



Spring  
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## Former Participant Becomes Teacher in Youth Arts Program

While he was a student at Scranton High School, Malek Thomas became involved in UNC's Illumination Youth Arts program. He credits his participation in the program's photography, theatre, and creative writing classes with helping him build confidence and relationships. Recently, UNC was proud to welcome Malek back to the program, no longer as a student, but as a teacher!



Malek is currently a sophomore in the Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management program at Keystone College. His passion for cooking started at a young age and stemmed from watching his parents cook and attending family gatherings with numerous different types of unique food. Taking advantage of the remodeled teaching kitchen at the Oppenheim Center for the Arts, UNC hired Malek to teach a new culinary arts class once per week for teens 14 and older. Focusing on the basics of kitchen safety, affordable meals, and some French cuisine, the culinary arts class has quickly become a popular program, with Malek also serving as a mentor to his students.

"Coming back to UNC as an instructor has to be one of the most exciting things that has happened to me," says Malek. "Getting a chance to teach something I love to do is amazing!"

After he graduates from college, Malek hopes to open a fusion restaurant, a bar, and maybe a bakery. In the meantime, UNC is glad to have him as part of the team!

## Chronic Disease Self-Management Program Expanding



UNC's Community Health Department serves as a bridge connecting at-risk individuals to health care services. One of the Department's initiatives includes a recently expanded education program, targeted to individuals with chronic diseases, that teaches ways to better manage illness and access appropriate care.

The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) is an evidence-based program developed by Stanford University that utilizes peer health educators to teach individuals with chronic illness how to improve

their quality of life, hopefully lessening some of the economic, physical, and social burdens that they face due to illness. Over the course of six weekly sessions, each participant learns important information about healthy habits, medication usage, and treatment decisions.

UNC currently has a total of 5 staff members trained by Stanford to offer the program. The agency also recently expanded the program by hiring two Spanish speaking peer health educators, as well as by cross training several of the staff in the versions of the program specific to Diabetes and pain management.

"Being able to share my experiences and knowledge with others and watching them grow is what I love about being a Peer Health Educator," said Josefina Lowe.

Area health care organizations, community groups, senior centers, and other entities can request the program to be hosted at their site. For more information, call Meredith McCracken at 570-346-0759, ext. 115.



## Letter From the Chief Executive Officer

Well, Spring is in the air! Here we are at the end of April and the weather has been terrific. It makes planning for camp seem so appropriate. We are well on our way to filling the resident camp we have inherited from the Diocese of Scranton and plans have begun for Project Hope registration throughout May. We are cautiously optimistic that we will be able to expand Project Hope somewhat this year with a goal of getting it back to its original six-week program in the near future. In order to do this we will need to expand the utilization of the resident camp program, as this is what will help support Project Hope. Initial plans include bringing back a Father/Son weekend program, as well as the addition of a boys' resident camp next year. Stay tuned for more developments as they unfold. We are hopeful to have the property transferred to UNC by the end of the summer.



Michael Hanley

As you can see from this newsletter, there are many things cooking at UNC, but none make me prouder than the article about Malek Thomas. Malek is a graduate of our Leaders in Training Program and was a participant in many of our arts programs. He always had a camera around his neck and was an avid and skilled photographer. Now he has returned to us as a teacher, using the skills he developed in Keystone College's Culinary Arts program to teach at the Center. Welcome back Malek.

Be sure to read the articles on Kicks for Kids, a kickball tournament to support Project Hope, and on Seniors Got Talent, which supports our Older Adult programs. Both are entertaining events not to be missed.

Finally, thank you for all the support you have given to United Neighborhood Centers throughout the year. Without you we would not be able to offer all these diverse and unique programs at UNC.

— Michael Hanley

## UNC Preparing for 2016 Camp Season

UNC is currently finalizing preparations for the 2016 Summer Camp season, which this year will include operation of resident traditional and basketball camps at Camp St. Andrew, as well as Project Hope.

Currently, 325 children from low-income families are expected to be provided with a traditional summer day camp experience through Project Hope during the month of July. Hiring of camp staff is being finalized and training will soon take place. Arts and crafts, sports, and supplemental tutoring activities are all on the agenda to make the experience both fun and educational.

Likewise, UNC is preparing to offer traditional and basketball resident camps at Camp St. Andrew, which the agency is leasing from the Diocese of Scranton for the summer. More than 400 children are already signed up to attend these programs. Discussions regarding a potential permanent transfer of the Camp are still ongoing.

