

Too many people living in the Lehigh Valley continue to struggle, clinging to the lower rungs of humanity's ladder. In 2013-2014, we set out to reach more of our neighbors in need by participating in winter sheltering efforts, forging new relationships in Northampton County, and redesigning the way in which we deliver services to those facing homelessness to deliver greater results for our community's poor and more cost-effective results for society.

Our goal is to represent those whose voices go unheard, to drive greater equity of basic human rights for all citizens of the Lehigh Valley, and to empower all to reach their full potential—no matter what barriers stand in the way.

– Jack Felch



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Stretching Our Wings

2014-2015 Annual Report



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***Responding to the call of Jesus Christ, the mission of
The Lehigh Conference of Churches is to unite communities of
faith as ecumenical partners. Putting our faith into action,
we minister to and advocate for those in need and encourage
all to reach their full potential.***

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Kristi Breinich, HOPE ICM Supervisor

Marie Libsy, HOPE ICM Case Manager

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Charles Brannon, Soup Kitchen Coordinator

Bruce Jackson, Soup Kitchen Assistant

Ralph Dejesue, Maintenance

Bob Stewart, Maintenance

Johnny Brown, Maintenance

Cover art provided by JB, staff member and Daybreak member. JB enjoys sketching birds and animals in his free time and has an incredible talent for working in pencil.

New Strategies, Improved Governance

We, The Lehigh Conference of Churches are stretching our wings as we move toward a vision of operating in a unified home of our own; providing focused assistance to people entering and returning to the abounding choices of a free society; and using our resources in entrepreneurial ways to provide the self esteem of employment to as many people as we can. No longer bound by a county border, we hope to soar throughout Lehigh Valley to apply the skills of our well trained crew to the benefit of all whom God places in our path. Our flight path has placed us, once again, at a crossroads and ready to meet new challenges in our expanded coverage area and encouraged by progress already made during 201-2015.



Our independent auditor has provided us with a clean opinion regarding our annual financial statements. We have elected to voluntarily file a report known as IRS Form 990 to be as fully open and transparent as possible for our donors and supporting foundations.

In these pages you have read a sampling of the missions and ministries God makes possible through your support. God made a way when we took a leap of faith in opening a winter shelter with empty pockets. Our 7% administrative costs are less than half of what other non-profits spend. We will never be extravagant, but we need you help to continuing raising the equity bar and building a healthier community in which we can all thrive.



Message from our Executive Director

The artwork chosen for the cover of this year's annual report of The Lehigh Conference of Churches is more than just a pretty picture. One of our employees, JB, who is also a Daybreak member, was inspired to use his God-given talents to draw this beautiful pencil sketch of a bird. The notions of wings and flight, takeoff and landings—familiar to me from my experience as an Army aviator—are fitting for a review of the missions and ministries of the Conference throughout our 2014–2015 fiscal year.

This year included what we pilots call a touch-and-go: The organization begun in 1954 as the Lehigh County Conference of Churches touched down on July 1st 2014 and then immediately took off again as The Lehigh Conference of Churches. More than a symbolic change, the new name (and updated logo) acknowledges the reality of how poverty and homelessness affect the entire region. The Conference's endeavor—you could call it an experimental test flight—to provide overflow seasonal sheltering clearly documented outstanding needs despite the existing resources and efforts in Allentown and Bethlehem.

The Conference's long-running programs continue to soar. Daybreak, the Ecumenical Soup Kitchen, and Pathways Housing Services see increasing demands for their ministries that are consistently met through the support of our member churches. Our specialized committees, such as Interfaith in Action, Ecumenism, and Justice and Advocacy, continue to provide important leadership in the Lehigh Valley.

Recent changes in United Way funding have caused Aspires, our innovative program for assisting at-risk youth, to sputter. Meanwhile, HOPE-ICM, a new program that provides intensive case-management services to people coping with serious and persistent mental illness while facing the economic stress of finding affordable housing, has taken off with award-winning success.

To my great joy, Rev. Dr. Larry D. Pickens, Esq., joined the crew this year as my copilot in the role of ecumenical director. Our fantastic team of almost 40 professional, caring employees keeps the Conference flying steady.

The Conference continues to receive substantial funding through government contracts to provide social services to the communities of the Lehigh Valley. Yet the high-octane jet fuel we need to fly high comes from member contributions, private foundations, and individual donations, for which we are continually thankful.

Dum Spiro Spero (While I breathe, I hope.) -

Jack Felch, Executive Director

Driving the Equity Agenda Forward

To improve the lives of ‘the least of us,’ we use a housing-ready model to surround each individual with a continuum of care. The ultimate goal: ready them to become successful residents. We then assist the client in finding housing that is conducive to their needs and income.

We start by helping clients apply for and receive whatever benefits they qualify for such as public assistance, health insurance, and food stamps to name a few. Concurrent to this activity, many of our clients enter our Daybreak program, a five-day-a-week drop-in center where they learn life skills that allow them to become more productive and employable and integrated into society. Staff members also work with each client to provide stability for mental health issues ranging from social anxiety and addictions to obsessive compulsive and personality disorders.

Most of the time, clients are referred to us from area social services agencies. We also take proactive steps to seek out those in need of assistance. Our staff does street outreach at hospitals, libraries, soup kitchens, overnight shelters, and parks in an effort to locate those living on the street. This is not an easy job; it often takes weeks, months, or even years before people are ready to accept the help they so desperately need.

Here are activities that yielded the most impact in our efforts to move the poor in our community to a more equitable position in 2014-2015:

- We began Homeless Outreach and Positive-social Engagement (HOPE) Program in response to a growing population of homeless adults living with a mental illness and substance abuse. HOPE pairs case management services with a comprehensive array of outpatient mental health and substance abuse treatment services, shortening the length of time homeless and increasing employment income.
- We assumed operations of the overflow winter shelter effort in Allentown in partnership with the Allentown Rescue Mission, Salvation Army, Lehigh Valley Hospital Street Medicine program, other non-profits, and faith-based and community organizations.
- A rental subsidy program offered through a partnership with Lehigh County increased its funds by 55% allowing 175 people to be permanently housed, a 69 percent increase from the prior year.

Salvation Army of Allentown
San Martin de Porres
Seibert Evangelical Congregational Church
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Slatington Baptist Church
Solomon's United Church of Christ
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church
St. Andrews Episcopal Church
St. Ann's Roman Catholic Church
St. Catherine of Siena
St. Francis of Assisi
St. James AME Zion Church
St. James Lutheran Church - Coopersburg
St. James UCC - Allentown
St. John The Baptist
St. John's Church of Faith, Inc.
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church
St. John's Lutheran Church - Allentown
St. John's UCC - Allentown
St. John's UCC - Coopersburg
St. John's UCC - Emmaus
St. John's UCC - Fullerton
St. John's UCC - Fogelsville
St. John's UCC - Laurys Station
St. John's UCC - Mickleys
St. John's UCC - Slatington
St. Joseph the Worker Roman Catholic
St. Joseph's Lutheran Church
St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church
St. Luke's Hospital

St. Margaret's Episcopal Church
St. Mark's Lutheran Church
St. Mark's UCC
St. Matthew's Lutheran Church
St. Michael Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Nativity
St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church
St. Paul's UCC - Allentown
St. Paul's UCC - Seiberlingville
St. Paul's UCC - Trexlertown
St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church
St. Peter's Union Church Lynnvile
St. Stephen of Hungary
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church
St. Thomas More Church
St. Timothy's Lutheran Church
The Barn
The Rev. Kenneth L. Buckwalter
Third Day Worship Center
Trinity Memorial Lutheran Church
Trinity UCC
UCC Greenawalds
Union Baptist Church
Union Evangelical Lutheran Church
Union UCC
Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lehigh Valley
United Presbyterian Church
Vision Misionera Ministries

