



Chevy Chase Community Center

Report to the Community

September 2013

**Chevy Chase Community Action Council, Inc,
640 North Fifth Street
Indiana, PA 15701**

724-463-0674

www.indiana-cccac.org

Message from the Executive Director

In times of hardship, uncertainty, and insecurity, some families don't know where to turn for help while our economy continues to challenge them to make rash decisions about whether to pay the electric bill or to put food on the table. At one time, some of those families were able to pay their bills on time and feed their family. They planned for their retirement and trusted the system to maintain their savings. It failed them. The families I speak of are the "working poor" -- the "hidden poor" -- the new faces of poverty.

As I look at the situation, I ask myself how we at the Chevy Chase Community Action Council, Inc. (CCCAC) can assist families to obtain a better quality of life. Is self-sufficiency a goal? Absolutely! Is it realistic at this moment in time? That's the uncertainty. It's a challenge we in the social service circle have tried to answer. It is an everyday struggle to help families create solutions to help overcome the obstacles they face.

We know someone who works 40 hours a week making \$10 an hour may be facing financial hardship and truly be in need. But we may not know his struggles because we see him going to work. We assume he should be making enough to feed his family but many times, he faces the challenge of whether to buy food or pay the heating bill.

We at Chevy Chase Community Center know when a family receives help through our services we can create a better quality of life, one family at a time. We can help them obtain food stamps, provide them food through our food donations program and make available opportunities for them to become food secure through nutritional education, gardening, canning, freezing, healthy eating and exercise. We provide families healthy wholesome meals through our soup kitchen and create an environment to come together as a family and as a neighborhood unit with a common goal to help those most in need.

I could go on and on about the unique issues we see daily from those who need temporary emergency assistance to purchase prescription drugs, to pay a utility bill or to provide a growing child a pair of shoes or a winter coat. I am certain many of you could tell a story or two. But the bottom line is we are determined at CCCAC to do all we can to help bring hope and security to those in need.

We have a great responsibility and an awesome opportunity through the Center to meet the needs of those seeking our help. We will rise to the challenge and help them overcome the obstacles they face through compassion, listening, respecting their situation and not being judgmental. We will provide that special touch from caring hands and caring hearts. We do not have all the answers but we refuse to part of the problem. We are part of the solution.

Diane Reese-Walters
Executive Director

Introduction

In October 2012, at the time of my father, Bill Shane's death I did not understand or appreciate his role as president of the Chevy Chase Community Action Council Board of Directors and his goal to bring financial stability to the operations of the Center. I did not understand that the money donated and raised in his memory ensured the Center did not close its doors and operated for one more year. I did not understand that many of the people with ties to the Center experienced the same period of sadness, reflection and challenges for the future that I faced.

In recent months, I have become more involved in assisting the Center in numerous ways and today I understand the past and share the vision for the future.

I have developed a deep respect and appreciation for every individual, business and organization who has dedicated time and made donations to support the Center and the services it provides to the low-income residents of Indiana who are most in need of help.

I have seen first hand the precious assets the Community holds in its hands and the challenges it faces as the Center continues to operate from month-to-month and year-to-year trying to raise funding just to keep its doors open.

And more important, I have seen the dedication of everyone involved with the Center who works to ensure services are provided for our neighbors in need.

It's a story that needs to be told, which was the genesis of this report.

For example, since January 2012, the Center has served nearly 3,000 meals and supplied bread and emergency food and services to approximately 30 families each weekday. And since the beginning of the year, these services were supported by more than 79 volunteers who provided approximately 2,500 volunteer hours of service to the center.

There is no doubt I have a deep personal commitment to see my father's vision become a reality and to continue the work he had underway. But I also believe the facts speak for themselves. The Center is a valuable asset worth preserving..

This report is intended to begin the process of bringing awareness and transparency about the operations of the Center. It is my hope it is simply a starting point and triggers additional thoughts and ideas so the Chevy Chase Community Action Council Inc., its Board of Directors and the residents of the Indiana County community can consider your options to assist in bringing financial stability and future growth to the Center's programs and services.

Susan Grimm
Member of the Board of Directors

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Doctoral Student/IUP

Bill Stancombe
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Mary Whitfield
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Preschool Teacher

Overview and History

The Chevy Chase Community Action Council, Inc. (CCCAC), commonly referred to as the Chevy Chase Community Center, is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization founded in Indiana County Pennsylvania in 1969.

Mission Statement

To provide a venue for community members to offer support and services to assist residents who live in poverty by ensuring they have access to vital human services, food, education and recreation programs that will improve their quality of life and enhance the greater community.

History

In September 1969, a community of concerned citizens who wanted to combat poverty and assist Indiana County residents in need established the Chevy Chase Community Action Council, Inc.

After the CCCAC was incorporated as a tax-exempt non-profit organization, the group launched a fundraiser to build a community center. Their vision became a reality in 1971 when the Chevy Chase Community Center was constructed with assistance from the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

In 2000, the Center was renovated and rededicated to the community with a grant from the Indiana County Commissioners.

The Chevy Chase Community Center

The Chevy Chase Community Center building, land and equipment is the greatest financial asset. As of December 31, 2012, the value placed on those assets was \$133,785.

The Center is located in the Chevy Chase Heights neighborhood in White Township and is within blocks the borough of Indiana, the Indiana Area High School, the Junior High School and numerous government and non-profit service providers from which low-income residents can receive services such as housing assistance and government benefits.

The building is handicapped accessible and includes a large community room, a fully equipped kitchen, offices and activity rooms. The building is not only used to provide services, but is also rented out to the community organizations at a nominal fee.

Serving Residents in Need

The Chevy Chase Community Center provides services for low-income individuals and families, including unemployed, working poor, homeless, disabled, elderly, veterans and children in Indiana County.

The Center does not discriminate against any person based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, disability, or age in participation in its programs, services and activities

The Center's consumers are concentrated in the rural communities of Indiana County as well as Chevy Chase Heights and the neighboring Indiana Borough. Families and individuals are qualified based on three main areas as defined by various government agencies as follows:

Poverty

For 2013, HHS defines poverty as an individual living on an annual income below \$11,490 or a family of four living on \$23,550. The most recent estimates available from the U.S. Census bureau show that more than 18 percent of the residents in Indiana County and 23% of children under age 18 live in poverty.

Food Insecurity

The USDA Research Service reports that the characteristics most often reported when a person or family is food insecure include that they are worried food would run out; food bought did not last; could not afford a balanced meal; skipped meals; or, ate less than they should.

Feeding America, a national hunger relief charity, developed a Map the Meal Gap, which estimates there are 12,170 food insecure individuals, or 13.7% of the total population of Indiana County. It further estimates that 64 percent of the food insecure population in Indiana County is below 160% of poverty, which is the threshold for eligibility for the SNAP, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps).

Unemployment

Feeding America estimates that unemployment is one of the most common indicators of food insecurity. Unemployment is defined by The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics classified persons as unemployed if they do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the prior 4 weeks, and are currently available for work. In May 2013, 7.2% of the Indiana County population was unemployed.

2013 Programs and Services

Gleaning

Bakery items are available at no charge to residents Monday through Friday and made available with donations from community businesses including Martins, Auntie Anne's Pretzels and Giant Eagle. Area residents serve as volunteer gleaners by collecting the baked goods each day. An average of 30 individuals stop by the center each day to pick-up food from throughout Indiana County. Since January 2013, the program served 333 individuals in 143 households.

Souper Friday

From September to April, a healthy, balanced lunch is provided on Fridays at the Center. The program is open to all residents and those with the ability to pay are encouraged to make donations. Not only does the lunch provide meals to those in need, but also is an opportunity for our residents to get to know each other and become more familiar with the Center. From January through May 2013, the programs served 79 households and provided 409 meals.

Summer Food Lunch Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture funds and the Pennsylvania Department of Education administers the summer food lunch program, which is managed locally by the Center and with support from area volunteers from June through August. During the 2013 summer, the program served approximately 80 children and youth by providing more than 3017 meals and 824 snacks at the following five locations in Indiana County.

Chevy Chase Community Center
Poets Village Apartments
Adelphoi Village
Alpha-Day Treatment at the Community Guidance Center
New Story -Homer City Location

In addition, an estimated 66 children who received lunch at the Chevy Chase Community Center also participate in the youth activity program, which includes field trips, education and recreation.

It's Dinner Time

During the spring of 2013, a new Friday evening meal was provided along with educational programming to low-income youth and their families. This program is designed to address the challenges facing our youth in an atmosphere that allows them to learn and grow. The program served 79 children and family members in the spring, Plans are now underway for the fall program.

Health Education and Awareness

The Center maintains partnerships with local organizations to provide free preventative health services and nutrition education for residents. These include free medical screenings, healthy meal planning and preparation, fitness and drug and alcohol awareness. The Center provides the facilities, outreach to its clients and support for the programs, which are offered free of charge to the community.

Community Garden

A community garden was established in 2013 on land donated to the center by the children of the late Ben Cunningham, a founding member and neighbor of the Center. The garden provides youth with an opportunity to learn how to grow, prepare and store fresh food. The Indiana County Penn State Extension provides education and assistance with gardening, safe food handling, storage and preparation. 30 volunteers worked with youth at the Center to prepare the garden in the spring of 2013.

COMPASS and Referral Services

The Center became a partner with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the summer of 2013 to assist people who need help with COMPASS, an online application for government health and human service programs and benefits. The program provides a one stop online location for families and individuals to apply for a variety of programs including Medical Assistance, Children's Health Insurance (CHIP), Cash Assistance, Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP), SNAP (Food Stamps), Home and Community Based Services, Long Term Care and School Meals.

Emergency Services

Emergency services are provided in a variety of ways based on the individual needs of clients who come to the Center for help. The CCCAC accepts donations for food and clothing, which are available on an as needed basis. When possible, we also provide assistance with those who need emergency financial assistance for utilities, prescription drugs or other needs when other avenues have been exhausted but financial need still exists. Since January 2013, more than 200 individuals from 74 households were served.

Cinderella Program

The Cinderella program is planned to kick off in the spring of 2014. The program is for income eligible female high school students who wish to attend their prom but are unable to afford the cost to attend. Participants will be required to attend 4 workshops that will address self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth. At the completion of the program, participants will receive Prom Gowns donated by area residents.

Major Sources of Funding and Donations

The following information is not intended to be comprehensive and it is important to note that while every donation cannot be included, every contribution made to the Center is vital and appreciated no matter what the size.

Funding carried over from 2012

Bill Shane Memorial Contributions

\$15,570 was donated to the center at the end of 2012 and more than \$2,000 was donated in 2013 for general operations of the Center

Summer Food Lunch Program Youth Activities

Approximately \$1,730 was carried over from 2012 by funding raised by members of the community with additional funding provided in 2013 for youth activities including field trips and supplies.

Walmart

A \$1,000 grant was provided to purchase supplies for the Souper Friday program.

Year-to-Date Funding 2013

United Way of Indiana County

A \$10,000 grant application was funded to support the Centers' family meal programs and related emergency services programs.

White Township Supervisors

\$9,900 was provided for general operations at the center.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education

An estimated \$8,000 to \$9,000 in reimbursements for meals either has been provided or will be provided in support of the Summer Food Lunch program, which ended Friday, August 16.

Mid-Day Rotary

A \$1,000 grant was funded for the youth initiatives at the Center.

Pathstone Senior Community Service Employment Program

Four part-time staff positions are provided to eligible individuals age 55 and older to receive on the job experience through employment at the center. Three positions are currently filled.

Giant Eagle, Auntie Anne's, Martins Food Markets

These local businesses donate baked goods to be provided free of charge to residents in need Monday through Friday.

The Boy Scouts of America

Donated more than 1,131 pounds of non-perishable food for the Center's emergency food pantry.

The children of the late Ben Cunningham

Donated the use of land one block from the Center to be used for a Community Garden and enlisted the support of 25 volunteers not only to support the preparation and planting of the garden, but also to prepare the Friday evening meal. Starbucks donated \$1,500 as an employee match on behalf of Joni Malloy, daughter of Ben Cunningham.

How Can You Help?

The Chevy Chase Community Action Council takes seriously its commitment to operate a Community Center that embodies the spirit of community service on which it was founded. Your assistance is critical to helping us build on our mission to combat poverty and support our neighbors in need.

Donate

Your financial contributions ensure we are able to maintain the building and provide support for our programs, services and general operations.

Please send your donations to:

**Chevy Chase Community Action Council, Inc.
640 North Fifth Street
Indiana, PA 15701**

We welcome donations of non-perishable food, clothing and household items between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Volunteer

The following volunteer services are needed:

- Gleaners to collect baked goods weekday mornings from area merchants.
- Kitchen helpers for Soup Kitchen.
- Gardeners to help maintain the community garden.
- Office support to help with basic administrative functions of the Center.
- Individuals with an interest in helping plan and execute fundraisers.
- Community organizations to provide free programs and services to those who come to the Center for help.

If you have a special talent, a business service or other ways you believe you can help the Center provide quality services, we welcome your ideas and assistance.

We invite you to stop by the Center between the hours of 9:00 am and 2:00 pm weekdays or call us at 724-463-6674.

We thank you for your support.