



# The C.O.N.N.E.C.T.O.R

## Sharing Community Makes Our Mission Possible

### Hampton

1975 Ferguson Road  
Allison Park, PA 15101  
412-487-6316, option 1

### Millvale

Millvale Community Center, 2nd Floor  
416 Lincoln Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15209  
412-487-6316, option 2

### North Boroughs

Allegheny General Hospital,  
Suburban Campus (Bellevue)  
100 South Jackson Avenue, 2 South  
Pittsburgh, PA 15202  
412-307-0069

### O'Hara

Lighthouse Pointe  
500 Chapel Harbor Drive  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
412-449-0151

### Pine (Community Auto)

11490 Perry Hwy., Suite 7  
Wexford, PA 15090  
724-443-8300

### Office Hours

Monday through Friday, 9 AM - 4 PM  
(Other times by appointment only)

email: [help@nhco.org](mailto:help@nhco.org)

website: [www.nhco.org](http://www.nhco.org)

**Mission:** North Hills Community Outreach is an interfaith organization addressing the needs of people in crisis, hardship and poverty.

**Vision:** Northern Allegheny County is a sharing community where no one is cold, hungry or alone.

Fay Morgan, Executive Director  
[fpmorgan@nhco.org](mailto:fpmorgan@nhco.org)

The Connector is published three times per year and mailed to 22,000 local addresses. You can **help us save postage and printing costs** by signing up to receive the newsletter electronically by emailing [help@nhco.org](mailto:help@nhco.org).

Thanks to the generosity of this community, NHCO relieves a burden for hundreds of local families in poverty, hardship and crisis through our seasonal "sharing projects," whereby we collect and distribute various items throughout the year.

Last month for our **Back-to-School** project, we distributed new backpacks filled with lots of age-appropriate school supplies to more than 900 children!

Many thanks to *everyone* who donated. Significant contributions were given by **Huntington Bank, Rotary Club of North Boroughs, St. Alphonsus, St. Sebastian, CVS Caremark, Robert Watson, St. Paul's UMC CAT Camp, Memorial Park Presbyterian members and VBS, Lagasse/Sweet, Dutilh UMC and St. Teresa of Avila.** Thanks also to the extra special volunteer efforts of **Jean Muth, Linda Murphy, Sandy Vita, and Dan and Sandy Hasshak.**

Our next two sharing projects are:

**Free Winter Coat Shop:** Clean, gently worn (or new) coats may be donated through October 31. Adult XL, 2X, 3X and children's sizes are especially needed.

**Turkey on Every Table:** A complete Thanksgiving meal includes: one grocery store gift card of at least \$10, large boxes of stuffing mix and instant mashed potatoes, one can of cranberry sauce, two cans of vegetables, pie crust mix, "easy" pumpkin pie mix, evaporated milk, muffin mix, turkey gravy mix, and napkins. Donations of one, some or all of these items are appreciated from October 10 through November 16 (but preferably by October 28 to help us prepare for a timely distribution).

See the back cover for information on our winter sharing projects!

To learn more, contact Vicki Burstynowicz at 412-487-6316, option 1, x3143, or [vdburst@nhco.org](mailto:vdburst@nhco.org).



Children from **North Hills Estates** assembled packets of school supplies and also organized a carnival that raised \$845 for our mission!



**Tyler Kautzman** of McCandless (back center) asked his friends and family to bring new shoes to his 12th birthday party instead of gifts. He and his siblings dropped off 57 pairs of shoes!



Girl Scout **Abby Gentry** fashioned 100 lunch bags out of 1,400 recycled juice pouches for her Troup 834 Silver Award.



# ALL ABOUT OUR VOLUNTEERS

## Contact:

Linda Robins  
412-487-6316  
Option 2, x3215  
[lkrobins@nhco.org](mailto:lkrobins@nhco.org)

## Orientation Sessions

Please join us for an overview of our services and volunteer opportunities. If you'd like to volunteer but can't attend one of these sessions, please contact Linda.

