

THE OPEN LINK



VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

SPRING/SUMMER 2018

THE OPEN LINK

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Summer 2018 HSE /GED session begins July 3. Call 215.679.4112 to register or for more info.
- Red Hill Jazz Band Concert, July 27 at 1 p.m. at The Center in East Greenville. \$3 sugg. donation. Call 215.679.6550 to RSVP.
- Back-to-School Supply Drive is underway! Help us help kids succeed. See page 5.

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Summer Food Program to Launch in East Greenville

It's fun; it's nutritious; it's Summer Lunch Bunch!

This year The Open Link's superhero volunteers and staff will be providing lunch, dessert and activities for all area children. And we're opening a new location adjacent to Frederick J. Bieler Park in East Greenville!

The new space, which

moved from St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Pennsburg, will allow easy walking access for kids in the Colonial Village housing development. The popular location at Treichler's Mill Park in Hereford, next to Hereford Estates, will also be open.

The program started June 18 and runs through August 9. The best part is

that lunch bunch is free to families and there's no registration. Just show up, Monday through Thursday, from 11:30-1 and we'll feed you a balanced lunch and have some fun games, crafts or other activities to do.

"We hope to see lots of kids at both locations

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Three sisters enjoy a tasty meal during one of the Summer Lunch Bunch sessions last year at Treichler's Mill Park in Hereford Township.



Message From the Executive Director



Stuart Bush, Ph.D.

We're Launching "Food Pantry Without Walls"!

Having food on the table. What is more important or elemental than that?

As one of your neighbors recently noted: "When things are tough and the food at home is slim to none, there is The Open Link's food pantry with open hearts, filled food shelves and always a big smile!"

Every year The Open Link's food pantry serves more than 400 households, more than 1,000 of your

neighbors in need. About 70% of those households include either seniors or children.

Unfortunately, the need is even greater! As we look at available statistics we realize that these two vulnerable populations, seniors and families with children, are underserved:

* Only 20% of eligible seniors in two subsidized housing units in Red

Hill — the Upper Perkiomen Manor and the Red Hill Villas — are receiving food from our pantry.

* Only about 25% of eligible families with children in the Upper Perkiomen School District receive food from our pantry.

At The Open Link, we have been asking, "Why?" We have discovered two major reasons:

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complimentary

MASTER GARDENING CLASSES



at The Center
517 Jefferson St
East Greenville

Classes offered
by Penn State
Extension through
a grant by
Montgomery
County



6 Classes • Held at 1:00 PM • Register for each at least 3 days before date of class
Call Evet at 215-679-6550 or email programmanager@theopenlink.org

6/28 - Raised Bed Gardening
8/23 - Indoor Gardening-Pots/Soils
9/27 - Indoor Gardening-Fruit Trees

7/26 - Outdoor Container Gardening
9/13 - Indoor Gardening Herbs
10/18 - Composting / Vermiculture

Super Sponsor Spotlight: Titanium Visits NASA

It isn't every day that you get a personal invitation to speak to the brains behind the National Aeronautics Space Administration

(NASA). But recently, Melanie Cunningham did just that.

As the president of Titanium Finishing Company, an East Greenville business performing rare high-quality metal finishes, NASA wanted to have her weigh in at a quality symposium March 13 at the Kennedy Space Center. Titanium provides products for the aerospace, space exploration, medical, commercial, automotive, defense, consumer goods and oil and gas industries.

For Cunningham, whose father, Mel Faul, started the business in his family's kitchen in 1970, it was a dream realized.

"It felt like the crowning point of my professional life," she explained. "I've always been a big fan of space exploration – way back to when they used to roll the TV's into our classrooms to watch the Apollo missions."

"Speaking to the top qual-

ity people of the big companies of this country, knowing they wanted my opinion, it was a real achievement for me."

controls and wastewater testing.

For a company with 17 employees, it's many times an ex-



Melanie Cunningham, right, president of Titanium Finishing Company, accepts recognition for being a 2018 titanium sponsor of The Open Link at the June 6 Community Partnership Breakfast. Pictured at left are Gerry Fioriglio, TOL board president, and Melinda Cunningham, Titanium executive vice president and CFO.

Cunningham talked about the impact of big regulations on small businesses. Titanium Finishing is highly regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency, PA Department of Environmental Protection, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), the DDTC (Department of Defense Trade Controls), SAM.gov (System for Award Management), not to mention adhering to local water and sewer regulations, air quality

pensive and time-consuming way of life.

For example, a Titanium customer, one of the world's top aircraft producers, once asked them to become certified in a specific process. Titanium performs four different anodization processes; the certification, specific to the aircraft industry, required a \$50,000 investment per process. It couldn't be done.

