

## UNC Receives Grant Funding for E-Learning Support Programs

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools, work, and even medical appointments online, many UNC consumers struggled to access the technology needed to keep up with these daily tasks. Thanks to two grant awards, UNC is able to provide support to ease the digital divide.

### Helping Teens Connect and Learn

This fall the Best Buy Foundation awarded UNC with a \$20,000 grant for its e-learning support program for teens. With the switch to virtual learning, many teens lack the technology and assistance needed for online school assignments. They have lost consistent access to friends and adult guidance. UNC designed this program to address the educational, social, and mental health needs of teens during this time of isolation and distance from school support systems.

Funds from the Best Buy Foundation are being used to upgrade and add new technology at the Oppenheim Center for the Arts. Purchases include laptops and tablets for students to complete schoolwork as well as gaming and streaming devices to provide teens with much-needed fun and socialization with peers either in-person or virtually. UNC staff has selected games that develop teamwork, leadership, creativity, and problem-solving skills. The live streaming platform Twitch will be used to engage and educate teens on subjects such as mindfulness, leadership, racism, and other topics that will benefit the youth throughout the pandemic and beyond.

### Support for ESL Families

UNC's Community Education department, which is home to SCOLA (Scranton Council of Literacy Advance), found a gap in digital access and literacy among its students when the pandemic forced classes to go virtual. Many students had difficulty navigating their English as a Second Language (ESL) classes online or

helping their children with virtual school. With most of UNC's ESL students reading and writing at or below a fifth-grade level, they could not afford to experience this gap in learning, nor could their children. They also were struggling to access portals for telehealth appointments, use Zoom for job interviews, and navigate other services and appointments that had moved online.

UNC was recently awarded a \$25,000 grant from the Margaret Briggs Foundation to support students in the SCOLA program with technology assistance and case management. The funds are being used for digital literacy services including help with setting up personal devices and email accounts, learning how to use Zoom, and helping families with school-age children navigate online schoolwork. Students can also sign out an agency laptop through its lending library service.

The pandemic brought the issue of digital equity to the forefront. With the support of these foundations, UNC aims to provide the e-learning support and skills needed to help our neighbors achieve self-sufficiency and reach their goals.



*Pictured above: ESL Instructor Audrey Golosky helps a student with his online schoolwork while his parents attend ESL classes at UNC's Community Education building.*

United Neighborhood Centers of  
Northeastern Pennsylvania wishes you



FALL  
2020



Lisa Durkin

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Like most others, the team at UNC is ready to say good riddance to 2020 and begin counting down to a happier, healthier new year. From this vantage point, it seems the one thing that has remained consistent throughout the year has been generosity of spirit. We've watched it play out in so many ways, from the altruism of essential workers to the monetary contributions of thoughtful donors. Through the general willingness of our community members to give their time, dollars, expertise, and assistance to others, we've seen great acts of kindness and goodwill.

The holiday season is quieter than normal but no less special. What we lack in cheerfulness, we make up for in gratitude. We're sorry to forego our annual traditions such as the Ethnic Carol Sing, Santa Train, Holiday Toy Store, and parties, but the absence of large events has made small gatherings more meaningful and cherished.

As we brace ourselves for the cold winter months ahead, we're inspired by the hopefulness of 2021! While we await the arrival of a vaccine, we'll be planning new programs to assist our community's "comeback!" New affordable housing, career assistance, second shift child care, and expanded options for older adults are a few of the services we intend to develop in the new year. We remain optimistic that the best is yet to come!

Wishing everyone peaceful holidays and good health!

## Thank you to our 2020 Corporate Sponsors:



## A Heartwarming Community Response to Feed A Friend

UNC partnered once again with WNEP-TV for the Feed A Friend program, with a few necessary changes due to COVID-19. Typically, with the collection of food and monetary donations from the community, UNC provides all of the makings for a Thanksgiving dinner to local families with children in need. This year, to reduce the number of people handling and distributing food, only monetary donations were collected and each registered family received a turkey voucher and gift card to a local grocery store.

With many people experiencing economic hardships this year, UNC wondered if donations would match the need. There was no reason to worry. The outpouring of support from individuals and organizations in our community was incredible. From generous donations by individuals, to companies giving a percentage of sales, to school collections, to employees donating as part of dress down days, our community dug deep and made sure that every family received the Thanksgiving dinner they deserve. Thank you, again, to everyone who supported Feed A Friend!



Spirited Art Scranton donated a portion of sales on art kits in November to Feed A Friend. Pictured above, from left: Owner Katharine Schkloven with her son Andrew.



Toyota of Scranton made a \$1,000 donation to Feed A Friend. Pictured above, from left: Toyota of Scranton CFO Patrick Rogers, UNC President and CEO Lisa Durkin, and UNC Vice President of Community Development Marty Fotta.



Students, teachers, and staff of Scranton Preparatory School supported Feed A Friend with a donation of \$3,250. Pictured above, from left: Student Council Treasurer Andrew Stark, UNC Vice President of Programs and Services Jessica Wallo, and Student Council President Quinn Casey.



Penn East Federal Credit Union presented UNC with a check for \$400 to support Feed A Friend. Pictured above, from left: Penn East FCU Indirect Landing Manager Alyssa Yanochick, Marketing Specialist Bill Sweeney, and UNC's Assistant Director of Community Services Kristin Kishel.

## Landmark Community Bank Supports UNC through EITC Program



Landmark Community Bank presented a check for \$2,500 to United Neighborhood Centers as part of the Pennsylvania Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) Program.

Pictured here, from left: Danithza Farrell, Landmark Community Bank Scranton Branch Manager; Lisa Durkin, UNC President and CEO; and David Wintermute, Landmark Community Bank Vice President/Commercial Lender II.

# UNC NEWS

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## Robert H. Spitz Foundation Awards UNC with Emergency Assistance Grant



United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern Pennsylvania has been awarded a \$20,000 Emergency Assistance grant from the Robert H. Spitz Foundation, administered by the Scranton Area Community Foundation. These funds will help meet the immediate needs of families and individuals in crisis. Pictured above: UNC President and CEO Lisa Durkin.

## South Side Farmers Market Moves Indoors and to Pre-Order System



The South Side Farmers Market has moved indoors for the winter. The new location is at 601 Cedar Avenue, at the corner of Cedar and Alder Street in South Scranton. The market is currently pre-order and pick-up only. For pre-order information, visit our website at [www.uncnepa.org](http://www.uncnepa.org). Pictured above: Market Manager Holly Yorkonis opens the door to the indoor market.