- October 13, 10AM, Allison Park
- November 10, 10AM, Millvale
- January 12, 10AM, Millvale
- January 12, 6PM, Allison Park

## Spotlight on Receptionists

Caring and compassionate volunteer receptionists are the voice and face of NHCO! Last year, 71 individuals gave 3,945 hours in this capacity (we have no paid receptionists at any of our five sites). Answering the phones and greeting people who come for help or to drop off donations are the two main responsibilities of the volunteer receptionists. Help is needed at all of our locations, but we are in particular need at our Millvale Satellite. Receptionists generally commit to one half-day shift per week, but substitutes are also needed. Training is provided, and there are always people around to help you if you have questions!



**Susan Stoehr** served as a receptionist at our main site in Hampton for 13 years before moving out of the area in June.

## A Sampling of Other Opportunities

- Leaf raking for elderly neighbors, Saturdays beginning October 29. Great for families, teens and groups!
- Sort and distribute coats to families in need.
- Help create a haunted house in Bennington Woods, Saturdays in October.
- Bulk mailing volunteers are needed this fall, dates to be determined. Callers and mailers are requested for phone campaign to donors, November 1-3 (no cold calls!).
- Bell ringers and gift wrappers will be needed at various locations in November and December.

## Appreciation Picnic

Please join us on **Sunday, October 2**, 12:30-4:30PM, for a volunteer appreciation picnic at the Croatian Center on Schuetzen Park Road (Millvale). Bring the whole family for an afternoon of fun, food, fellowship and the Steelers game! RSVPs to Linda are appreciated but not required.



VISTAs **Kevin, Derek and Dave** will increase our capacity to serve people in need!

## Three New VISTAs Join NHCO

As People Helping People, NHCO welcomes three AmeriCorps\*VISTA members who will provide a year of volunteer service through NHCO!

**Kevin Grande** graduated from John Carroll University in May. A Hampton native, Kevin will develop our employment and financial literacy programs for people in need.

**Derek McMahan** will be working with our Community Auto program in Pine (see page five). A Greensburg resident, Derek earned his degree from Allegheny College in May.

**Dave Gifford** comes to us from Seattle, where he worked with Habitat for Humanity. He will help us grow our garden (see page four) and develop educational programs and other resources for our two food pantries.

## Dreams Come True for Savers

NHCO has been offering **Family Savings Accounts (FSA)** since 2002. Through this program, income-eligible individuals save up to \$2,000 for a specific goal (car purchase, home purchase or repair, higher education, or small business asset) and have their savings matched dollar for dollar by the **PA Department of Community and Economic Development**. Savers are also required to complete a financial literacy education component.

Since the program's inception, 115 local savers have completed the program and received \$223,264 in matching funds! Unfortunately, due to state budget cuts, enrollment for the program ended in June. We didn't want to lose a single penny of the matching funds available and were able to enroll 71 new savers in the final three months! Special thanks to lead volunteer **Marleen Kasbee** for her significant contributions in making this happen.

"**Sarah**" enrolled in the FSA program in August 2008. We matched her with a volunteer savings coach who helped her develop a savings plan, track expenses, and fulfill all of the program requirements. Sarah's dream is to earn her degree as a physician's assistant, which she is now pursuing with her savings and matching funds.

**Lori** started saving to purchase a house in January 2008, completed all of the requirements, received her matching funds and closed on her beautiful home this past June! She says, "It has been a goal of mine to be a homeowner since I was a teenager. I moved around a lot



**Lori and her husband were able to purchase their first home with savings and matching funds earned through NHCO's Family Savings Accounts program.**

most of my life and have always wanted a permanent place of my own. Through the FSA program at NHCO, I was able to learn more about budgeting and find a little money to put away each month. At times it was very hard to save, but the pride I feel now with accomplishing my goal has made it more than worth it!"

*"I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for helping my family this year with our electric bill. It truly helps because we recently lost my husband to cancer, so times are tough in our home these days. Thank you so very much." — Shaler mom*

## Why People Need Our Help

Last year, the top reason people asked for help at NHCO was because they were having trouble paying their utility bills and facing a potential shut-off. We provided utility assistance to 1,570 local families.