To Cunningham, it was important to convey her view that the certifications and overbearing

"The people at TOL are what makes it special. There are no judgements, just neighbors helping neighbors – the way it should be."

~ Melanie Cunningham

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Valued Volunteer: Wes O'Brien

Some people just have a heart for helping others. For recognizing needs and stepping up to fill them. Wes O'Brien is one of them.

After a long career as a computer systems analyst for United Healthcare, O'Brien retired four years ago. He didn't take a lot of time off to enjoy the calm of retirement. Instead, he quickly signed up as a volunteer with RSVP, Inc., a non-profit volunteer placement agency in the region. From there, he was referred to The Open Link.

He said he likes the one-on-one aspect of volunteering with people in the community. He was used to being a member of a team for a long time in the workplace, so now he relishes the opportunity to meet the needs of people, one at a time.

"When I worked I didn't have as much time to volunteer, but now that I'm retired, I like to give back. I feel like my life

is blessed and I'm very fortunate," O'Brien said of why he volunteers. "If I can help some people who need the help I will. I'm healthy and I'm able to get

the Harleysville resident said. "For some of them it's only a few years, but for some a lot longer. Some do it for economic benefit but for some it's just something they've always felt deficient in, something they always wanted to accomplish."

O'Brien also volunteers as a Meals on Wheels driver each week, delivering hot, nutritious meals to homebound seniors across the Upper Perkiomen Valley. His favorite part of the program is getting out, riding around and talking to people.

And he always tries to leave each person with a smile.

"You try to be upbeat and friendly when you're there because you never know what the rest of their day is going to be like. All the people seem very appreciative. It's a great program."

O'Brien admitted another fun part of volunteering is meeting other volunteers and inter-

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Wes O'Brien loads up his vehicle with hot and cold bags for his weekly Meals on Wheels trip.

around. Some people, when they retire, are members of a board or do administrative things. I like helping individuals."

He currently works in The Open Link's High School Equivalency (HSE) program as a tutor and a test administrator. It's gratifying to help people achieve their goals, he noted.

"I admire the people who go back and get their diplomas,"

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this year and think the new East Greenville locale will really allow us to better serve our neighbors,” said Communications Manager Kelly Chandler. “Don’t be shy about checking us out! We’re looking forward to seeing our old friends and making new ones.”

The program serves to fill the gap for families with children home during the summer. Some of those families receive free or reduced lunches during the school year.

Each week will have a theme, starting with “Music Week” June 18-21. That will be followed by art, celebrating the 4th of July, building, maps and wayfinding, “around the world”, flight and carnival themed weeks.

Kids will also be able to participate in a version of the Upper Perkiomen Valley Library’s summer reading program where they earn tickets for every 20 minutes of reading and win simple prizes. No library card needed. The Upper Perk YMCA will also be running some games and activities.

This year’s meal menu is new and improved with make-your-own pizzas, ham and turkey sandwiches, bagels with cream cheese, yogurt and fruit, and will also feature baked goods and frozen desserts. Sun-Butter and jelly sandwiches will be available daily as a substitute entrée.

Thank you, too, to the management of Rita’s Water Ice in Pennsburg, who was kind

enough to donate some tasty water ice to treat the kids on occasion.

More activities and special visitors will be added throughout the summer.

For more information on Summer Lunch Bunch, call 215.679.4112 or email Brooke Harvey, Nutrition Services Coordinator, at nutrition@theopenlink.org.

Back-To-School Supply Drive 2018 Needs

SCHOOL BUS

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| 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.

THE
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The 2019 Sponsorship drive is right around the corner. Can we count on your business or organization?

We gratefully acknowledge the support of our 2018 sponsors

Diamond Sponsors



Platinum Sponsors



Gold Sponsors



Silver Sponsors

Brode & Brooks Real Estate • Falk Funeral Homes & Crematory • Family Caregivers Network, Inc. • Fife & Drum Tree Farm
Finland Mennonite Church • Geryville Storage LLC • Gordon H. Bayer, Inc. • Lechner & Stauffer, Inc.
Palm Schwenkfelder Church • Perkiomen School • Perkiomen Tours • Perkiomen Valley Women's Club
Upper Perkiomen Community Church • Upper Perkiomen Valley Lions Club

Bronze Sponsors

Bally Mennonite Church • Frieden's UCC • Green Lane-Marlboro Lions Club • Harleysville Bank • Hereford Homes
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church • St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church • Thomas & Muller Systems
Unami Friends Meeting • U.S. Tape Company

Copper Sponsors

BB&T • Boulder Valley Sportsmen Association • Community Bible Fellowship Church • Edwards Business Systems
Grand View Health • Head Hunters Family Salon • Huff's Union Church • John Membrino Building Contractor • K.D. Landis, Inc.
Kiwanis Club of the Upper Perkiomen Valley • Lam Financial Services • Mann-Slonaker Funeral Home, Inc. • Mullaney Law Offices
Neuber Fastener Corp. • Perkiomenville Mennonite Church • R.J. Sell Excavating, Inc. • Sands Ford of Red Hill
Town and Country Newspaper • Upper Perkiomen Business and Professional Women's Club • Upper Perkiomen Valley YMCA

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acting with them and the staff.

