students to prepare, test, and complete their HSE in one location!

Since that time The Open Link's high school equivalency instructor, Eve Puhalla, Ph.D., and a small cadre of dedicated tutors have helped pre-

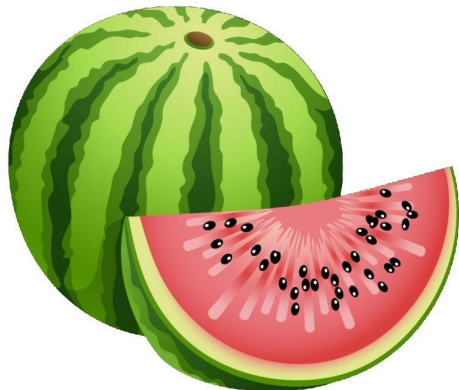
pare 30 students. These students have successfully passed 85 individual subject tests (that is, math, social studies, science, reading, writing) with eight students completing their HSE and another nine students just one subject short of their HSE diplomas.

But getting their high school equivalency is just the beginning.

(Continued on page 5)

Join Us For National Watermelon Day and Learn How to Stay Hydrated!

- Enjoy watermelon at Community Lunch at 12:30 p.m.
- Information and tips on hydration and how it affects your whole body
- Refreshments



Thursday, August 3

1-3 p.m.

The Center,

517 Jefferson Street,

East Greenville, PA

18041



Super Sponsor Spotlight: P3 Towers

In today's world, many of us rely heavily on quality wireless voice and data connectivity.

And that's what Pennsburg-based P3 Towers is all about providing. Larry Romanowski founded the company, which constructs cell phone towers and works with municipalities to responsibly develop infrastructure to suit each community's needs.

Romanowski, a 1987 Upper Perkiomen High School grad, owns the towers and then subleases space to carriers like Verizon, AT&T and Sprint. But he specializes in working with townships, boroughs and cities to market out real estate that they feel is appropriate for a cell tower. Not every location is a good fit.

"You want to avoid interfering in folks' everyday lives, he said. "You want a location that's typically not located right next to residences. By locating them on properties like wastewater facilities, public works yards, municipal buildings and recycling centers, typically not next to residences, they get to control where the cell phone towers go."

Romanowski said with that kind of proactive approach, the municipalities

benefit two-fold.

Not only are they promoting strong wireless in their communities, they're also getting substantial revenue from the tower through revenue sharing. Forty percent of the revenue from the tower goes to each municipality, he said.



Larry Romanowski, owner of P3 Towers

P3 Towers largely serves eastern Pennsylvania, and the "collar counties" of Philadelphia, but also reaches out to others like York and Scranton, where it is currently engaged in projects.

"I enjoy the business aspects of it," Romanowski said of his company. "I find it satisfying to work with the municipalities in a responsible, community-sensitive way."

And it's that community-minded spirit that led him to The Open Link (TOL).

Romanowski, a married dad of three, said he always knew TOL was in the community and identified it as a great organization. But it wasn't until the agency reached out looking for funding with an article in the *Town and Country* newspaper that he volunteered.

"Hearing all the great things they do, I wanted to get involved!" he said.

With his background, he started on the building committee and then, two years ago, joined the board of directors. This year, P3 Towers is a platinum sponsor for the agency.

And what's his favorite part of being involved with TOL?

"The Summer Lunch Bunch program," he answered without hesitation. "Making sure kids get fed is a really important thing! I enjoy working with Stu (Bush, executive director), Mary (Young, board member) and Sheila (Ruth, center manager) on that program."

"What it comes down to is that TOL represents such a bright spot in our society. Folks of varied backgrounds all come together with care

*"What it comes down to is that TOL represents such a bright spot in our society. Folks of varied backgrounds all come together with care and love for our community."
~ Larry Romanowski*

(Continued on page 8)

Valued Volunteer: Gloria Hinkle

Dedication isn't something you'll hear Gloria Hinkle talk about. But believe us, words aren't necessary. Her actions do all the talking.

On weekday mornings, you can hear her breeze by the offices at The Open Link's Penn Street location with a "Good morning!" on her way up and down the stairs to the agency's food pantry on the lower level.

She puts in the hours of a full-time employee as a volunteer. She helps with cataloguing food donations, assisting clients during appointments, weighing and shelving donations and, along with her husband John, who also volunteers, picks up food donations from Wal-Mart in East Greenville twice a week.

The Marlborough Township resident clocks a whopping 1,700 hours a year. She has volunteered for a little more than eight years for The Open Link. She started with administrative tasks like data entry before moving up, or down, to the food pantry.

She said while she always

donated funds to TOL through her employer's contribution program, she was looking to get

the agency.

Many times clients can find organic foods and fresh produce from local gardens in the pantry.

Hinkle said she also loves that the pantry is a choice pantry, where clients can choose items they can really use, which cuts back on waste.

She said she finds volunteering fulfilling.

"Just knowing you're meeting the needs of people who could really use the help, that's great," she said. "It's the feeling that you're making a difference."

"Gloria is very dedicated to The Open Link," said Food Pantry Coordinator Sylvia Stottlemire. "She works tirelessly. She's a great asset."

We're grateful for you, Gloria! We couldn't do our work in the community without people like you.

For more information on volunteering at The Open Link, please call Program Manager/Volunteer Coordinator Evet Hexamer at 215.679.6550 or email volunteers@theopenlink.org.



