

United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern Pennsylvania

Annual



Report

"Always Evolving, Continuously Caring"

2012

Letter from the President



Each year brings new challenges and new opportunities, and this past year was no exception. As it states on the cover, United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern PA is “always evolving, continuously caring”. As our 89th year wraps up, we look back at some of our new programs and some of the challenges we have overcome.

For the first time, we were able to begin providing permanent supportive housing for homeless families. The stability provided by secure housing gives these families hope for themselves and their children’s future. New arts programming was also added to our teen and youth initiatives, making these programs even more appealing and giving more exciting opportunities to local youth. In addition, our Leaders in Training program for teens and SASIE (a cooperative program with Marywood University which encourages our teens to finish high school and enter higher education) were renewed. New wellness programs to keep our older adults active and healthy were started at our senior centers. Our family literacy program is thriving and growing, and the demand at SCOLA is increasing as a result of our move to South Side.

This past spring found us scrambling to find new funding for Project Hope after cuts on a number of fronts, including a substantial reduction in federal funding through the Community Development Block Grant Program. Thanks to local funders, some foundations and donors, we were able to carry on as usual without resorting to diminished hours or limiting transportation. Project Hope has made such a difference in the lives of so many children throughout its 42 year history that keeping the program intact became a priority to everyone here.

UNC continues to be active throughout the community. The South Side Farmers’ Market moved to the Scranton Iron Furnaces where it was very successful. A festival was held at Nay Aug Park last spring to involve the community in a variety of fun activities that helped them learn about all the things that UNC does. The Elm Street Program helped facilitate funding for improvements at the South Scranton Intermediate School.

We continue to make every effort to help our community members not only deal with the crises in their lives, but to gain skills and grow so that they can provide a better, safer and more secure home environment for their family. As President of the Board of Directors, I speak for the entire board when I say how inspired we are by the hard-working employees who do their jobs with a passion for the people they serve and by the great stories of hope they share. UNC is so grateful for our many generous donors who make it possible to continue to meet the needs of our community and to provide the necessary resources. Looking forward, we are excited to begin celebrating our 90th year.

Watch for news about lots of upcoming events celebrating our past and building our future!

**Sincerely,
Kevin Rogers**

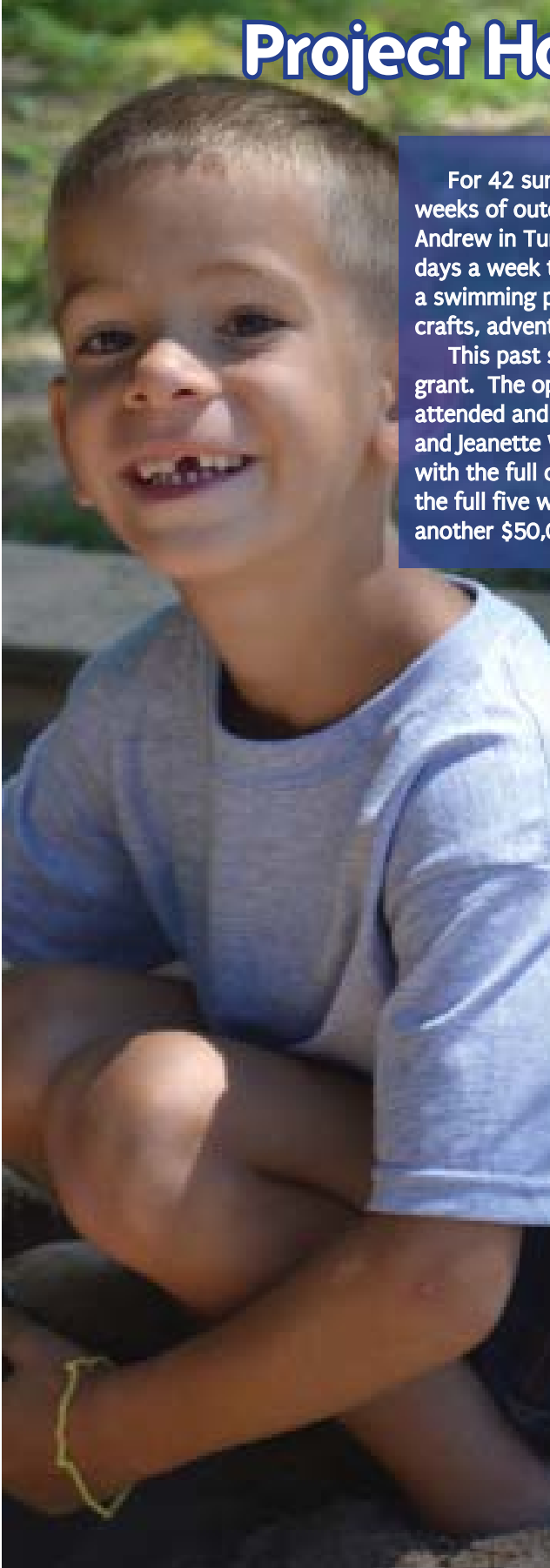


Recent News & Accomplishments

Project Hope continues success

For 42 summers, Project Hope has been providing inner city youth with five weeks of outdoor fun, sports, swimming, and academic instruction at Camp St. Andrew in Tunkhannock, PA. Over 500 Lackawanna County youth are bused five days a week to camp. The camp features over 550 acres of fields, hiking trails, a swimming pool and lake. Activities include archery, music, kayaking, arts and crafts, adventure learning, team building and more.

This past spring, UNC found itself with a funding gap due to the loss of a past grant. The options for the program were to reduce the number of children who attended and to shorten the schedule. Thanks to a \$50,000 grant from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Project Hope had another successful season with the full complement of campers from all over Lackawanna County and the full five week term. The Weinberg Foundation has also generously donated another \$50,000 towards the 2013 season of Project Hope Summer Camp.



Senior centers begin wellness program



Over the course of the past year, UNC has begun implementing a new health and wellness program for older adults in our four senior centers- Carbondale, Mid Valley, West Side and South Side. The program includes a variety of exercise and activity classes during the day and in the evening. Some examples of classes that were held included Tai Chi, line dancing, ballroom dancing, yoga and non-impact aerobics. These classes were also open to the public and all UNC employees to attend. These programs were in addition to the regularly scheduled health tests and screening in the centers conducted by various organizations throughout Lackawanna County. The wellness program will continue in 2013.

UNC holds first ever FunFest event

United Neighborhood Centers presented a free event for the community on Saturday, June 23 at Nay Aug Park. The community FunFest featured games, activities, prizes, and free hot dogs for the first 500 people who attended. The day included a strolling magician, face-painting, Zumba both for adults and children, a musical presentation, photography show, a performance from our Spotlight Youth Theater, Taekwondo lessons, a K-9 Police dog demonstration, cooking lessons from Marywood University, story hour, and aikido led by Steve Corbett. There was a lot to do for the little ones including a visit by the Scranton Library Bookmobile, a children's race, and a bounce house. The purpose of the event was to highlight and bring community awareness to the varied programs and activities that UNC has available.



Young professionals help increase awareness of UNC



A new group has been formed at UNC—the Young Professionals Auxiliary Board. The purpose of the board is to promote the agency in the community and to help with fundraising. The members are: Ryan Alpert, Paul Batyko III, Esq., Sarah Fortunato, Joe Gluba, Lauren Greenwood, Carrie Hodovanec, Jonathan Kalasinski, Val Kiser, Ken Knelly, Ruth Koelewyn, Jude McDonough, Michael Muller, Carolyn Tugend Quinn, Eric Rogan, Pat Scanlon, Lynn Scaramuzza, Alysia Scazafabo, Eric Weinberg, Jaime Weinschenk and Jay Weinschenk. It is a diverse and talented group representing many different professional fields.

Another group of young professionals are also lending their hand to UNC. Leadership Lackawanna has selected UNC as one of the class of 2012-13's projects. Fashioned like the Amazing Race, there will be a race with teams competing to win. The race will feature places and information related to the 90th anniversary of United Neighborhood Centers and will utilize many of the agency's facilities.

Bellevue gets new playground with help from U. of Scranton

Children at UNC's Bellevue Childcare Center have new playground equipment to use thanks to the hard work and determination of the University of Scranton's Students in Free Enterprise group led by Kaitlin Dolan. SIFE students competed for a Lowe's grant and won \$2,000 in funding for the playground equipment, which was installed this summer. A groundbreaking ceremony for the playground was held.

"A playground at the Bellevue Center has been a dream for 23 years," said Michael Hanley, executive director of UNC. A playground had been planned since the center was built. However, the center never had the funding to construct it. UNC will now move forward looking for new funding to place more equipment in the playground.





Youth arts programs expanded

The youth arts programming at UNC has grown in popularity and offerings over the course of the past few years. The Shutterbugs photography group has grown from a small group of teens to a program that operates three times a week in Scranton and Carbondale. A second photography group was also started for middle school students as young as nine. UNC and Penn Foster joined together to offer a unique program where teens in the photography program would be able to receive their professional certificate in photography through the educational institution free of charge.

The Spotlight Youth Theater program, which began in 2010, has quickly become one of our most popular youth initiatives. The group of students, ages 5-18, has grown to over 50 regular participants and has begun hosting two theatrical shows for the community each year.

In 2012, UNC was awarded an Arts Engage grant from the Lackawanna County Arts & Culture Department to expand the arts programming for young children and teens. A dance program was started in our childcare centers in partnership with Arabesque Academy of Dancing. UNC also began offering creative writing classes, video production classes and a young adults' book club. In addition to these offerings, the grant allowed UNC to partner with local arts group the Pop Up Studio to create interactive art installations, as well as with the Scranton Shakespeare Festival and the REV Theatre Company out of New York City to offer drama-intensive workshops.

SCOLA & Elm St. get new home



The SCOLA adult literacy programs and UNC's Family Learning Program moved to a new home this past June from their prior location in North Scranton. The programs now share space with the Elm Street Revitalization Project in the building recently restored by the United Neighborhood Community Development Corporation at the corner of Cedar Avenue and Willow Street in Scranton. The programs are now more visible and accessible to the growing immigrant population in South Side.

The Family Learning Program is continuously growing as families discover that the program provides child care while parents learn English. A new initiative, Partners in Print, guides parents in helping their children develop reading skills as the parents develop their own literacy skills. SCOLA's other literacy programs are experiencing growth as more young people are training as tutors and joining with longtime tutors to help adult learners progress towards their literacy goals.

The Elm Street Revitalization Project also continues to be successful. This past year the team was honored by the Pennsylvania Downtown Center with the Townie Award for Best Neighborhood Event for the annual Arts on Fire Festival held at the Scranton Iron Furnaces. In addition, the South Side Farmers' Market was moved to the Scranton Iron Furnaces and widely expanded to almost 200 visitors each week.

Local organizations step up to help with hunger demand



Hunger in our community continues to be an important and ongoing issue. This year, UNC struggled more than ever to keep up with the increased demand for food and to keep our shelves stocked. In response to the crisis, many community groups came to our assistance and conducted food drives of their own to support Angel's Attic, UNC's emergency food and clothing bank. Angel's Attic is so grateful for all the school groups, businesses, religious groups, and individuals who have donated food this past year. Some groups include Lackawanna College, Parker Hill Community Church, Temple Hesed, Fidelity Bank, Abington Heights School District, Dunmore School District and many, many more. In 2013, UNC will be starting an "Adopt a Month" program where local groups can choose a month to provide a food drive for the food bank so that our pantry can remain continuously full for those in the community experiencing hunger.

New programming begins in community services & childcare

In 2012, UNC received a number of funding opportunities that allowed the agency to create new programming. The community services department began new initiatives thanks in part from two separate grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. UNC was one of only six organizations in the state selected to receive funding to begin a fair housing program. The program provides services and outreach to four counties- Lackawanna, Luzerne, Pike and Wayne- by conducting educational forums, seminars and other activities on fair housing laws and educating protected classes on their rights. UNC was also awarded a grant to begin a permanent supportive housing program for homeless families, the first program of its kind in Lackawanna County. In addition, UNC's three childcare centers were awarded one of seven state-wide grants from the Women's Sports Foundation to begin a self-esteem and physical activity program for girls ages 5-12. The youth will now have the opportunity to take part in activities such as dance, rock climbing, volleyball and taekwondo.



Voter registration drive part of UNC civil engagement



Throughout the month of September, UNC implemented a voter registration initiative across the agency and Lackawanna County. "Encouraging civic engagement is an important part of the mission of United Neighborhood Centers," said Michael Hanley. "There is no more effective means of civic engagement than the ballot box." The agency was actively registering voters at all ten centers and concluded with 150 community members who were registered to vote on Election Day. Additionally, UNC helped community members register to vote in all City of Scranton public housing developments in collaboration with Friends of the Poor and coordinated transportation to the polls on the day of the elections. On September 25, the agency celebrated National Voter Registration Day with more than 1000 other non-profits across the country. A rally was held at the West Side Senior Center and speakers included Andrea Mulrine, the President of the League of Women Voters of Lackawanna County, and Attorney Bill Fisher. A trivia contest was emceed by Gary Drapek, President of the United Way of Lackawanna County, which was won by UNC's childcare team.

Teens produce national public service announcements

A group of 15 teens from the True Colors Alliance spent months working with two local production companies to create two public service announcements based on discrimination and anti-bullying. In March, this group filmed their creations at Abington Heights High School. A rap, written by two of the members Miranda Chemchick and Terry Thompson, was showcased through a viral video.

The PSAs were developed through the work of UNC's youth and communications departments, 25/8 Productions and Blackout Design and were funded by the national organization Advocates for Youth. Advocates for Youth debuted them on their national website in May. The agency also held a launch party for these videos, as well as the ones they created with the NEPA Rainbow Alliance's "It Gets Better" project, where the students also talked about their own experiences with bullying. To see the videos these teens created, you can go to www.youtube.com/uncnepa.



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UNC would like to extend a sincere thank you to all of the donors, from the largest to the smallest, who gave this past year. Each and every one of you helped to feed families in need, provided emergency housing, assisted in getting families needed emergency services, taught adults to read and write, gave children a safe and healthy place to go after school and in the summer, provided leadership training, arts instruction, and guidance to local teens, and gave seniors a place to socialize and enjoy a hot, nutritious meal.

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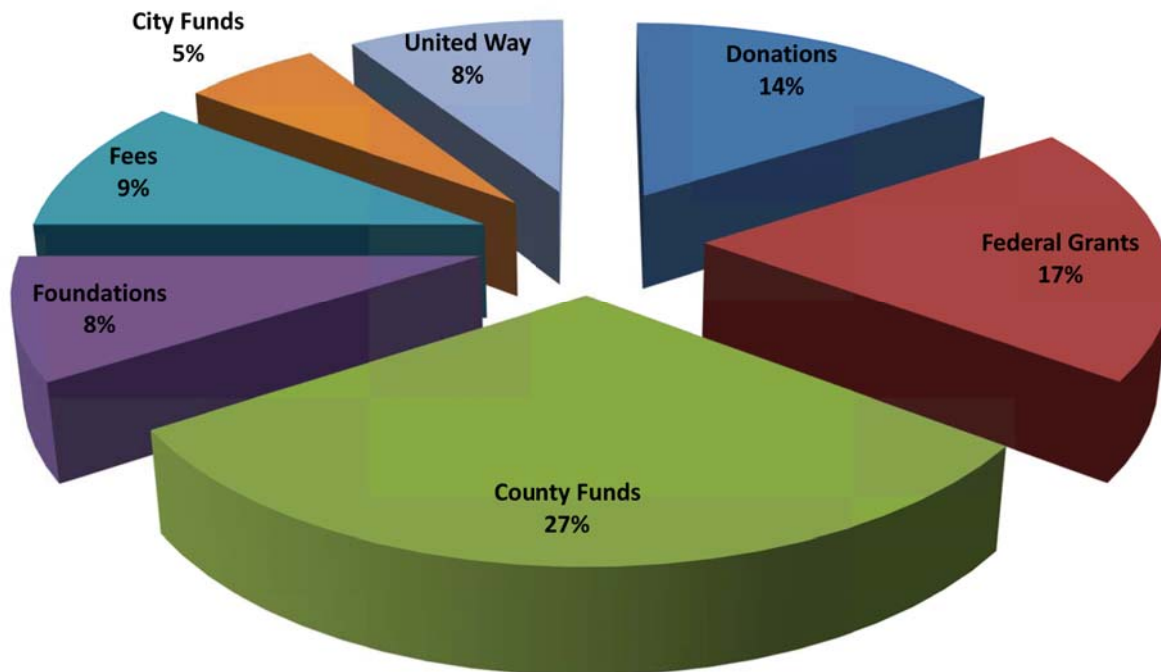


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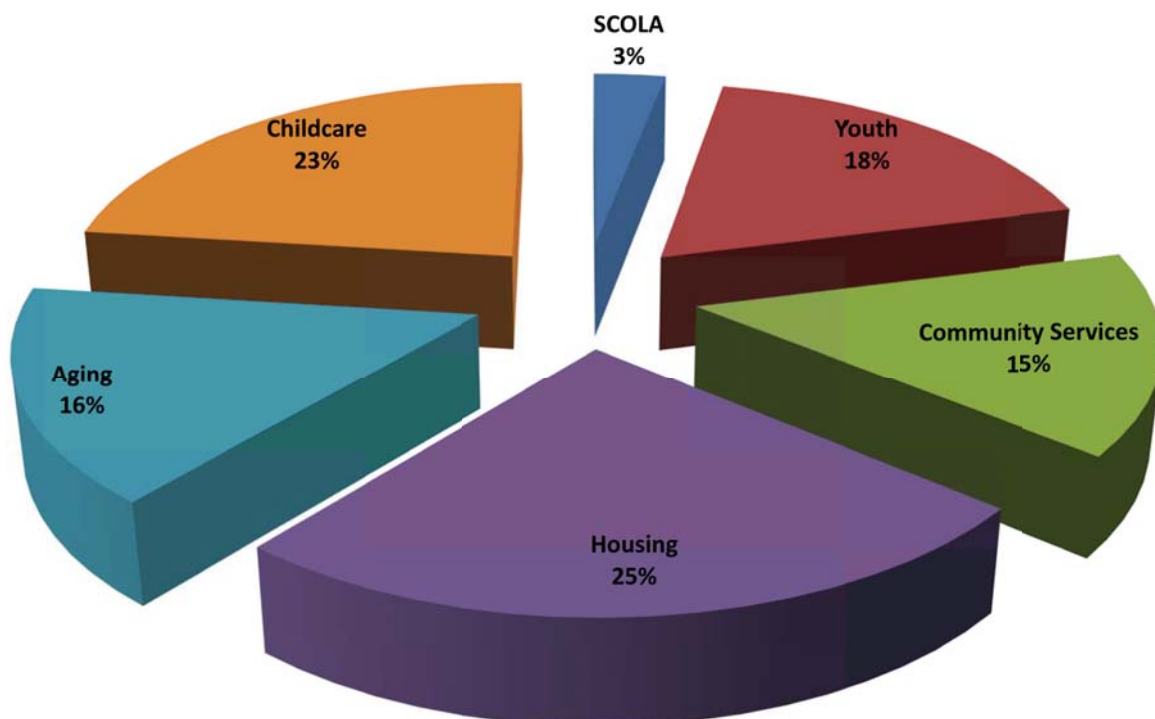
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