While he said he would love to be able to do more within the Meals on Wheels program, his schedule keeps him pretty busy. O'Brien still volunteers through RSVP as a shopping assistant, a reader at schools and day-cares, taking people to doctor's appointments and helping the Mid-Atlantic Blind Golfer's Association.

There, he's active in both the senior and junior divisions. When golf season's in full swing, he teams up with a senior golfer who suffers from a visual impairment. He is, in effect, the eyes for his partner. He lines up the golf ball, helps the golfer

with club selections, lines up putts and tees the ball. During matches, they golf as a team. His work with the junior division revolves around helping similarly disabled kids, ages 8-16, with clinics and different events.

O'Brien said it's a lot of fun.

"I've golfed since I was a kid but I'm still working on it. I'm no Tiger Woods," he said with a laugh.

He also keeps busy at home with gardening, reading and lending a hand at a local church. He and his wife, Mara, who retired at the same time he did, also enjoy traveling when they can.

He was quick to point out that

volunteering is flexible and that he would recommend it to others.

"If you can't be there, it's not a problem. There's all different things you can do based on your schedule. You can give an hour a day or a week or a month. It allows you to do other activities. I would definitely recommend it to others."

Thank you, Wes, for your willingness to help those in need in our community. We couldn't do our work without people like you!

For more information on volunteering at The Open Link, please contact Lynn Brearey, volunteer coordinator, at 215.679.4112 or volunteers@theopenlink.org.

We Need You!

We can't run our many programs without you! Right now we need additional volunteers to expand our Meals on Wheels routes, serve with the Summer Lunch Bunch program and more. If you can give as little as an hour a month, we'd love to have you as part of our team!

Call Lynn Brearey, volunteer coordinator, at 215.679.4112 or email volunteers@theopenlink.org.



Food Pantry Needs Summer 2018

- Juice (64 oz. preferred)
- Canned Tomato Products
- Canned Kidney, Black and Baked Beans
- Canned Carrots and Corn
 - Canned Fruit
- Soups and Stew
 - Cereal
 - Pasta

Top Personal Items Needed

- Baby diapers (size 4, 5 and 6) and wipes
- Shampoo and Conditioner
 - Bar Soap
 - Body Wash
 - Toothpaste

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



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US Postage
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Permit #10045

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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* **Logistics** – At a recent presentation to seniors at the Upper Perkiomen Manor, I was surrounded by folks in wheelchairs and walkers; even those without disabilities no longer had a car or license. And imagine a single working mom from Green Lane getting to our food pantry in Pennsburg during limited food pantry hours!

* **Stigma** – Many seniors and families with children are too proud to

come to a social service agency.

What is the Solution? Bring the food to where they are: A “Food Pantry Without Walls”. Order online from our pantry’s inventory one day, have it delivered to a convenient facility the next day.

As I write, The Open Link’s dedicated staff and volunteers are implementing a new on-line inventory at our food pantry in Pennsburg. In the fall

we will start ordering and delivery at pilot sites at Upper Perk Manor and the Red Hill Villas. Starting next spring, we will start to deliver food at Upper Perk Middle School to needy families with children.

Our ultimate goal is to serve most eligible seniors and children in the Upper Perkiomen Valley.

Because no one should go hungry!

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regulations don’t add any value for either her company or for the consumer.

“I think what I had to say was really important and I made them laugh and got a lot of feedback. It went really well,” she said of her presentation. “I think it helped them identify with small companies.”

Apparently, Cunningham made a good impression. NASA officials

asked her if she would be available to speak again at a supplier symposium in Maryland in the fall.

It’s validation that Titanium’s hard work is being noticed, not just in the region, but beyond. But Cunningham’s heart for the Upper Perkiomen Valley is always in the forefront.

She and her husband Tim, as well as their daughter Melinda, continue to be big supporters of The Open Link and its work.

“I love TOL because I know my dollars and my time are staying in this valley...The people at TOL are what makes it special. There are no judgments, just neighbors helping neighbors – the way it should be. It makes me happy to help right where I live and work. It’s very satisfying.”

For more information on Titanium Finishing, visit titaniumfinishing.com, their Facebook page, or call them at 216.679.4181.