Here's one example of how we are able to help people with utility issues. "**Darla**" is a Bellevue woman in her forties who receives \$662 a month from Social Security Disability. As this is her only income, she is living well beneath poverty level, making it impossible to pay even modest rent and all of her utilities. NHCO partners with local utility companies to enroll people in need in Customer Assistance Programs, so we were able to freeze her electric bill balance of \$155 and reduce her monthly bill from \$20 to \$10 a month. This might not make that much of a difference for the "average" person, but for Darla it does.

NHCO volunteers also enroll between 250-300 people in the \$1 Energy program every year, which provides utility grants to those in need. To learn more about volunteer opportunities with our utility assistance programs, contact Linda Robins at 412-487-6316, option 2, x3215.

To read about the *second* most frequent request for help, please see page seven!

## How Our Garden Grows

All food grown at the **Rosalinda Sauro Sirianni Garden** goes to feed local families in need! Located on land donated by **Teresa Amelio** and her brothers in memory of their mother, the garden was dedicated to our mission on June 26. More than 200 supporters joined us for the ribbon cutting and blessing given by **Rev. Catherine Purves** of Bellevue United Presbyterian and the garden party that followed.

The organic community garden, located at 119 Davis Avenue in Bellevue, is planted and tended by volunteers. **Derwana (Dee) Hurst** of Pittsburgh heard about NHCO's need for garden volunteers at her workplace and immediately got involved. As an avid gardener, Dee came out to our first planting day and brought parsley and cucumber seedlings as well as sunflower, zucchini and bean seeds, which were planted together in one of the contour beds, companion planting known as "three sisters." The sunflowers grow up straight, giving great support to the pole beans that climb their way up, and the low-growing zucchini leaves provide shade to the soil so it doesn't dry out. Neat, right?

Thanks to Dee's donation, more than 60 pounds of zucchini and 100 pounds of cucumbers have been harvested so far. All told, well over 1,500 pounds of fresh produce have been harvested and distributed to the families who use our two food pantries in Bellevue and Hampton.

Thanks to the **Grable Foundation** for providing funding for three youth leadership coordinators—high school students **Alicia Monahan**, **Alora Cinicola** and **Zack Springer**—to work at the garden. Check out their fun and informative blog at [nhco.org/garden](http://nhco.org/garden)!

Volunteers are needed through November (and starting again next spring). Please contact Rosie Wise at 412-307-0069 or [rmwise@nhco.org](mailto:rmwise@nhco.org) to help.



Participating in the ceremonial ribbon cutting, left to right: **Terrie Amelio**, **Ernest Sirianni**, **Vincent Sirianni**, County Councilman **Matt Drozd**, youth leadership coordinator **Alicia Monahan**, Bellevue Borough Council President and NHCO board member **Kathy Coder**, Grow Pittsburgh's **Julie Butcher Pezzino**, and garden volunteer **George Becker** who helped build the shed in the photo.



**Dee Hurst** is one of more than 100 dedicated volunteers who has worked so hard to make our garden grow and produce over 1,500 pounds of fresh produce for local families in need.

## Various Fundraisers Further our Mission

For additional events and activities, please check out the calendar at [nhco.org](http://nhco.org).

➤ **PittsburghGives Day of Giving 2011** will take place on **Tuesday, October 4** (24 hour period beginning at 12:00AM). All credit card donations made to NHCO at [pittsburghgives.org](http://pittsburghgives.org) will receive a portion of available match dollars. This is a wonderful opportunity to make your gift go further thanks to the generosity of **The Pittsburgh Foundation**. Contact Susan Rohm at 412-487-6316, option 1, 3120, or [shrohmn@nhco.org](mailto:shrohmn@nhco.org).

➤ **Learning Express** in Cranberry (20418 Route 19) will hold a charity night for NHCO on September 22 from 4-9PM. Customers will receive 20% off their purchase, and NHCO will receive 20% of the evening's sales proceeds.

➤ No excuse not to exercise! Check out the customer appreciation day food drive at **LA Fitness** on September 29 and additional dates twice a month going forward, or visit **Club Julian** for their RAvEnergy! fitness class on October 1 at 12:45PM with donations to NHCO. Register at [D-Fit.com](http://D-Fit.com).