Allentown Rescue Mission
 Annunciation BVM - St. Mary
 Asbury United Methodist Church
 Calvary Baptist Church
 Calvary Moravian Church
 Calvary Temple
 Cedar Lutheran Church
 Cedar UCC
 Chestnut Hill Church
 Christ EC Church
 Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church
 Christ UCC Schoenersville
 Christ's Church at Lowhill
 Church of the Good Shepherd UCC
 Church of the Manger UCC
 Church of the Redeemer
 Dubbs Memorial UCC
 Egypt Community Church
 Emmanuel UCC - Allentown
 Emmanuel United Methodist Church
 Emmaus Moravian Church
 Endeavor Community Church
 Episcopal Church of the Mediator
 Faith Lutheran Church
 Faith Presbyterian Church of Emmaus
 Faith Tabernacle Deliverance Temple
 Faith UCC - Center Valley
 Faithpointe Church of the Nazarene
 First Church of Christ Scientist
 First Presbyterian Church of Allentown
 First United Presbyterian
 Friedens Evangelical Lutheran Church
 Good Shepherd UCC
 Grace Episcopal Church
 Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church - Allentown
 Grace Lutheran Church - Macungie

Grace UCC
 Heidelberg Lutheran Church
 Heidelberg UCC
 Hope Church UCC
 Iglesia Metodista Unida La Trinidad
 Immaculate Conception BVM
 Jacob's Church
 Jerusalem Lutheran Church - E Salisbury
 Jerusalem Western Salisbury Union Church
 Jordan Evangelical Lutheran Church
 Jordan UCC
 Lighthouse Baptist Church
 Luther Crest Retirement Community - Spiritual Life
 Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit
 Metropolitan Community Church of Lehigh Valley
 MorningStar Moravian Church
 New Beginnings Fellowship
 New Bethany EC Church
 Old Zionsville UCC
 Our Lady Help of Christians
 Phoebe Ministries
 Presbyterian Church of Catasauqua
 Protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary
 Ripple
 Sacred Heart Hospital
 Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ
 Salem UCC - Catasauqua
 Salem UMC- Zionsville
 Salem United Methodist - Slatedale
 Salem United Methodist Church - Allentown

Partnerships

You might say that partnering is in our DNA.



God is our partner in everything we do. What we often lack in funds, we make up for in faith. Our organization is comprised of 140 partners—Christian-based organizations that have joined forces to minister to and advocate for the poor in our community. In 2013-2014, we benefitted from 4,600 community volunteer experiences. Working together, we are able to do more good.

Much of the good work we are doing today is the result of progressive thinking by our member churches. In some cases, today's programming was instigated by one or another member church; in other cases, member churches have found ways to further extend programmatic care. Last year, The Barn sponsored a Christmas party for our Daybreak clients. Union Baptist instituted a breakfast program to better serve Winter Shelter patrons. Housing case managers conducted outreach at the Trinity Lutheran Church in Bethlehem at the request of the Bethlehem Health Bureau. Many churches sponsor families in need during the Christmas season, providing gifts to more than 160 children.



Uniting communities of faith and putting our faith into action, we touch the lives of almost 14,000 people each year.

In 1982, we partnered with Catholic Charities to form two soup kitchens to serve the area's poor. Our kitchen operates three days a week; Catholic Charities, four. Between our two organizations, the working poor, homeless, elderly, children, those between jobs, individuals on fixed incomes, and those who have nowhere else to turn can be assured of at least one meal every day of the week.

This year, our **Ecumenical Soup Kitchen** served 36,263 meals—a 26 percent increase over the kitchen's first year of operation.

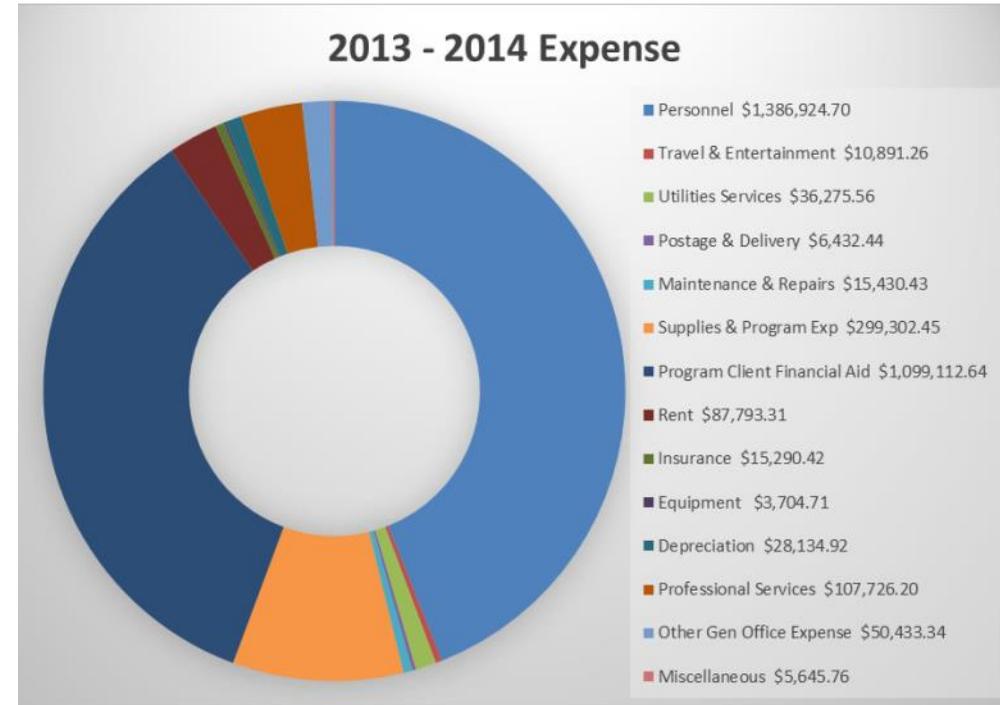
Hot, nutritious meals are made possible by financial support and in-kind donations from foundations, supermarkets, eating establishments and other businesses, member churches, other faith-based organizations, and unaffiliated individuals.

Each year, hundreds of volunteers donate their time and talent to cook and serve meals, clean up tables, sweep up floors, and all the other sundry tasks required to keep the kitchen operational and expenses low. At least half of these volunteers are member church congregants. We are grateful for the continued support of the Second Harvest Food Bank, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Department of Agriculture as well as our member churches St. Paul's Lutheran Church and St. James A.M.E.- Zion, which have each offered over the years the use of their kitchen and dining facilities.



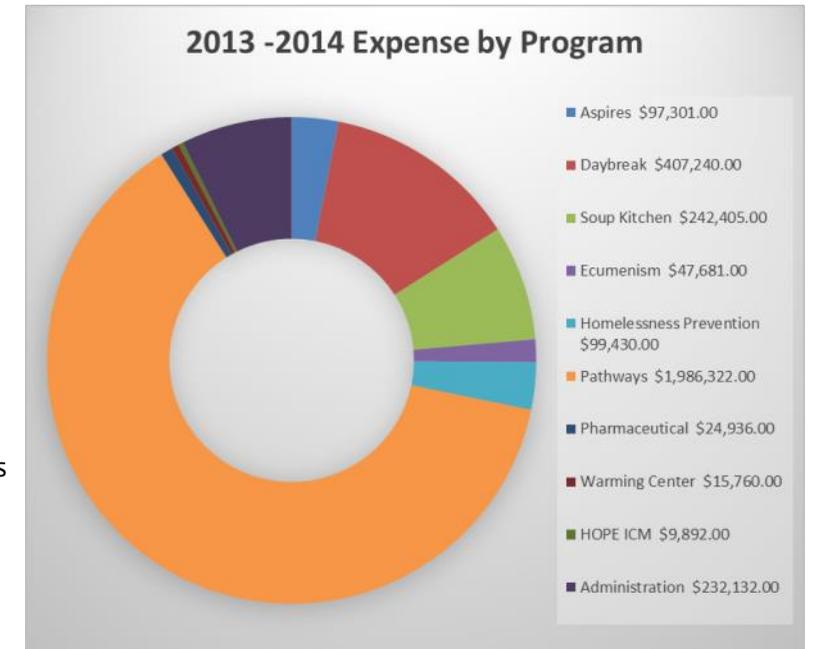
Congregants of St. John's UCC, Coopersburg, one of at least five member church groups that have been volunteering their time since the Ecumenical Soup Kitchen opened in 1982. In 2013-2014, 15 member church groups, 2 non-member faith-based groups and an area business shared the responsibility for cooking and serving meals under the direction of and with assistance from our Soup Kitchen coordinator and kitchen assistant.

