



**North Hills
COMMUNITY
OUTREACH**

People Helping People

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*)

email: help@nhco.org

website: 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

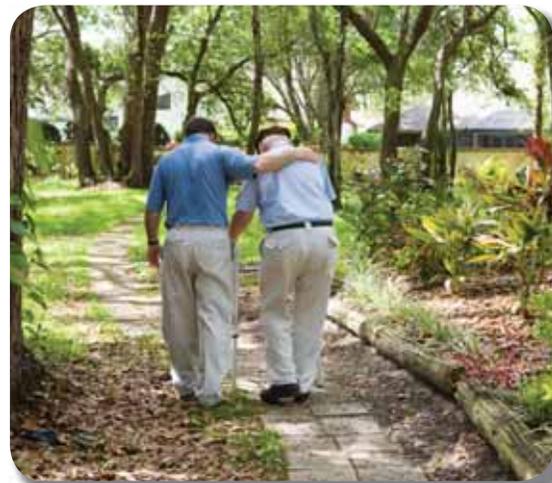
The Connector is published three times per year and mailed to 13,500 local addresses.

You can **help us save postage and printing costs** by signing up to receive the newsletter electronically. Also, please let us know if you are receiving more than one copy by sending an email to help@nhco.org.

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

Open Your Heart to a Senior

In the past three years alone, NHCO has provided compassionate and effective help to 35,379 individuals in need. Of that number, 10,209 (29%) were over the age of 65. Each senior received an average of ten services, which could include volunteer caregiving, food pantry, utility assistance, advocacy, emergency financial assistance and other help. Volunteer caregiving, which was provided for 1,127 older adults in the last three years, is an essential service that helps our elderly neighbors remain in their own homes.



With funding from the **United Way of Allegheny County** and in partnership with **Family Services of Western PA**, North Hills Community Outreach is reaching out to potential volunteers through an initiative called *Open Your Heart to a Senior*. The goal is to ensure that every senior citizen in Allegheny County who needs a caring volunteer to help has one.

Volunteers can help an older adult stay safe and independent in his or her own home by assisting with simple tasks that don't take that much time. We're talking about an hour or two at the most! You can make a difference by:

- Taking a senior grocery shopping, or taking their list with you when you do yours
- Driving an older adult to a doctor's appointment, physical therapy, hair salon or worship service
- Visiting or calling to make sure a senior is safe and to alleviate loneliness
- Shoveling snow, raking leaves and other yard projects

If this sounds familiar, that's because it is: the program already exists at NHCO as *Faith in Action*. *Open Your Heart to a Senior* is a collaborative initiative designed to increase the program's impact. Trainings are held throughout the county, and we are looking for caring individuals with a little bit of time and an open heart. There are opportunities for everyone, including high school and college students as well as families with children.

To learn more about how you can help a senior in your community, please visit www.openyourhearttoasenior.org or call 412-307-0071.



An initiative of



Contact:

Reuven Dashevsky
412-487-6316
Option 2, x3208
rdashevsky@nhco.org

Volunteer Orientations

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 Reuven.

- February 11, 10 AM, Millvale
- March 11, 10 AM, North Boroughs
- April 8, 10 AM, Allison Park
- May 6, 10 AM, Millvale
- June 10, 10 AM, North Boroughs

A Sampling of Volunteer Opportunities

- March 5-9: Unload, sort and deliver fruit for the annual **Citrus Sale**.
- April 13-14: Help us raise much needed funds by assisting with the spring appeal **bulk mailing**.
- May 3-5: Join us in the evenings for the spring **phone campaign**.
- **Family Savings Accounts coaches** are needed to help savers reach their goals. Attend a training on Saturday, April 10, from 9:30-2:00 at the Millvale Satellite.
- **Volunteer coaches** are needed to advise individuals and families as they manage their finances, search for and secure employment, and address housing concerns.
- **Help older adults** remain safe and independent in their own homes (see cover story).
- Drivers and dispatchers are needed for the **Free Rides for Seniors** shuttle.

Our Eighth Community Champion!



In December, NHCO volunteer **Althea Worthy** was honored by the *Post-Gazette* as a Community Champion.

Althea volunteers four full days a week at NHCO's North Boroughs Satellite office in Bellevue, helping families in crisis, hardship and poverty. As a utility specialist volunteer, she coordinates applications for programs like the Dollar Energy Fund Hardship Program that assist those struggling to pay their gas, electric and water bills. Althea also serves individuals and families in need of emergency food, employment, rental and housing assistance.

