

Meals On Wheels Is In Motion!

MOW—bringing Independence, Connection, & Delicious Meals to our Upper Perk Seniors

Many of you are familiar with our food-based services, including food pantry at our Penn Street location and our Monday-Friday Community Lunch at our Senior Center. But what happens when a senior is unable to shop for themselves, prepare meals, or utilize our other food-based services? Thankfully, our Meals on Wheels (MOW) Program helps to serve our most vulnerable seniors in need!

Meals on Wheels provides home-delivered, nutritious, and well-balanced meals to older adults in our community 60 and above. Currently, the requirements to apply for Meals on Wheels in Montgomery County are as follows: the individual must reside in Montgomery County, be age 60 or older, must be unable to prepare meals for themselves, must be unable to shop for themselves, and must have no supports residing with them or visiting regularly to provide meal preparation and shopping support. Currently, there is no income-based requirement, though Montgomery County’s informational page on Home Delivered Meals does now note a focus on “impoverished” older adults in Montgomery County.

Meals on Wheels is not only an opportunity for a daily, day-brightening visit, but is also a safety check, providing peace of mind to participants and their loved ones, as well as helps participants remain independent in their homes longer.

Currently, we serve 35 seniors, a significant increase from our number of participants last year. While our current program and enrollment is smaller than other local MOW programs, over the past fiscal year, on average, the meals for MOW alone still cost us \$4,800 per month. Unfortunately, while we do receive a small amount of funding for MOW from Montgomery County, The Open Link is directly responsible for the administrative and operations costs ourselves. That means that the amount received from the county does not fully help homebound seniors - so we are dependent upon your generous donations to keep this program running. Beyond financial contributions, we would also love it if you would volunteer to be a weekly



driver, sub driver, or sub packer!

It is also important to know that Montgomery County’s Office of Aging Services (MCOAS) runs the approval process for this program, where participants and families are required to complete both a phone assessment by enrollment and a home visit by a care manager prior to approval for Meals on Wheels. However, we are often the first point of contact from consumers or loved ones about MOW, and we review the individual’s qualifications, send eligible referrals to the county, and if approved, we are quickly able to enroll participants in our MOW program.

If an applicant is not initially approved for MOW, we are able to follow up with a consumer or their loved one, email the enrollment supervisor, and if someone is still rejected, they are eligible for our food pantry services and Community Lunch. While you can call MCOAS directly, we’d still love to chat with you to get to know you, understand qualifications and the process, and help you if you have any issues – we’re here for you!

To learn more about this process and to be referred to MCOAS and The Open Link’s MOW program, please call The Center at 215-679-6550 or center@theopenlink.org. Additionally, if you’re interested in donating to MOW or volunteering your time with MOW, we’d love to hear from you!



452 Penn Street | Pennsburg, PA 18073

The Open Link is a 501(C) (3) corporation, A copy of our official registration and financial information may be obtained from the PA Dept. of State by calling toll free, within PA 1.800.732.0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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452 Penn Street
Pennsburg, PA 18073
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The Center
517 Jefferson Street
East Greenville, PA 18041
215.679.4112

www.theopenlink.org

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UPCOMING AT THE OPEN LINK

Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP):

Begins this June! This program provides eligible seniors with 5 \$5 vouchers for locally grown fruits, vegetables, honey, and herbs from participating farmers markets and roadside stands. Voucher pickup times at The Center are Wednesdays 9:00 AM-11:30 AM and 1:00 PM-4:00 PM. To pick up at Penn Street or The Center at another time, please call 215-679-4112 (Penn Street) or 215-679-6550 (The Center).

Summer Kids Nutrition Program- June 16-August 22:

Mondays & Thursday

Treichler’s Mill Park, Hereford– 11:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Bieler Park, East Greenville– 12:15 PM - 12:45 PM

Tuesdays & Fridays

Isaac Smith Park, Green Lane– 11:30 AM - 11:55 AM

Hope Valley Community Church, Red Hill– 12:00 PM - 12:25 PM

Pennsburg Commons, Pennsburg– 12:30 PM - 1:00 PM

Summer Reading: We’re kicking off our summer book club with Poverty, By America by Matthew Desmond. We’ll be hosting a group discussion with staff, our board, volunteers, and anyone interested in reading the book starting the last week of August.