➤ We are already recruiting runners and assembling a committee for NHCO's second year of participation in the **Dick's Sporting Goods Marathon** in May 2012. Please contact Lee Anne Pontis at 412-487-6316, option 1, x 3133, or [lapontis@nhco.org](mailto:lapontis@nhco.org).

➤ **Donations** of food and sharing projects items may be **dropped off** at 1975 Ferguson Road in Hampton on the following Saturdays between 9AM-12PM: October 15, November 12 and December 10.

# COMMUNITY AUTO GETS PEOPLE TO WORK

It seems like everything is a competition these days, and the nonprofit world is no different. There are only so many charitable dollars and volunteer hours to go around. NHCO works hard to be the place to go when you need help or **want to help others**, and we are fortunate to have wonderful community support.

However, the one program in which we are struggling to get ahead is Community Auto. Everywhere you turn you'll find yet another organization accepting car donations. Turn on your radio or open those coupon packs you get in the mail and you are sure to hear or read a pitch or two.

When a vehicle is donated to one of these other organizations, the car is not repaired but instead is sent directly to an auction to be sold as-is. The donor may only deduct the price paid for the vehicle at auction.

## Here is what makes Community Auto different.

We evaluate every donated vehicle to determine if it is suitable for a family in need and whether it can be made roadworthy to get somebody to work. Once repaired and inspected, all cars are sold below market value and include current registration stickers, a six-month warranty, one-year AAA Plus membership, a full tank of gas and new car seats if needed. Each family's individual needs are taken into consideration when matching them with a vehicle.

All car donation programs are NOT created equal. In 2005, the tax laws regarding car donation to nonprofit organizations were amended to favor our program

versus other charity car donations. When your car goes to a person in need, you can deduct the fair market value of your car. This can often be a deduction of \$2-3,000 over the auction amount that most other nonprofits provide!

Community Auto accepts all vehicles—cars, minivans, pick-up trucks, work vans, old police cars, motorcycles, boats, RVs, etc.—in any condition. If the vehicle cannot be driven, we will arrange for it to be towed to our site in Pine. A notary public is on hand and we take care of all the title work in-house at no charge to the donor.

Please consider putting the handy reminder below on your fridge; if and when the time comes to donate your car, you'll know who to call to make the most impact with your donation.

**DONATE YOUR CAR**  
**MAXIMUM TAX DEDUCTION**

**COMMUNITY AUTO**  
A program of North Hills  
Community Outreach

**724-443-8300**  
**communityauto.org**



This mother of three from east Pittsburgh purchased a 2003 Honda Civic. As a traveling beautician for nursing homes, it is important for her to have a reliable and affordable vehicle.



This single mother of two was referred to us by **Victory Church** and purchased this 2001 Mazda with a grant from NHCO and assistance from the church's benevolence fund.



With funding assistance from another nonprofit organization, this single mother of two purchased a 2000 Mazda so she can get to work and take care of her family.

# PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE

Here are just a few of the ways people are making a difference for their neighbors in need through North Hills Community Outreach. We're sorry we don't have room to mention every gift or effort!

- Keeping us cool at our North Boroughs Food Pantry is **Bolster-DeHart**. They generously donated labor and materials for the installation of much needed air conditioning—a value of \$2,473! Thanks also to **Pat, Bill, Matt** and **Kevin** in the AGH-Suburban/WPAHS facilities department for their assistance.
- Thanks to the leadership of **Hampton Township Council**, NHCO has received \$1,817 from **113 generous Hampton residents** who chose to donate rather than receive their local tax refund!
- Food pantry volunteer **Ryan Wilson** was named a Hero of Everyday Life by the Sodexo Foundation and selected NHCO to receive his \$5,000 award.
- **Elan Financial Services** held a golf tournament that raised more than \$5,000 for our Community Auto program.
- 38 walkers raised \$1,797 for NHCO through the **Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community**. Special thanks to volunteers **Chris** and **Crystal Manning**.
- **Piecing it Together** on Babcock Boulevard donated five handmade quilts for families in need.
- Recruiting expert **Cori Swidorsky** donated her time to lead a workshop on LinkedIn for jobseekers. Thanks to lead volunteer **Deborah Furda** for organizing the event.
- The McCandless/Ross Chapter of **MOMS Club International** donated \$100 of their year-end surplus to NHCO.
- The **St. Paul's Players** once again donated two nights of their summer theatre performances to NHCO's Desert Theatre, which raised \$11,500. Thanks to **Thrivent Financial for Lutherans** for providing matching funds; **Crate & Barrel** for their silent auction donations; and the **Followers of the Drunkard's Path** quilting group for donating a gorgeous handmade quilt for the auction.
- The **Three Rivers Singles Golf Club** donated \$632 and six boxes of groceries.
- **Jim Yingling** of **Hesse Service** on Route 19 gives us a nice discount on towing for Community Auto.
- **Ingomar Middle School** students collected and donated \$5,036 for participating in one hour of exercise activities.



**HJ Heinz** employees spent a summer day sprucing up our grounds (as did folks from **Memorial Park Presbyterian**). A big thanks to both groups!



Sixty kids and 15 adults from five local Lutheran churches participated in a week-long “stay at home work camp” this summer. They spent their days doing service projects for elderly neighbors and slept at **Christ Lutheran** in Millvale. **Joslynn, Angela, Maddy** and **Skylar** stopped by with school supply donations.



**Bruster's** of Ingomar held their annual Summerfest event in July. With activities including the ever popular ice cream eating contest, \$362 was raised for our mission.

## United Way Contributor Choice Codes

- **NHCO General Fund—2357**
- Combined Federal Campaign—53330
- State Employee Combined Appeal— 4601-0133
- For additional program codes, visit [nhco.org/uw.pdf](http://nhco.org/uw.pdf).

## Simple Gestures Mean So Much to Our Elderly Neighbors in Need

“**Mary Ann**” is only 66 years old, one of our youngest Faith in Action (FIA) care recipients. Due to health issues, the Ross Township resident has a difficult time walking and getting out and becomes lonely due to lack of contact with others. We matched her with **Kara**, a volunteer from Hampton who works full-time as a physical therapist. Kara takes Mary Ann grocery shopping in the evenings or on the weekends, while other caring volunteers take her to doctors’ appointments on weekdays.

According to Mary Ann, “Kara is such a delightful person and it’s like going shopping with a friend.” For her part, Kara says, “Mary Ann is someone who, despite facing challenges, has been able to maintain an independent lifestyle. We are a great example of how FIA can work to help seniors by providing a simple service and increasing a person’s social support system.”

Another FIA care receiver is “**Helen**,” a resident of UPMC Lighthouse Pointe in O’Hara, where our FIA-Hartwood and Free Rides for Seniors programs are based. Helen relies on a walker, is a widow and has no immediate family in the area. Although she has many friends and is active in her church, she said she felt like she was missing that extra special someone in her life.

That special someone is FIA volunteer **Paula** from West View. Like Kara, Paula works full-time but made arrangements to see Helen one evening a week at Lighthouse Pointe. During their visits, they go shopping and just spend time talking, something that Helen has cherished. She says, “I believe that Paula is a Godsend. I look forward to our outings and visits, but most importantly she has filled an empty space in my life.”

These stories demonstrate how easy—and meaningful—it is to volunteer through Faith in Action. We especially need volunteers who can provide transportation for our elderly



**Marie**, 91 years old of Shaler, was one of 49 seniors to receive a **Smile Day** bouquet in July, delivered by one of ten caring volunteers. Thanks to **McCandless Floral** for their participation in this nationwide Teleflora event.

neighbors. They need to get to the doctor, post office, grocery store and other key destinations. Sometimes they just need to get out and be with others. An hour of your time goes a long way towards alleviating feelings of loneliness and isolation. We are also recruiting volunteers in every community to rake leaves and shovel snow for older adults.

With funding from **United Way of Allegheny County**, NHCO is working with **Family Services of Western PA** to ensure that every senior in Allegheny County who needs a volunteer to help has one. Please call us today at **412-307-0071** or visit [openyourhearttoasenior.org](http://openyourhearttoasenior.org) to learn how you can help an elderly neighbor remain safe and independent in his or her own home.

## Hunger Happens Here Too

When we think about feeding the hungry, our thoughts can drift towards “somewhere else.” People may think that there aren’t any hungry people in the northern suburbs of Pittsburgh, but there are. Last year, 1,372 families in economic hardship used our two food pantries in Bellevue and Hampton—the number two reason people asked for help (please see page three for the top need).

In addition to nonperishable items, we also provide bread, meat and cheese when it is made available to us. We also have an organic community garden (see page four) and are one of only four pantries in the entire Pittsburgh region to have a dedicated gluten-free section. Right now we have 15 families with celiac disease or gluten sensitivities taking advantage of this feature.

More than 96% of what we distribute is donated to us by caring individuals and groups. To learn more about organizing a food drive, please contact Brandi Rukovena at 412-487-6316, option 1, x3145, or [brukovena@nhco.org](mailto:brukovena@nhco.org).

*“It’s not an easy thing to admit one could use some help with purchasing food. I just want to thank you all so very much for making my first food pantry experience comfortable.”*  
—Ross Twp. woman

## NORTH HILLS COMMUNITY OUTREACH

1975 Ferguson Road  
Allison Park, PA 15101-3235

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Pittsburgh, PA  
Permit #952

### My Neighbors Can Count on Me!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (in case of questions) \_\_\_\_\_

#### Gift Amount/Payment Method

\$25  \$50  \$100  \$250  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed.

MC/VISA # \_\_\_\_\_

Expires \_\_\_\_\_ 3-digit security code \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

You can also make a secure donation at [www.nhco.org](http://www.nhco.org).



#### Optional

- Save postage! Please don't send a thank you letter.
- My employer will match this gift; my form is enclosed.
- I wish to remain anonymous.
- Please contact me about volunteering.
- Please contact me about including NHCO in my will.
- This is a commemorative gift:

- in honor of  in memory of  in thanksgiving for

\_\_\_\_\_

Please notify about my commemorative gift:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

OR email \_\_\_\_\_

NHCO is an IRS-approved 501(c)3 organization.

Your donation qualifies as a charitable deduction.

Please mail to:

NHCO, 1975 Ferguson Road, Allison Park, PA 15101

F11NEWS

### When Everyone Shares, No One is Cold, Hungry or Alone

The holidays are supposed to be a joyous time, but for families struggling financially, they can be a tremendous burden more than anything else. NHCO works to ease their worries with our winter sharing projects.

**Sharing Holiday Warmth:** Low-income families receive a credit on their gas or electric bill and a grocery store gift card. Knowing they are receiving this help, they can budget some of their funds for holiday spending for their families. Financial donations and gift cards are requested to supplement a generous lead gift from the **Sylvia and Martin Snow Charitable Foundation**. If you would like to display a Sharing Holiday Warmth wreath with gift tags at your place of business or worship, please contact Vicki at 412-487-6316, option 1, x3143, or [vdburst@nhco.org](mailto:vdburst@nhco.org).

**Holiday Toy Shop:** Toys, games, books, sporting goods and other gifts appropriate for children of all ages can be donated between November 21 and December 14 (the week or so before Christmas is pretty chaotic at our service sites, so this deadline is really important). Also, we can only accept *new* items (unwrapped please so that parents can choose the gifts for their children).

Donations may be dropped off or mailed to NHCO at 1975 Ferguson Road, Allison Park, PA 15101. Thank you!

### Wish List Priority Items

Before buying anything, we always try to get it donated to conserve our limited resources. Our complete wish list can be found at [nhco.org](http://nhco.org), but over the next few weeks our priority items are gently worn, clean winter coats and Thanksgiving food. To help, please contact Vicki Burstynowicz at 412-487-6316, option 1, x 3143, or [vdburst@nhco.org](mailto:vdburst@nhco.org).

### Enjoy/Entertainment Books

We have both coupon books! Contact Cheryl at 412-487-6316, option 1, x3111, or [clenglish@nhco.org](mailto:clenglish@nhco.org) to order yours.