Gloria Hinkle volunteers more than 140 hours each month in The Open Link's food pantry.

more "hands-on" once she retired.

"I enjoy it," she said of her time spent volunteering. "I like to keep busy and meet new people. I like working with the public, especially helping people in need. And I chose the food pantry ultimately because I like to help them make good choices when it comes to food."

Hinkle said she really loves that the pantry offers a large variety of foods. She noted that local companies and groups, in addition to individuals, are very generous with donations, including hosting food drives that benefit

Coloring With a Purpose

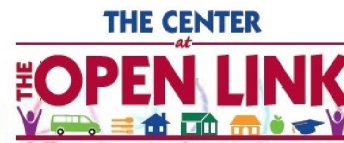
With Julie Longacre

Sept. 21st and Oct.
19th, 1-3 p.m.

\$5 per session; \$8 for
both.

RSVP to 215.679.6550,
one week prior.

When it comes to the pastime of coloring, age has no limitations! From grandchild to grandparent, coloring is a relaxing way to decompress and, with a bit of instruction, pick a few tips on developing your artistic talent.



(Continued from page 2)

The Open Link's employment counselor, Sheila Grove, has long experience working with community members to help them get a job or get a better job. She works with clients to target their favored work, write or improve their resume, apply for work and improve their interviewing skills to help land the job. She also works with local employers to

understand their employment needs so she can be a better "matchmaker".

Sheila regularly connects with Eve's high school equivalency students to offer help in obtaining better employment. So when she heard that a local company was offering two apprenticeships leading to high paying skilled work, she reached out to Eve to ask if any of her

students might "fit".

Two students seemed to fit the bill and the employer agreed, offering them both apprenticeships even before they completed their HSE. One has already started his apprenticeship and is off to a good start.

This is truly a win-win-win for the students, the employers and The Open Link!

Will You Join Our Team of Sponsors?

The Open Link is blessed to have many area businesses who committed to sponsor our work in the community in 2017. Our 2018 sponsor search is right around the corner. Will you and your business be next?

For more information on sponsorship and its benefits, call 215.679.4112 or email communications@theopenlink.org.

Donate school supplies to local children in need and help them succeed!

SCHOOL BUS

2017 School Supplies Top Needs List



- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| • New Backpacks | • #2 Pencils |
| • 3-Ring Binders (size 1" to 2") | • Pens |
| • Pocket Folders | • Large Erasers |
| • Markers | • White Glue (bottles) |
| • Pencil Pouches/Cases | • Ear buds |
| • Loose Leaf Paper | • Calculators |
| • Highlighters | • Flash Drives |
| • Colored Pencils | • Dry Erase Markers |

Donations currently being accepted! Thank you!

**Donations can be dropped off at the Main Office:
452 Penn St, Pennsburg, PA 18073
Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday until 7 p.m.**

EDUC8

(Continued from page 1)

heard about the classes at The Open Link.”

Amos said she loved that the classes were local, which made it easy for her to work full time and still make it to class two nights a week. She also loved her instructor, Dr. Eve Puhalla, who she said was very helpful, accessible and gave her the push she needed to keep up with her work and take the tests needed to graduate.

Amos lauded the one-on-one attention she received during classes, including tutoring assistance which enabled her to get the last bit of help she needed to pass her last exam.

HiSET graduates must pass five exams to get their diplomas, which can all be taken at TOL’s Penn Street, Pennsburg location.

“I was at work and I was honestly scared to see my results,” she said. I opened it anyhow and I cried for joy. I finally did it! After 28 years of being out of school, I did it. My husband and my daughter were both very proud of me. And even though my mother is in heaven, I know she’s very proud of me too!”

While she hasn’t narrowed down her field of study, Amos wants to go to college. She said she plans to take courses at night once she’s settled on a major.

She recommended the HSE program to anyone who hasn’t completed high school.

“If you are a recent dropout at 16 or haven’t been in school for 60

years, I would tell you to sign up for the program!” Amos said. “I had fellow classmates who were a lot older and a lot younger than me. But when we all got together in the classroom, it’s like we’re family. We didn’t see our differences, we just see a friend that has the same goal as our own, to get our diploma.”

Puhalla said she’s so proud of Denise and her classmates.

“I think it’s awesome that they have completed! For some of them, this has been a very long road,” she

said. The fact that Denise and seven of her classmates have a diploma now opens up so many opportunities. I’m thrilled to be able to help them into the next phase of their lives. I’m often brought to tears because I know how hard they’ve worked to get over this hurdle!”

Registration is going on now for the fall 2017 session of The Open Link’s HSE program. For more information, call Dr. Eve Puhalla at 215.679.4112 or email instructor@theopenlink.org.

The Open Link Food Pantry Needs Summer 2017

- Juice (64 oz. preferred)
 - Canned Tomatoes
- Canned Carrots and Corn
- Canned Kidney, Black and Baked Beans
 - Cheese
- Pancake Mix and Syrup
 - Canned Fruit
- Soft Burrito and Flour/Corn Tortillas
 - Frozen Vegetables
 - Ketchup (small size)

Top Personal Items Needed

- Laundry Detergent (small containers)
 - Paper Towels
- Shampoo and Conditioner (small sizes)
 - Deodorant
 - Cleaning Supplies

Donations can be dropped off at The Open Link Main Office, 452 Penn Street, Pennsburg, during regular office hours. For more info, call 215.679.4112.