## Around the Agency

Children in UNC's Youth Arts Program will perform the musical Aladdin on Friday, May 20 at 6:00 p.m. and Saturday, May 21 at 2:00 p.m. at UNC's Oppenheim Center for the Arts' Burns Auditorium. The performance is open to the public, and approximately 30 youngsters are taking part in the show.



The South Side Farmers Market, which is coordinated by UNC, will move to a new outdoor location during the spring/summer of 2016. As of Saturday, May 14, the Market will operate weekly from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at the corner of Alder Street and Cedar Avenue. The new location will allow the businesses surrounding the area to have greater participation, and the Market will have more to offer than ever!

## Save the Date!

### Farm to Fork

August 6, 2016 - 6:00 p.m.  
Spring Hills Farm

A delicious farm to table dinner overlooking the fields and benefiting UNC's Community Health Department.



Lisa Durkin, Chief Operating Officer at UNC, recently completed the "Achieving Excellence" Program, an executive education course conducted in collaboration with Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and NeighborWorks America. The prestigious program takes place over an 18-month period, leading participants through a process of achieving measurable success to address a major challenge in their community. "I'm looking forward to applying what I learned to benefit the individuals served by UNC," said Lisa.

Members of UNC's children's book club at Skyview Park Apartments recently prepared care packages with shampoos, soaps, and conditioners to be distributed to the homeless. The book club meets weekly to take part in fun, educational activities coordinated by UNC staff.



UNC is currently working on a complete website redesign to make it easier for the community to access information about the agency's programs and services. The web address, [www.uncnepa.org](http://www.uncnepa.org), will not change. Watch for the launch of the new site later this summer!



UNC ESL student, Azra Noorallah, recently applied the language skills she is learning to read a story to children in the agency's Family Literacy Program.



Members of the 23V's (23 volunteers) group recently donated their time to help sort and organize donations at UNC's Angel's Attic food and clothing bank.



The Peoples Security Charitable Foundation recently awarded a \$2,500 grant to UNC to support the agency's Leaders in Training Program for at-risk youth.



More than 120 volunteers at UNC's four active adult community centers were recognized in celebration of National Volunteer Week. Pictured above are volunteers from the Carbondale Center.



The Northeastern Pennsylvania Health Care Foundation recently awarded a \$50,000 grant to UNC to support the agency's Chronic Disease Self-Management Program.



Youth in UNC's Leaders in Training program are completing a five week science workshop with the University of Scranton that includes experiments educating the students on topics like sound waves and the human eye.



# UNC NEWS

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Questions regarding this publication may be directed to Christine Zavaskas, Director of Grants and Communications, at [czavaskas@uncnepa.org](mailto:czavaskas@uncnepa.org). If you wish to no longer receive this newsletter, please contact Bob O'Brien at (570) 346-0759.

## Tickets Available for 4th Annual Seniors Got Talent

Get ready for UNC's 4th Annual Seniors Got Talent! Scheduled for May 15 at 2:00 p.m. at the Lackawanna College Theatre, the show promises to be exciting, with a full line-up of singers, dancers, and other acts. The performers will be scored by a panel of judges that includes Frank Gervasi from The Poets, Evie Rafalko McNulty, and Valerie Tysanner from PA Live. Get your tickets now at [www.uncnepa.org/events](http://www.uncnepa.org/events) for \$10 each, or purchase them at the door for \$15. Proceeds support UNC's older adult programs. Lackawanna County, Gem 104, WBRE/WYOU, Lamar Advertising, PNC Bank, Geisinger, and Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield are event sponsors.



## Register Now for Kicks for Kids Kickball Tournament



Calling all kids-at-heart! UNC will host the 2nd Annual Kicks for Kids kickball tournament on June 4 at 10:00 a.m. at Scranton High School's Valor Field at Veterans Memorial Stadium. Teams of all ages, with at least 10 players, are invited to register for a \$200 donation, which includes custom team shirts. Register by May 20 at [www.uncnepa.org/events](http://www.uncnepa.org/events). All proceeds benefit UNC's Project Hope summer camp for at-risk children. Thank you to our event partner, the Scranton School District, and sponsors: WNEP-TV, Times Shamrock Communications, PNC Bank, Geisinger, and Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield.