

UNC NEWS

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All questions regarding this publication should be referred to Alison Woody, Director of Grants and Communications, at awoody@uncnepa.org. If you wish to no longer receive this newsletter, please contact Bob O'Brien at (570) 346-0759.

UNC NEWS

Newsletter of United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern Pennsylvania

Elm Street celebrates 5 years; program continuing

The Elm Street Revitalization Program of UNC successfully ended its designated five year partnership with the PA Department of Community & Economic Development in June of 2014 after being selected for the program in 2009. Fortunately, the important work rebuilding the South Scranton neighborhood will continue thanks to a renewal grant from the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation.

Since the inception of the program, the lead partners have worked together to provide tangible, successful results. Criminal activity in South Side has significantly decreased due to increased involvement, presence and task force efforts by the police and implementation of a neighborhood watch. South Scranton went from a total of 2176 arrests in 2009 to a total of 1784 in 2013. Additionally, enforcement efforts of both the police and District Attorney's Office, combined with community clean-ups and the installation of permanent trash cans and street lights from UNC, have led to a large decline in blight, garbage and graffiti. Through a façade improvement grant program, 50 residential homes and business owners have received up to \$5000 match funds, for a total of over \$300,000 invested, to enhance the exterior elements of their properties. Economic development is also on the rise in South Scranton. Since 2009, over 10 businesses have been established or relocated to the neighborhood, including a substantial increase in Latino and immigrant-owned companies.

Over the next two years, the Elm Street team will focus its efforts on physical improvements, recruiting and educating small business owners to the corridor, creating a multicultural destination and continuing resident engagement activities such as the Ethnic Carol Sing and the Farmers' Market.

Chocoholic Frolic raises \$15,000

The Scranton Cultural Center was filled with chocolate on October 19 for the tenth anniversary of the Chocoholic Frolic with a record crowd of over 400 people in attendance. This year's event hosted 18 local vendors of all things chocolate, eleven of them first-timers to the Frolic. Four Points by Sheraton won the Chocolate Challenge which was voted on by participants for their espresso-rubbed short ribs in a chocolate stout sauce. Also, a trip to Las Vegas was raffled off this year! The event raised over \$15,000 for the agency's literacy education programs. Thank you to all of our sponsors including: Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs, AAA Travel, PNC Bank, Comcast, Amerihealth Northeast, Lamar Advertising, The Times-Tribune, Entercom, and WNEP-TV. We hope to see everyone again on October 18, 2015!



35th Annual Thanksgiving Feed-a-Friend Food Basket Program underway

UNC is currently in the midst of its annual Thanksgiving food basket program in partnership with WNEP-TV's Feed-a-Friend initiative. Last year, the need for this program drastically increased, with total registrations up 27% over 2012. A total of 1700 families were served by this community's generosity. A donation of \$35 helps provide one family in Lackawanna County all the necessities of a traditional Thanksgiving meal including a turkey, pumpkin pie, stuffing, and more. Please consider donating by mailing a check to 425 Alder St. in Scranton, Attn: Thanksgiving or go online at www.uncnepa.org/donate.

Ground broken on Oppenheim Center for the Arts

On Friday, September 12, UNC hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for its new youth arts center, located at the former West Side Community Center at 1004 Jackson Street in Scranton, which will be officially named the Oppenheim Center for the Arts. The center will continue to operate a senior center and will begin intergenerational programming, including a theater initiative, once the location is re-opened. Local officials including Scranton Mayor Bill Courtwright, State Senator John Blake and Representative Marty Flynn attended the event. UNC has raised \$630,000 towards the overall costs of \$800,000 for the center. The building, when complete in January 2015, will include a new auditorium, new HVAC system, a dance/fitness studio, pottery room, recording studio, media room and much more. State Senator John Blake said, "I'm just delighted to see this next milestone take place because it will be important for the seniors who are served here, and it will be important for the children who create here."



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UNCDC is proud to announce that it has recently completed its newest and most extensive project to date; the Cedar Avenue Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (Cedar Point), which rehabilitated two entire city blocks in South Scranton into houses, apartments, and shops. The goal of the Cedar Avenue Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative was to develop new homeownership and rental housing for community residents in conjunction with providing opportunities for new small business start-ups along the Cedar Avenue commercial corridor. The key to the initiative was to remove and restore blighted properties that posed serious health and safety issues and provide affordable housing to lower income residents. The Cedar Point Apartments targets the East side of the 600 block of Cedar Avenue, along with Alder Street, Willow Street, and Rosen Court. Construction began in the fall of 2010 and the first completed units, were completed in January 2012. Followed by an additional 10 apartment units completed in September of 2014 and the remaining 20 apartment units in November of 2014. More specifically, the completed development includes: six town-homes for sale; four of which include commercial shops, four-single family rental homes, and an additional 26 housing units which consist of 3 newly renovated and 2 newly constructed buildings. This \$15 million project will now be home to over 100 new residents in South Scranton. Additionally, UNCDC announced its newest project called the "Old School on Luzerne", which will substantially rehabilitate the old West Pittston High School, located at 311-313 Luzerne Avenue in Luzerne County. It is UNCDC's plan to rehabilitate the Old School into 22 apartments for seniors. An exciting aspect of this development are the intensive supportive services that will be offered to the residents of this property. UNC will provide services to residents in conjunction with The Wright Center. These intensive services will allow residents to remain in their own homes for longer periods of time.



UNCDC begins moving in residents along Cedar Ave.; announces next project in Luzerne county



Letter From the Executive Director

Autumn is now in full swing, and by the time you read this it will be almost Thanksgiving. Where does the time go? Last year at this time we were preparing for our 90th Anniversary Celebration. It seems like just yesterday and it was a lot of fun celebrating our long and eventful history. However, looking back also reinforced in us our responsibility to look to the future. We have a responsibility to continue our traditional programs that have contributed so much to enhancing the quality of life for so many families struggling in this economy, as well as to continue to assess the emerging needs in our community.



Michael Hanley

As you see in this newsletter we are in the midst of our Thanksgiving Food Basket Program which, for 35 years, has provided all the "fixings" for the Thanksgiving Holiday to needy families with children. Project Hope Summer Camp, while struggling financially, will be entering its 45th year in 2015. The camp has been providing summer enrichment and nutritious meals to thousands of children over the years.

Moving into the future, our Community Health program is breaking new ground in removing the barriers between healthcare and social services in Lackawanna County. The program is creating a model that other communities around the country are looking to for direction.

As we prepare for the upcoming holiday season and enter into a new year, we have numerous challenges, but also much to be proud of in making our community a stronger and healthier place for all our citizens. All of this would not be possible without the many partners and donors involved, such as yourself. Some are mentioned in these articles, but many more, both large and small, encourage us by their generosity and strengthen our programs that provide opportunities to so many.

Project Hope completes 44th year despite funding cuts

UNC ended another great summer at Camp St. Andrew in Tunkhannock as Project Hope celebrated its 44th year. Unfortunately, the program has experienced severe funding cuts over the past few years causing the agency to have to cut back the weeks of camp from five to four and limit the amount of children served for the first time in Project Hope's history. Despite a lack of income, UNC is proud to say that almost 300 children were still able to experience the outdoors and be kids in a safe, fun environment. All of the young participants were also provided with nutritious meals, education from Scranton School District teachers, and plenty of physical activity! UNC is dedicated to sustaining Project Hope and is working hard to close the funding gaps for Summer 2015. Stay tuned for information on fundraisers and if you would like to get involved in helping this great cause please contact us at 570-346-0759 and ask for Mary Carroll or Alison.



Around the Agency

The Elm Street Revitalization Program has initiated the City of Scranton's first ever indoor **Winter Farmer's Market** that will be held every Saturday at 509 Cedar Avenue from 10AM-2PM. Vendors will have fresh produce, meats, eggs and other items. Stop by and support local business!



The agency will be providing **emergency heating assistance** this winter through a partnership with PP&L and the United Way of Lackawanna County's Gift of Warmth program. For more information and/or assistance, please contact Community Services intake office at 570-343-8835.

The Green Ridge Childcare Center, located at 1917 Boulevard Ave. in Scranton, was recently given a **Star 4 certification status** by the PA Department of Education. This is the highest attainable level in the Keystone Stars evaluation program and exemplifies best practices in childcare. Congratulations!



The **Illumination Youth Arts** programming is underway for the new school year thanks to a Lackawanna County Arts Engage grant. The program includes new art genres for 2014-15 including sculpting, painting, and songwriting. The Spotlight Youth Theater will host their next performance for the community in January 2015.

Isabella DeFlice, a 5th grade student from the Scranton School District, was presented a \$1,000 scholarship to IronWorks Taekwondo Academy in Dunmore that will cover all of her costs for an entire year. She was presented the honor after taking part in and excelling at a year-long physical fitness program at UNC that was funded through the Women's Sports Foundation.



Save the date for the agency's **15th Annual Mardi Gras Celebration** which will be held on Friday, February 6, 2015 at the Radisson Lackawanna Station from 6-10 p.m. As usual expect fun including casino gaming, fortune tellers, New Orleans cuisine and much more! Ticket information coming soon and they will be available for purchase online at UNC's website.



The Community Health department has begun a Cardiovascular Awareness Program for older adults thanks to a grant from the Blue Ribbon Foundation. Additionally, Peer Health Educators have been trained and are beginning to work in the community.



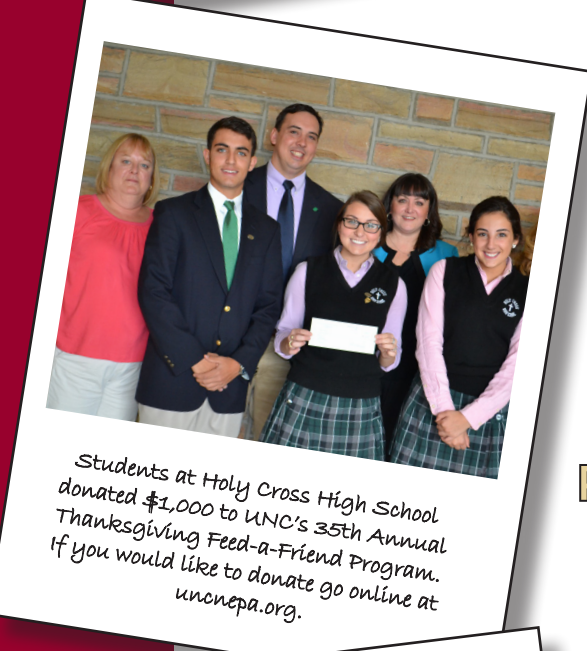
In September, UNC once again participated in the United Way's annual Day of Caring event by hosting over 75 volunteers who spent the day painting, helping pack storage, and interacting with youth and seniors.



The agency's Board of Directors hosted an Employee Appreciation Dinner at the Melting Pot in October to honor UNC employees who have attained milestone service dates-- two staff have 25 years of employment!



Older adults from all four UNC senior centers-- West Side, South Side, Carbondale, and Mid Valley-- held end of summer picnic celebrations at McAdams Park and Merli-Samoski Park.



Students at Holy Cross High School donated \$1,000 to UNC's 35th Annual Thanksgiving Feed-a-Friend Program. If you would like to donate go online at uncnepa.org.



Carol and Jerry Smurl of South Scranton won a PA Downtown "Townie" Award for Best Physical Improvements & Design after being awarded a facade grant from UNC's Elm Street Program.