Althea joined NHCO's board of directors in 2009 and has faithfully served on committees, participated in fundraising campaigns, and coordinated facility tours. She has met with community, business and government leaders to advocate for and promote NHCO's programs and services. For the past five years, Althea also has served as a member of NHCO's Mini-Masters Miniature Golf Tournament, which annually raises \$10,000 to help families in need.

For more information about NHCO, visit nhco.org or call 412-487-6316. Althea Worthy is a 2009 Jefferson Award recipient. To nominate a volunteer for this award, visit postgazette.com/jefferson or call 412-262-2534.

With compassion, kindness and professionalism, Althea also serves individuals and families in need of emergency food, employment, rental and housing assistance. Always ready to listen and lend a hand, her daily efforts help to improve the quality of life for individuals and families experiencing hardship and set them on the path to self-sufficiency.

Althea is also a member of our Board of Directors and has served as the co-chair of the Mini-Masters Miniature Golf Tournament for six years.

A leader, advocate and supporter of those who are struggling in our own community, Althea is an indispensable asset to North Hills Community Outreach. See what Althea has to say about her volunteer experience with NHCO by viewing the five-minute informational video on our website.

Increasing our Capacity to Serve Neighbors in Need

This past summer, we welcomed four volunteers for a year of service through the AmeriCorps*VISTA program to increase our capacity to serve struggling families (part of the federal economic recovery plan).

Three volunteer coach coordinators are tasked with developing volunteer mentoring programs to help families avoid or move out of poverty by increasing access to employment, financial literacy and housing resources. In just a few short months, they've recruited 14 enthusiastic volunteers who have helped 56 individuals in crisis. Trainings are offered on an ongoing basis. To learn more about volunteering, contact **Jeff** at North Boroughs, **Laurie** at Allison Park, or **Devin** at Millvale.

Our food projects coordinator is developing sustainable methods to acquire adequate donations of food and other items to meet the supplemental needs of all low-income families. So far, she has worked with 125 new supporters and brought in \$183,481 in food and other items. To learn how your organization or business can help, call **Katie** at 412-487-6316, option 1.

Seasonal Sharing Projects Wrap-Up

We appreciate every gift and hour of time and wish we had room to name every donor and volunteer!

Winter Coat Shops

- 347 families and 42 agencies received 3,199 coats
- Volunteers **Jo Stone, Jim Kane, Don O'Leary** and **North Boroughs Rotary**

"Above and Beyond" Donors:

Carson Middle
Cherry City Volunteer Fire Company
John & Connie Geier
Glen Montessori School
Memorial Park Presbyterian
North Allegheny Intermediate
North Allegheny/North Hills Cheerleaders
Sam Riley
Shaler Area Elementary
St. John Neumann
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran

Turkey on Every Table

- 591 families received a Thanksgiving dinner
- Volunteers **Jean Kirk** and **Jean Fitzgerald**

"Above and Beyond" Donors:

Assumption School
Ingomar Middle
Jones Day
Tim Keene
Legend Financial Advisors
Morreale Chiropractic
Shady Side Academy
St. Paul's UMC
Unitarian Universalist
Wexford Community Presbyterian

Sharing Holiday Warmth

- 300 families received grocery store gift cards
- 262 families (so far) received utility bill credits
- Volunteer **Jean Muth**
- **Sylvia and Martin Snow Charitable Foundation**

Holiday Toy Shops

- 880 children received toys, games and more
- Volunteers **Karen Boujoukos** and **Jean Muth**

"Above and Beyond" Donors:

Choice Chiropractic and Wellness
Marine Corps Toys for Tots
North Pittsburgh Corvette Club
Shaler Area Middle
Roy & Jill Sharon
UPMC Passavant Pharmacy Department

Sports Share

- 185 children received 425 new sporting goods items

"Above and Beyond" Donors:

Best Buy
Todd Burkey
Shaler Area Health & Physical Education Department
Target

Up Next: Spring Share!

From February 16-March 26 (the earlier the better!), we are collecting pre-assembled baskets, baskets with plastic grass, wrapped candy and candy bars, mini sports drinks, snack-size treats and granola bars, small toys and stuffed animals (*new*) and store gift cards. We expect to help 500 families in hardship.



Youth leadership coordinator **Cara Tovissi** organizes donations for Sports Share.



St. Paul's UMC kindergartners dressed in Thanksgiving attire deliver a food donation.



The tower of games is almost as tall as lead toy shop volunteer **Karen Boujoukos**.

30,000 Free Rides (and Counting)!

This May marks the five year anniversary of Free Rides for Seniors (FRFS), our 14-passenger shuttle bus that operates out of donated space at **UPMC Lighthouse Pointe** with funding from **St. Margaret Foundation**. Since the program's inception, our volunteer drivers have provided more than **30,000 rides!** Here are two stories of how the program has gone above and beyond to help people in need recently.

FRFS helps hundreds of senior citizens every year, but this past year we "bent the rules" to help a 46-year-old man with terminal cancer. Doug lived in Sharpsburg with his wife, four children, one grandchild and his mother-in-law. Including Doug, five members of this family had gone through cancer treatment at one point. The family did not have a car, and the Port Authority bus stop was six blocks from their home. So Doug rode the Free Rides for Seniors bus to St. Margaret Hospital for a year to undergo treatment. Sadly, Doug lost his battle in November, but we were honored to be able to provide this service for him and his family during their time of need.

Many residents of the Blawnox High Rise ride the shuttle, some on a daily basis. In October, the building was evacuated due to a fatal fire. FRFS volunteers **Kay Neiswonger** and **Karen Roach** led the volunteer team from **Hoboken Presbyterian** and worked with the Red Cross to coordinate clothing, meals, medication and transportation for the residents.

Volunteer drivers (ages 25-70) and onboard dispatchers are always needed. No special license is required to drive the shuttle. Call 412-449-0151.

Help with Appliances

NHCO is collaborating with the **Society of St. Vincent dePaul** to provide energy-efficient appliances to low-income families and individuals in emergency situations. Since the program began in November, we have provided three stoves, a washer, refrigerator and hot water tank. We expect to provide 20 families with new appliances through this program, which is funded by **The Pittsburgh Foundation's** NeighborAid Fund.

Community Auto Car Giveaway

On Christmas Eve, our partner agency Community Auto gave a free car to a local family in need. Forty applications were received, with a panel of community volunteers deciding who would receive the car (not an easy decision; every story was compelling).

The 2002 Buick Century was fully detailed and filled with presents. Also included was a current PA inspection sticker, one-year AAA-Plus membership, \$100 gas card, and a one-year/12,500 mile warranty.

The recipient of the "Too Big for the Stocking Car Giveaway" is **Jami**, a single mother of three children and caregiver to her young nephew. Jami recently earned certification as an administrative computer specialist and wants to pursue an undergraduate degree but is unable to do so without reliable transportation to work and school. She has purchased several cars at auction, but they have all turned out to be "clunkers." According to her application essay, "Not having a vehicle is stifling my potential to develop my career and make a better life for my family. Please help me accomplish this." We hope her new car will help her achieve her goals.

To donate your car and receive the maximum tax deduction possible, call 724-443-8300 or visit www.communityauto.org.

Top picture: KDKA's **Kristine Sorensen** interviews Community Auto manager **Jennifer Carr**, Community Auto vehicle consultant **Ed Holdcroft**, and car recipient **Jami** and her family.

Bottom picture: Jami and her family are thrilled with their new car (and boots and coats from "Santa").





Savings coach volunteers give their undivided attention to FSA lead volunteer **Marleen Kasbee** at a recent training.

Saver Reaches Goal with Coach's Help

Since NHCO's Family Savings Accounts began in 2002, 96 individuals have completed the program and received \$191,807 in matching money (funded by the **PA Department of Community and Economic Development**).

One saver who recently completed the program and received her matching funds is **Karen** of McCandless. She opened her Family Savings Account in November 2007 with an asset goal of home repair.

With the help of a volunteer savings coach, Karen learned to balance her checkbook consistently, created a workable budget, and tracked expenses on a spreadsheet to help her better understand her family's spending habits. Says Karen, "The FSA program was very beneficial to my family. My savings coach was encouraging and knowledgeable, and helped me to stay focused and get our family's budget on track. It was a great feeling to reach our goal!"

Karen's coach **Lauren** says, "Karen was a great participant in the FSA program. I was able to give her some tips on how to look at her spending and budget her money; from there it was all her efforts. I am excited to see her reach her goals."

The family used their savings and matching funds last summer for home improvement.

If you'd like to learn more about becoming a volunteer savings coach, contact Harriet Gibbs at 412-487-6316, option 2, x3217, or hzgibbs@nhco.org. The next training is scheduled for Saturday, April 10, from 9:30-2:00, at the Millvale Satellite.

"Because of people like you and all the volunteers and families who donate their time and money, we were able to celebrate our holiday in a more relaxed atmosphere, and we cannot thank you enough."—

Shaler

Housing and Utility Assistance Relieves Burdens

Due to limited resources, NHCO typically provides one-time financial payments for people with housing and utility issues (these families are usually still eligible to use the food pantry, receive holiday help and benefit from other NHCO programs).

The **Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program**, funded in part by the **Allegheny County Department of Economic Development** and the **City of Pittsburgh**, enables us to provide extended rent and utility assistance to local families in extreme crisis situations.