Our Summer Adult Education Courses Begin July 7 (online) and July 8 (in person). In person classes are open enrollment, but registration for our online courses ends on June 27. Visit our website to enroll!

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NEWSLETTER
Summer 2025

From Capitol Hill to the Upper Perk Valley

How Federal Decisions Will Impact Our Work

By Marianne G. Lynch



gap through food donations, drives, and/or direct food purchases.

In addition to this loss in pantry support, households who currently receive LIHEAP (the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program) could lose these benefits in the winter of 2025. LIHEAP provides help with heating bills for about 346,000 Pennsylvanians each year in the form of a one-time grant of about \$200 to \$1,000. While LIHEAP is administered by Pennsylvania, the funding is appropriated by Congress. Right now, there is a freeze on that funding due to staffing cuts at the Federal level, as well as a proposal to cut the program altogether.

While The Open Link operates a small utility and rental assistance program that helps our neighbors with a utility bill or rent in an emergency, our role is mostly to help low-income Valley residents, particularly seniors, register for LIHEAP each winter. If the program no longer exists, The Open Link will struggle to support those in need of heating assistance. Our utility and rent support fund is approximately \$25,000 thanks to several grants, helping about 165 people with rent and utility assistance each year. We anticipate that we would need to double this budget to support those who would not be able to access LIHEAP next year.

Other cuts that are not tied directly to The Open Link but could have a significant impact include proposed decreases in the SNAP

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WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH OPEN LINK

Give Online: Gifts can be made online by visiting www.theopenlink.org or by scanning the QR code with your phone to make your gift to The Open Link today!



Give by Traditional Mail: Complete the information on the enclosed envelope and return with your check to make your gift to The Open Link!

Volunteer: Pantry Support, Meals on Wheels Packers and Drivers, Tutors, Senior Center Ambassadors, Receptionist, Communications and Fundraising Help.

Host a Food Drive: Have a birthday or anniversary party, have a gathering to “gather” the items on our pantry wish list, create a Cereal Society to provide cereal to The Open Link each month.

Main Office | 452 Penn Street | Pennsburg, PA | 215.679.4112 | www.theopenlink.org
The Center | 517 Jefferson Street | East Greenville, PA 18041 | 215.679.6550

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(food stamp) program and cuts to Medicaid. In our community, the majority of those individuals using both programs are our neighbors over 60 who are very low-income, or those who have less than 50% of the median household income in our area. Many already live in low-income communities and have very limited fixed incomes.

Without cuts, the charitable food system can realistically provide 1 meal to every 8 meals provided by SNAP. If SNAP is cut significantly or discontinued, The Open Link and other pantries like us will be overwhelmed in trying to meet the needs of the community and will struggle to fill the gap left without SNAP. In addition, nutrition and



health for those on SNAP would also be in jeopardy, as it provides much of the fresh and perishable foods that pantries struggle to keep on hand. Additionally, without proper medical care or the ability to afford medications, our seniors will struggle with their health and other related impacts.

Adding the loss of Medicaid with the possible loss of SNAP and LIHEAP, our seniors and children in particular will suffer medically, nutritionally, and in many other ways.

In sharing this news, it is not my intention to create a gloom-and-doom scenario, but rather to share the nature of this symbiotic relationship with the other programs designed to support our most



vulnerable community members. It is also an opportunity to emphasize the vitality of The Open Link in this community. While policies and programs ebb and flow, our small-but-mighty social services organization will continue to adapt and work to support the community in the best, most innovative ways possible. The Open Link was created by this community, FOR this community. With that focus in mind, we will support its most vulnerable members as long as the community believes it is important.

It is more important now more than ever to keep The Open Link up, running, and thriving amongst these changes. **If you would like to help, contact me at mariannel@theopenlink.org!**



Our Volunteers Are Appreciated and Celebrated Over 6,000 hours of time spent with The Open Link

It's not every day that volunteers get the recognition they deserve – so on April 26, we made sure to do just that! The Open Link hosted our annual Volunteer Appreciation event at The Center, where volunteers enjoyed refreshments, Volunteer Bingo, Pass the Prize, and a volunteer appreciation gift.

Last year, our volunteers completed over 6,000 volunteer hours for The Open Link and our programs. Their

work included helping with the food pantry, driving for Meals on Wheels, handwriting welcome notes and birthday cards to all participants at The Center, gardening in the Hope Grows Here Garden, and even creating an optimized Community Lunch plating procedure for staff and fellow volunteers. We are so grateful for the dedication, creativity, and kindness of each of our volunteers!



A special congratulations to the following volunteers for receiving special awards:

Diane Appold
Penmanship Award

Gregg Foster
Cheeseball Award

Frank Bauer
Whistle While You Work Award

Tami Laughlin
Florence Nightingale Award

Lori Dzojko
Diving Award

Jay Cashatt
Charged Up and Ready to Go Award

Dawn Tunnell
Dawn Method Award

Fiji
Top Dog Award (woof woof!)



Thank you to our Board of Directors and Executive Committee members for your attendance and support!



50 Years of Planting Hope for Upper Perkiomen Our Garden Party Raised More Than \$64,000 For Our Neighbors in Need

Over 165 guests greeted and chatted with one another on March 30th at La Massaria at Bella Vista Golf Course in Gilbertsville.



Marianne Lynch, Executive Director, kicked off the event with opening remarks.



Live entertainment was provided by 3x Grammy-nominated trumpeter Clayton Reilly.



It is with great sadness that the members of The Open Link family share the passing of our beloved Kelly Chandler. Kelly was our Communications and Development Director and an essential member of our team.

In the 9 years that she was part of The Open Link's staff, she made a huge impact on the way the organization shared its mission, connected with community members, and supported those in need.

Kelly had an infectious smile and a wonderful laugh that was contagious. She cared deeply about the people we served and was a tireless advocate for the children and older members of our Valley.

As a team, we appreciated her professionalism, attention to detail, and deep understanding of this place we call home. She will be deeply missed by our staff, board, partners, and volunteers.

Thank You To Our Code Blue Volunteers!



On May 19, we honored our 2025 Code Blue volunteers at the Upper Perk Homelessness Coalition volunteer dinner. This past winter, 76 volunteers served our community across 91 Code Blue Declaration nights.

Because of the dedication and hard work of each of these volunteers, we were open for every single Code Blue Declaration night declared by Montgomery County! 7 unique male individuals used the shelter this past winter, and next year, we are also hoping to serve the women in our community via this same program.

A special thank you to these volunteers, especially to Scott Buchanan, who achieved the #1 volunteer spot at over 200 volunteer hours during the Code Blue Season.

Thank you additionally to the community partners who have given time, funding, dinners, and supplies to the shelter, including Finland Mennonite, Upper Perk Community Church, St. Philp Neri, Morningstar Fellowship, Upper Perk Rotary, and Lions.



Code Blue Shelter By the Numbers:

7 Individuals used the shelter this winter

91 Code Blue Nights - and we were open for ALL of them!

76 Shelter volunteers this winter

180 "Bed nights" - meaning that beds were used 180 times

20+ Community partners who have given time, funding, dinners, and supplies

7 Women who needed emergency shelter and could not be accommodated

Backpack Program

School might have just ended for the summer, but we're already gearing up for our Back to School Supply Drive! Every August, we distribute backpacks and school supplies to our local students in need. We start collecting supplies in July and need your help!

Items can be dropped off at The Open Link's main office at 452 Penn Street in Pennsburg, M-F, 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM, with additional hours until 7:00 PM on Tuesdays.



School Supplies Needed For Back to School 2025:

- New Backpacks
- 3 Ring Binders (1" and 2")
- Pocket Folders
- Colored Markers (washable)
- Colored Pencils
- Crayons
- Block & Pencil Tops
- Erasers
- Scissors
- Spiral Notebooks (wide ruled)
- Gift Cards (Walmart, Target, Amazon)
- #2 Pencils
- Pens (black or blue)
- Hand Sanitizer
- Glue Sticks
- Composition Books
- Dry Erase Markers
- Highlighters
- Looseleaf Paper