

SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

Open Arms Senior Connection - Arndt's, Easton



For over 17 years, grants totaling more than a half million dollars have been made possible through mission support giving. Grant applications are received by the Witness and Service Ministry Team and are awarded based on the outreach the grant will accomplish.

The story that follows is written by the founders and the current program director of Open Arms Senior Connection. It tells of an inspiring ministry that got its beginning because of a vision, the need to help others, and the available grant funds that allowed it to thrive.

Over ten years ago a small Welcome and Outreach committee at Arndt's Lutheran Church in Forks Township was looking for another ministry that could use their resources. The congregation came together to modify their existing spaces using funds predominantly from a Transforming Congregations grant and a Witness and Service grant, both of which are mission support grant programs available through the Synod.



Today "Open Arms Senior Connection" continues as a two-day a week program for older adults in the greater Easton community. Realizing that the time some of the participants spend at Open Arms might be the only times during the week that they enjoy a meal with someone, or have any human contact at all, inspires the congregation to make the program as effective and impactful as possible.

The success of this program is due in great part to two paid co-directors and all the volunteers. The program runs on a budget of about \$1000 per month, which goes toward daily beverages and snacks, basic supplies, and salaries.

Donations, fundraisers, and Witness and Service grants from the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA has allowed this program to reach and provide long term benefits to hundreds of older adults in the region.

To learn more about the activities and outreach of this ministry, please read the full story on the synod website (nepasynod.org/open-arms-senior/) or look for it on the facebook page "Mission Interpreters of NEPA Synod." Remember to "Like" and Share." You can also print a bulletin insert.



Sharing Life - St. Mark, Allentown



Sharing Life is the brain child of Sue Krasley, a parishioner of St. Mark's, who worked at Allentown State Hospital and who had concerns about individuals losing peer relationships due to the closure of the hospital in 2010. At the time, Pastor Brindjar graciously and enthusiastically afforded the opportunity to begin our mission by opening the doors of St. Mark's for a monthly gathering.

What originated as a modest idea of serving a monthly luncheon nine years ago has expanded into a much sought-after experience by our community; it now includes monthly Craft days led by St. Mark's talented artists Brenda Mann and Charlie Orbin.

As our events grew, our attendees have become diverse; and today, monthly events not only include individuals formerly served at Allentown State Hospital, but also embrace individuals with Intellectual Developmental Disabilities as well as the community at large.

Throughout the years the echo and sentiment of Pastor Brindjar's mantra can still be heard: "Stay Calm and Carry On". Due to the success of our mission, and because we often find ourselves serving upwards of 120 individuals each month, we have adopted another mantra: "fishes and loaves."

Because of St. Mark's willingness to take a risk and open their doors and hearts, our mission isn't just about serving individuals lunch. More important is offering to individuals our acceptance, an opportunity to form new friendships, and a welcome to a faith-based community. All activities and luncheons are free to participants and are funded lovingly by our mighty Committee members, St. Mark parishioners, and community donors.



Deadline for 2019 Mission Support Contributions January 31, 2020

Checks must be in the office (not postmarked) by that date. Also, it is important that the Remittance Form is marked correctly to indicate whether a contribution is intended for the year 2019 or 2020. After the January 31 cutoff date, all receipts will be credited as 2020 contributions.

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