Last year, **LVHN Street Medicine Team** joined in our efforts to provide a mini-continuum of care inside the Soup Kitchen by visiting the kitchen once a week. This service works well in tandem with weekly visits by a representative from Sacred Heart Parish Nurses. Clients have access to free healthcare screenings, referrals to follow up medical care, and assistance with health insurance enrollment.



Last year, the Conference remained committed to further improving efficiency and avoiding duplication of services.

- Several senior management positions were combined to minimize overhead costs;
- Centralized Intake Case Management position was created to better facilitate access to housing assistance programs and shorten wait times for clients;
- Conference absorbed Lazarus House, a 501c3 which creates housing opportunities for citizens returning from incarceration.



Prudent Spending

In 2013-2014, contributions received by the Conference increased by 20 percent over the previous year or \$45,082. This increase was wholly a result of a generous bequest, designated for feeding and aiding the needy. The Conference receives contributions from public and private sector funders and donors and member churches, including contributions made in cash and in kind. The Conference allocated its resources based on a clear understanding of the priority needs for the poor in our community.



Total expenditures in 2013-2014 were \$3.16 million, with spending of 35% or \$1,099,112 devoted to rental assistance, funds provided directly to client landlords. The second largest area of program expenditure was personnel, which accounted for 39% or \$1,248,429 devoted to case management services and program delivery. Our administrative costs represented a fraction of our total expenditures: 7% or \$227,808.

In the late 1970's, the owner of an anchor store in downtown Allentown responded to customer complaints about a crowd of "vagrants" loitering outside the store and blocking the entrance. He quickly learned these people had been released from the State Hospital and had nowhere else to go. Instead of calling the police, he called the Conference and asked us to help them. We did. The Daybreak drop-in center opened in 1979, providing services and support to those who live with mental illness.

Today Daybreak also offers its services to individuals with chemical dependencies, HIV/AIDS, and physical disabilities as well as the neighborhood elderly. They strive to prevent homelessness, offer self-sufficiency, socialization, recreational, educational and vocational programs to encourage Daybreak members to reach their full potential. Individuals become members by completing or staying active in treatment.

In 2014, Daybreak Drop-In Center provided 25,381 nutritious meals, 508 free healthcare screenings and referrals, and transportation assistance to 153.

For the first time last year, Daybreak members held a Volunteer Friendship Award Ceremony to honor the hundreds of volunteers who made a difference in their lives. Members prepared and served food to the volunteers and presented them with a certificate of appreciation and handmade flowers.

Thanks to volunteers and supporters, Daybreak members have visited Nockamixon Park, gone to the movies, planted community gardens and experienced a wide range of healthy activities which would otherwise not be made available to them.



Two volunteers head down the red carpet at the Volunteer Friendship Awards. Daybreak's motto is People Helping People.