NHCO is collaborating with **Allegheny Valley Association of Churches** on this project; together we are currently working with 55 families (and many landlords) throughout the county. Here are two of those families:

James is 41, lives in east Pittsburgh and has a young daughter. Family emergencies and unexpected funeral costs plunged James into a severe financial crisis. He was facing eviction due to nonpayment of rent. With the grant, NHCO paid rental arrears, and James has been able to stay in his home. We will continue to work with James as he strives to attain economic self-sufficiency by earning his GED at a community college. His landlord wrote to us, "Just a few words of thanks for your payment on behalf of James. I greatly appreciate your help in his difficult time."

Michelle is a single mother who lives in Shaler. Her full-time job was cut to part-time, resulting in a financial hardship that led to an eviction. We paid her first month's rent as well as a security deposit for a new apartment. Additionally, we covered back balances and security deposits for several utilities. To assist with her budget, we helped her enroll in Duquesne Light's Customer Assistance Program. Michelle still has her part-time job but is actively interviewing for positions that would provide full-time work and a higher income. She is also considering going back to school for a college degree so that she can better provide for herself and her daughter.

We are grateful for the opportunity to help James, Michelle and many others in similar crisis situations.

Food Pantry Services in High Demand

Last October, we issued a plea for help. Our food pantry shelves were bare, and we weren't going to have enough food for the next distribution. The reasons for this were twofold: more people in hardship and crisis are using the food pantry, and donations tend to be lower at the beginning of the school year. We only buy about 3-5% of our food (mostly from the **Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank** at steep discounts); the rest comes from community donations.

The media, congregations, businesses and the community as a whole all responded to our plea. In the three weeks following our call for help, we received \$48,870 in food donations and \$14,654 in financial contributions for the pantry. To accommodate our donors, we opened our doors on a Saturday to accept food donations; in just three hours, 56 people dropped off food (see photo). Now we are open one Saturday a month from 9:00-noon



We asked for help, and the community responded!



Maggie, Kaitlyn and Marlyn Root of McCandless display some of their \$453 food donation. Maggie conducted a Thanksgiving drive for a Marshall Middle School consumer sciences project.

to make it easier for donors who can't get to us during the week. See our website calendar for dates.

Our two food pantries (Hampton and Bellevue) are currently serving about 500 low-income families every month. Due to the increasing number of people needing food, we added a fourth food distribution at our Hampton location. To keep up with the growing demand, we need the community to pitch in now more than ever! Here are just a few examples of recent generosity:

- **Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney** employees donated 300 boxes of cereal.
- **Rotary Club of North Boroughs** donated \$700 in fresh fruit.
- **Treesdale Community Association** and **A.W. Beattie Career Center** each donated more than \$6,000 in food.
- **Shaler Area Schools** and **Hampton Middle School** each donated \$3,000 in food, while the **North Allegheny Federation of Teachers** pitched in \$2,400 worth of food plus \$3,820 in funds.
- Two haunted houses resulted in donations to the pantry. Thanks to the **Medic family** of Hampton; their event brought in \$450 in food from **Hosack Elementary** families. Thanks also to **Robb Montgomery** of Ross; his elaborate cemetery resulted in \$756 in funds and \$700 in food.
- The Bellevue **Kuhn's** donated 1,000 plastic bags when we ran out at the North Boroughs Food Pantry.
- **Massaro Corporation** held a weight loss challenge/food drive. NHCO received \$2,500 and a van full of food, and 24 Massaro employees lost 191 pounds.
- **Unitarian Universalist** donates food and fresh produce nearly every week.
- **Federal Home Loan Bank** contributed \$1,500 for the food pantry.
- **Rocca's Italian Foods** donated \$5,280 worth of pumpkin ravioli, which we are sharing with many other pantries.

More than a dozen local elementary schools are participating in the "Souper Bowl" food drive; look for the results on our website and facebook page. Thanks to volunteer **Rosemary Prager** for organizing this effort.

If you'd like to conduct a food drive, now is the perfect time to do it! All food donations (and financial contributions earmarked for the pantry) received in March and April help us leverage funds from the **Feinstein Foundation's \$1 Million Challenge**. For more information, contact Katie Cowling at 412-487-6316, option 1, or kcowling@nhco.org.

Thumbs Up to People Helping People!

Here are just a few of the ways people recently have made a difference for their neighbors in need.

