

## Anti-bullying and True Colors Alliance formed



UNC was recently awarded one of only four national grants from Advocates for Youth, a Washington D.C.-based organization focusing on the health of youth, to become a partner in their Anti-Homophobia Project. With the grant, UNC

will conduct a project that addresses homophobia and creates a safe space for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning (GLBTQ) youth in Lackawanna County. UNC has formed a committee, with help from organizations such as Lackawanna County Children and Youth Services (LCCYS), Maternal Health and Family Services (MFHS), Lackawanna County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and the Employment Opportunity & Training Center (EOTC), to aid in the creation of this project. Recently, the True Colors Alliance hosted the award-winning documentary "Out in the Silence" at the West Side Senior Center, followed by a community forum on GLBTQ issues.

## 7th Annual "Chocoholic Frolic" fundraiser a success

The Scranton Cultural Center was full of chocolate on October 16 for the 7th Annual Chocoholic Frolic. Newly moved from its previous date in February, frolickers got to enjoy their chocolate for the second time in one year.

Eighteen vendors of all things chocolate participated including Patsel's, Gertrude Hawk, Manning's, Carmen's at the Radisson, Chocolate Creations and many more. Foods varied from duck on chocolate polenta dusted with orange powder to gluten free chocolate chip cookies, from ice cream cake to Godiva liquor poached pears.

The event, presented by Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs, benefited UNC's adult literacy programs through the SCOLA Learning Center. We hope to see everyone at our next fundraiser, Mardi Gras, on Friday, February 17, 2012!



All questions regarding this publication should be referred to Allison Woody, Communications Coordinator, at awoody@unc-nepa.org. If you wish to no longer receive this newsletter, please contact Bob O'Brien at (570) 346-0759.

**UNC NEWS**  
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## UNC begins new family learning program

UNC has been awarded a Family Literacy grant from the PA Department of Education to provide services to 30 families in Lackawanna County. UNC is proud to be the only new Family Literacy Program funded by the state this year. UNC's Family Learning Program is intended to help parents gain the educational and employment skills they need to move their families toward economic self-sufficiency while empowering them to take an active role in their children's learning at school and at home. In partnership with UNC's Childcare Program, SCOLA and Community Services, the Scranton School District, and the Lackawanna County Public Library, the Family Learning Program provides integrated services in adult education, early childhood education, parent education, interactive literacy activities, and home visits.

According to Stephanie Bressler, Director of Community Education and Revitalization, the program is a natural fit for UNC as we work to provide the opportunities and support needed for families to learn and grow together."



A family learns about Interactive Literacy Activities and the new Family Learning program at a kick-off block party held on Columbus Day at UNC's Progressive Center.

## Groundbreaking held at Hitchner Building



Members of UNC, the West Pittston community and local government officials take the first dig on the grounds at the historic Hitchner Building following the ceremony. Completion of the project is expected in late 2012.

UNC celebrated the groundbreaking at the historic Hitchner Biscuit Company building on September 30. The property, located at 530 Exeter Avenue in West Pittston, will be completely renovated into 18 one, two and three-bedroom apartments for working individuals and families. The completion of the project is expected in late 2012.

On hand for the ceremony were, from left to right: Michael Hanley; Boyd Hitchner, great-grandson of the founder of the former company; State Representative Phyllis Mundy; Kevin Rogers, President of the UNC Board of Directors; Lou Shapiro, President of the UNCDC Board of Directors; Bill Goldsworthy, former Mayor of West Pittston and the Deputy Director of the Governor's Northeast Regional Office; Mark Bufalino, West Pittston Borough Solicitor; John Hood, West Pittston Borough Council; George Miller, West Pittston Borough Tax Collector; and Brian Thornton, West Pittston Borough Council President.

## Partnership begins with Dante Literary Society

UNC recently met with board members of the Dante Literary Society to formalize a new partnership between the two groups. The Dante Literary Society was formed to teach English to the newly arrived Italian immigrants. In addition, the Dante Society helped new arrivals to assimilate into American society, offering help getting jobs, finding apartments, accessing medical help and enrolling their children in school. Through its new sponsorship of SCOLA and UNC, the society will work to raise funds to aid new immigrants, as well as native English speakers, improve their reading and writing skills. According to president Joe Riccardo, the partnership was natural. The Dante recognizes that Scranton's new immigrants settling into the South Side area need the same help that Italian immigrants needed so long ago, and they are ready to welcome them. The Society recently hosted a pasta dinner fundraiser in support of UNC.



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**UNC NEWS**

United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern PA  
425 Alder Street Scranton, PA 18505



Older adults from all four of UNC's senior centers- West Side, South Side, Carbondale and Mid Valley- came together at McDade Park to celebrate their annual Senior Picnic.



Janice Hargick and Anne Lawler from the Lackawanna County Association for the Blind spoke and read to children at the Bellevue Childcare Center, as well as taught them about Braille.



Fifteen youth from UNC's Progressive Childcare Center recently made a trip to the Griffin Pond Animal Shelter to spend the day volunteering. The children took part in cleaning the grounds and walking dogs.

## Letter From the Executive Director

As you read this newsletter, no doubt you are beginning to think of the Holiday season that is quickly approaching. While we have been thinking in that direction for quite a few weeks now, we are also engaged in the day to day struggle of keeping food in the pantry and meeting the basic needs of the growing number of families and individuals turning to us for assistance, many for the first time. Meeting these needs is important and would not be possible without the wonderful generosity of our community.



From the donation of \$5,000 received last week to the \$5 received today, we are touched by everyone's outpouring of care for those who are struggling. This newsletter, however, tells a wider story of United Neighborhood Centers. In addition to providing for basic needs, we are also striving to provide opportunities and programs for all age groups in our community from the older adults who utilize our senior centers to the young children who are gracing the stage for the first time in one of our youth theater productions. I encourage you to read the article on the Anti-bullying and True Colors Alliance as an example of our work in breaking new ground in the community and gathering like minded agencies around the table to address emerging issues. Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't brag a little about the honor bestowed on UNC as the recipient of the first annual Regional Leadership Award by the NEPA Alliance. This award is recognition of the wonderful work of the Board and Staff at UNC and just one more reason I am grateful to be a part of the wonderful work of this agency. May your Holidays be filled with joy and happiness.

**Come to Ruby Tuesday's near the Viewmont Mall in Scranton between November 15-17, 2011 and 20% of your entire purchase will go to helping UNC! Email [ndressel@uncnepa.org](mailto:ndressel@uncnepa.org) for the coupon.**

## Back-to-school donations aid community

Before the new 2011-12 school year began, UNC conducted two donation programs for low-income youth throughout Lackawanna County as they prepared to get back in the classroom.

First, UNC hosted its annual Back-to-School Uniform program at the Progressive Center. As more and more schools are requiring uniforms, families can no longer depend just on donated clothing. Therefore, UNC helps families by providing new and used uniforms for children in need at the start of each school year. This year, over 130 families were served through this program from seven school districts.

Additionally, UNC partnered with Temple Hesed for their Annual Backpack Giveaway Program. Members of Temple Hesed's Board of Directors and community members generously sponsor students in need of back-to-school supplies and distribute them to non-profit organizations throughout the local area.



## Around the Agency

UNC recently concluded its 41st year of Project Hope Summer Camp in August. In 2011, over 525 youth from across Lackawanna County were given the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors for five weeks. Please go to our website to see more photos from camp.



Verizon Foundation provided a grant to United Neighborhood Centers through its "Verizon Reads" campaign. The funds will be used to incorporate new technology at the SCOLA Learning Center to help aid community members who are looking for more advanced training with English as a Second Language and Civics Education.

The Spotlight Youth Theater performance troupe hosted two successful nights of "Alice in Wonderland, Jr." at the West Side Senior Center over the summer. The group consists of over 30 community youth who were involved with all aspects of the play from costumes, staging and promotion. The troupe will be holding a second performance this year, "Jungle Book". The events will be held on December 9th and 10th, 2011 and is open to the public.



United Neighborhood Centers recently became a member organization of the Alliance for Children and Families based out of Milwaukee, WI. The membership will allow for networking and public advocacy, as well as act as a center of knowledge and information for UNC. To learn more about the Alliance, go to [www.alliance1.org](http://www.alliance1.org).

United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern Pennsylvania and the Tobyhanna Army Depot's Community Service Relocation Assistance Program recently formed a partnership to begin a multi-level language and cross-cultural training assistance program to service member's foreign-born family members to ensure improved communication skills and cultural adaption.



The NEPA Alliance, a multi-county economic development agency, recently awarded the 1st Annual "Regional Leadership Award" to United Neighborhood Centers at the organization's 47th Annual Dinner. The NEPA Alliance recognized UNC for its housing projects in West Pittston and in South Scranton, among many other initiatives. Michael Hanley, Executive Director of UNC, accepted the award on behalf of the agency. In addition, the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce has named UNC as a finalist in the "Non-profit of the Year" category for their annual SAGE awards gala for the second year in a row.



Thanks to the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, UNC and its youth department were able to host a "Searching for a Better Future" festival at Connors Park, a day meant to bring South Scranton together.



Older adults from the South Side Senior Center recently hosted their annual Spaghetti and Meatball Dinner, earning money to continue activities. Twenty-five volunteers helped out on the day of the event.



As part of the United Way's annual Day of Caring, UNC welcomed over 90 community volunteers from local businesses who helped clean up the agency grounds and interact with clients.