A program to serve at-risk youth initiated by member church Asbury United Methodist Church quickly grew beyond the church's ability to manage. The program is today designed to help Allentown School District students identified by school counselors as at-risk to graduate to be promoted with and graduate with their class. A multi-modal approach and non-traditional instruction, as well as a variety of group activities, aims to build the socialization skills and self-confidence.

School year 2014-2015 was another successful year for the Aspires Mentoring Program. Our twelve-week Teen Healthy Chef program brought together 40 students at William Allen High School where volunteer mentors coach students on how to prepare nutritious meals. In addition to learning to cook, students better their comprehension skills by reading recipes, improve math abilities by measuring ingredients, and work as a team with fellow students and adults, creating positive self-esteem through their accomplishments.



Students enjoy a year end picnic celebrating their accomplishments during the school year and strengthening the friendships they made through Aspires programming. During the summer months Outdoor Adventure Club offers camping, white water rafting and hiking through local parks.

A weekly group mentoring program hosts an average of 13 students. Sessions focus on academic excellence, life skills, personal growth, and career and college preparation. Yoga classes, laser tag, hiking and movie nights provide an outlet for students whose home lives can be stressful and disruptive to learning at school. Aspires students that are actively engaged in a one-on-one mentor match are spending at least four hours a month with a caring, positive adult role model, an approach studies show can reduce a student's likeliness to skip school by 52%. In all, over 100 Allentown students participate in Aspires programming.

The outcome? 100 percent of Aspires students mentored through their senior year graduated high school.

The success of Aspires would not be possible without partnership with the Allentown School District, Asbury UMC, The Barn and support from many local foundations and churches.

Thanks to our most generous donors The Lehigh Conference of Churches is able to touch the lives of close to 14,000 people in need. We recognize and honor you.

St. Luke's Hospital and Health Network
 Anonymous
 Lehigh Valley Health Network
 Bakery Nook
 Bottom Dollar Supermarket
 The Century Fund
 PPL Services Corporation
 Sacred Heart Hospital
 First Presbyterian Church of Allentown
 Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit
 Dr. Edward M. Gianfonte
 Giant Food Stores, Inc.
 Just Born, Inc

Air Products Foundation
 Mr. Gunther Heussman
 Schyler Kemps Foundation
 Hommer Foundation
 Wegman's
 Lehigh Valley Military Affairs Council
 The Frank E. & Seba B. Payne Foundation
 Panera
 Mr. & Mrs. Corning Painter
 Harry C. Trexler Trust
 Highmark Blue Shield
 Episcopal Church of the Mediator
 Weis Markets, Inc.
 Asbury United Methodist Church





**60 years of uniting communities of faith
as ecumenical partners to minister and advocate
for those in need.**

The Lehigh Conference of Churches is grounded in ecumenism to provide social services to our neighbors in need. Our history demonstrates clearly how ecumenism has, does, and will continue to play a fundamental role in the shaping of our ministry.

1954 The Greater Allentown Council of Churches is borne out of conversations between six pastors concerned about the increasing number of poor migrating from large metropolitan areas into our community.

1978 An ecumenical food bank, founded, funded and operated by member churches, reveals several critical, unmet needs in the community: hunger, housing, mental health, access to community resources. This sympathetic insight into the plight of the poor in the community greatly influences the shape and direction of the Conference in the decades that follow.

- 1982 The Conference joins CROP Hunger Walk, a national organization sponsored by the Church World Service. The first Allentown CROP Walk is held later that year.
- 1982 Daybreak expands its service to five days a week.
- 1982 Pharmaceutical Assistance program began, supplying medication to the uninsured and under insured.
- 1988 Pathways program launched to facilitate the response by member churches and human service organizations to fulfill basic human needs.
- 1992 Conference moves to Alliance Hall to accommodate growing programs and additional space needs.
- 2002 Asbury United Methodist Church transfers its growing Aspires program to benefit at-risk youth to the Conference.
- 2006 Pathways establishes additional programs, including permanent supportive housing.
- 2013 Five Conference programs are merged to form Pathways Housing Services and provided new office space to better serve the growing number facing homelessness.
- 2014 HOPE Program begins, offering case management to those who are mentally ill and homeless.
- 2014 Lehigh County Conference of Churches become The Lehigh Conference of Churches and accepts its first member church from Northampton County.
- 2014 Safe Haven, operated since 2010 by St. Paul's Lutheran Church, turns over management of its program to the 6th and Chew Streets Winter Shelter. Recognizing a need to do more than provide shelter guests with a warm place to sleep, member church Union Baptist begins a breakfast service program.