- **Girl Scout Cadette Troop #51114** coordinates monthly donations of “birthday boxes” and personal care items from other local troops.
- **Avonworth High School Class of 1959** sent \$500 to help families in need in the North Boroughs, with a note saying, *“We want as many homes as possible to be filled with good cheer and the necessities of life this holiday season.”*
- The **Rylands** of Hampton donated \$200 from their annual golf tournament held in memory of two family members.
- District Judge **Ron Costa** hosted a spaghetti dinner that brought in \$3,000 for the Extreme Adversity Fund.
- **North Hills Newcomers** donated \$6,300 in proceeds from their holiday luncheon’s auction.
- **UPMC Passavant** underwrote the printing of our latest annual report, available for download on our website.
- **Ami Moore** and her **Iron City Church** friends provided a festive holiday meal for a local family in hardship in space donated by **Strictly Business Catering**.
- **Reverend Eric Reimer** of **Rehoboth Evangelical Lutheran** donated \$150 from his installation service.
- **North Catholic High School** students sponsored “Christmas on Campus” for seven families in need.
- **Joan Baxter** led bellringing volunteers, and **Jan Harrison** and **Francine Rose** were in charge of gift wrapping fundraisers.
- **Alexa Heller** of Hampton donated 19 items from our online wish list, along with two bags of groceries.
- Members of the **United Jewish Federation** visited with 65 elderly Faith in Action care receivers on Christmas Day. The volunteers delivered \$2,975 worth of gifts donated by members of **St. Alexis Parish**. Also, food pantry volunteer **Dana Getz**, along with her organization **KnitHOPE**, made and donated 20 beautiful scarves for the care receivers.



Central Elementary students made and donated 20 fleece blankets to help keep neighbors in need warm.



Michael Price, a student at St. Bonaventure, saved his pennies for a year and donated \$7.34.

Upcoming Fundraisers and Special Events

Glass Slipper Ball 724-935-6100

March 6, Four Points Sheraton in Cranberry
Sponsored by Zonta Three Rivers North
Some of the proceeds benefit NHCO’s scholarship program

Millvale Satellite Pasta Dinner 412-487-6316, option 2

April 16, 4-7 PM, Millvale Community Center
Tickets are \$7 in advance, \$9 day of the event
Dine in or take out

Mini-Masters Miniature Golf Tournament 412-307-0069

May 13, 5 PM, RMU Island Sports Center, Neville Island
Tickets start at \$45 and include golf, dinner and auctions

Walk for a Healthy Community 412-487-6316, option 2

May 22, Schenley Park
Sponsored by Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield
NHCO is a participating organization - walk for us!

Dessert Theatre

Details are still being ironed out.
Watch our website for updates.

2010 U.S. Women’s Open

July 5-11, Oakmont Country Club
NHCO will need 200 concession stand volunteers.
More information will be available on our website soon!

NORTH HILLS COMMUNITY OUTREACH

1975 Ferguson Road
Allison Park, PA 15101-3235

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Words of Thanks

"We live paycheck to paycheck, making just enough to maintain our bills; however, there's no room in our budget to allow for extras. With your kind and generous gift of love, we were able to pay our bills, and you made it possible to provide our kids with a wonderful Christmas.

The food provided gave us a delicious meal and helped us get to next food stamp day. My daughter said it was her best Christmas ever. My youngest son LOVES the G.I. Joe toy, and my oldest appreciated his new comforter (his room has no heat vents).

Gifts aside, what my husband and I appreciate most is the love and understanding we received from you. You allowed us to maintain our dignity. May God bless each and every one of you who gave us a helping hand."



NHCO is now on **facebook**. Become a fan today and stay up to date with all the latest news!

Wish List Priorities

- 2010 desk calendars
- Copy paper, white and colors
- 9x12 mailing envelopes
- Toys R Us gift cards to purchase car seats
- Vehicles for Community Auto

For a complete wish list, visit www.nhco.org. To donate, contact Vicki Burstynowicz at 412-487-6316, option 1, x3111, or vdburst@nhco.org.

Yes, I Want to Help!

Make your gift work twice as hard! Many employers have **matching gift programs**; please check with your human resources department to obtain the necessary forms.

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone (*in case of questions*) _____

Gift Amount/Payment

\$35 \$50 \$100 \$250 Other \$ _____

Check enclosed.

MasterCard # _____

Visa # _____

Expires _____ 3-digit security code _____

Signature _____

Optional

- Save postage! Please don't send a thank you letter.
- I wish to remain anonymous.
- Please contact me about volunteering (be sure to include your phone number above).
- Please contact me about including NHCO in my will and/or other planned giving opportunities.

This gift is:

in honor of in memory of in thanksgiving for

Please notify about my commemorative gift:

NHCO is an IRS-approved 501(c)3 organization.
Your donation qualifies as a charitable deduction.