In 2010, four people died on the streets of the Lehigh Valley due to the cold. In response to this tragedy, St. Paul's Lutheran Church opened the Safe Haven Ministry, where homeless men and women could spend the night in the parish hall's basement. By 2014 Safe Haven could not provide accommodations for all who were coming through their doors. The Conference opened its doors.

During the harsh winter of 2014, homeless-facing advocates were expressing concern that the safe havens for the street homeless were no longer able to meet the growing need to provide safe, secure, and sanitary emergency winter shelter for those unwilling or unable to access the traditional sheltering system. The Seasonal Sheltering Committee of the Allentown/Lehigh County Commission to End Chronic Homelessness, composed of concerned citizens and representatives from local nonprofits, the faith community, the homeless community, and local governments, devised a strategy to address this crisis. The 6th and Chew Winter Shelter (6CWS) would operate in Alliance Hall from November to April, administered by The Lehigh Conference of Churches. Guests would be provided a cot and bedding, given access to street health services, and offered the opportunity to enter case management.



Cots line the walls of Alliance Hall gymnasium.

304 unique individuals spent 4,498 nights at 6CWS. Guest attendance averaged 29 per night with a high of 53. We actively engaged 38% of guests of the 6CWS and 29 formerly homeless individuals have been housed. An additional 15 are about to be housed or have a person-specific housing plan in place and 20 individuals have accessed the Daybreak drop-in center.

We are grateful for the partnership of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran, Alliance Hall, City of Allentown, Salvation Army, Allentown Rescue Mission, our Board of Directors, volunteers and the enormous support received from the faith community.

Pathways housing and referral service was initiated in 1988 after learning from the Ecumenical Food Bank that food insecurity is rarely the single obstacle those in poverty are facing. Today Pathways Housing Services connects low-income families and individuals with available resources to help them meet a basic need: housing.

Pathways Housing Services prevents homelessness by counseling persons who are at high risk of becoming homeless on the actions and steps necessary to stabilize their housing situation and their lives. In addition to counseling, Pathways provides advocacy services on behalf of clients to landlords and utility services and, when a client qualifies, can provide rental assistance.



The Intake Case Manager speaks on average to 100 people in need per week. Pathways Housing Services connects with hundreds of human services agencies throughout the Lehigh Valley.

Pathways Housing Services improved upon client access to services by instituting a coordinated intake approach. Those seeking help meet with an Intake Case Manager who evaluates their situation and connects them with a menu of services for which they are eligible. Social service programs can be confusing and time consuming to navigate. We do the hard work so clients can connect with all the programs which may benefit them and shorten the time it takes to do so.

In FY 2013/2014, Pathways disbursed rental assistance or service provision to 108 families or individuals. 34 chronically homeless individuals or families were stably housed for longer than 6 months. In total, 1,007 heads of household came through our coordinated intake process seeking rental assistance with 809 of those households being enrolled in Pathways. 88 percent of those enrolled were categorized as "extremely low income" or receiving income of less than \$11,000 per year; 29 percent had been diagnosed with a mental illness.

As a long-term recipient or distributor of rental/utility assistance funding from FEMA, Lehigh County Aging and Adult Services, and the HUD Supportive Housing Program, Pathways has been a leader in the region in the provision of case management and cash assistance for households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness.