



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.

The Open Link @theopenlinkpa

The Open Link

Penn Street
452 Penn Street
Pennsburg, PA 18073
215.679.4112

www.theopenlink.org

The Center
517 Jefferson Street
East Greenville, PA 18041
215.679.6550

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Kelly Zayvelev
1175 Rosemont Ter
Pennsburg, PA 18073-1137

UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE OPEN LINK

Summer Kids Meal Program (SKMP) Now through Friday, August 21, 2026: We're distributing free to-go style meals for all Valley kids 18 and under. Delivered at 5 Valley drop off sites each week:

Mondays and Thursdays

- Treichler's Mill Park, Hereford– 11:30 AM-12:00 PM
- Bieler Park, East Greenville– 12:15-12:45 PM

Tuesdays and Fridays

- Isaac Smith Park, Green Lane– 11:30 - 11:55 AM
- Hope Valley Community Church, Red Hill– 12:00 -12:25 PM
- Pennsburg Commons, Pennsburg– 12:30-1:00 PM

HSE Summer Sessions: Our HSE Summer Sessions are ongoing! Prepare to earn your HSE diploma through our no cost courses. Visit theopenlink.org/get-help/adult-education.html, email instructor@theopenlink.org, or call 215-679-4112 to learn more.

Financial Empowerment Courses: Our Smart Finances, Bright Futures financial empowerment program will help you take control of your financial future! Learn practical tools for budgeting, managing credit, dumping debt, and more. Classes begin this September. For more information, email instructor@theopenlink.org or call 215-679-4112.

Community Day: Saturday, September 12, 2026, 10:00 AM-3:00 PM. Join us at Community Day on Main Street between Route 663 and East Greenville Borough! We'll have games, prizes, information about our organization, programs and services, ways to get involved, and opportunities to speak with TOL staff and volunteers.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE OPEN LINK

Give Online: Gifts can be made online at www.theopenlink.org or by scanning the QR code with your phone. 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, The Center Lunch Helpers and Activities Hosts, HSE Course Tutors, Meals on Wheels Drivers and Packers, Receptionists, and more!

Host a Food or Supply Drive: Our Pantry is always in need of food and supply donations. We even offer a Food Drive Tool Kit to help you get started! Visit theopenlink.org/get-involved/food-drive-tool-kit.html to learn more.



SCAN ME!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Matt Tomlin, *Vice President*
Carol Kress, *CIC CISR Secretary*
Cory Burkhardt, *Treasurer*

AT-LARGE MEMBER, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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AT-LARGE MEMBERS

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NEWSLETTER
SUMMER 2026

Our Valley, Our Children, Our Responsibility: Ending Childhood Hunger Together

By Marianne Lynch, Executive Director



Our volunteers share nutritious meals and warm smiles with Valley kids through our Summer Kids Meal Program. Together, we are ensuring that every Valley kid has access to the nourishment they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

Many years ago, when I was a single mom raising my toddler son, I struggled to afford food, rent, electricity, and daycare. I worked full-time and was college educated, but that didn't stop me from becoming a statistic. I was a low-income single mom with a child under 18. I was also one of the 37% of single moms who struggle to provide their children with enough to eat, but I was not low-income enough to qualify for programs like SNAP or WIC.

Flash forward 25 years and not much has changed. Single mothers with kids under 18 still account for 37% of those living in poverty. America is still not getting it right when it comes to childhood hunger. This is a solvable issue, and yet 14% of children in the U.S. are living with hunger every day. This plays out as not having enough food for three meals a day, not having enough to eat in the summer months or on weekends when school isn't in session, and not being able to access food at school because of changes to the free and reduced school meals programs.

In the last year, more families have seen themselves included in the percentage of households with children who are food insecure due to increased costs among basic expenses: food, fuel, electricity, housing, healthcare, and other essential services. With these increased costs come difficult choices and challenging realities, like struggling to provide enough food for every member of the household each day.

What does it truly mean for us as a country when children don't have enough food to live each day? It is not just about children suffering in the moment. There are deep ramifications of hunger and malnourishment:

1. When children lack sufficient nutrients, such as iron and vitamin D, research shows that they are more likely to experience developmental and cognitive delays. They can have difficulty thinking and reasoning, leading to more difficulty in school. Educators have been reporting on the difference full bellies make in the classroom for years. Many keep extra snacks on hand to help feed students and to keep their classrooms under control. Dr. Karen Haney, principal at Upper Perkiomen Middle School, agrees, saying, "When students face food insecurity, they may struggle with fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and lower academic performance. These behaviors can be mistaken for a lack of motivation or discipline when they are actually symptoms of hunger."
2. Healthy food is especially important in the first 5 years of life. During this time, children's brains and bodies develop rapidly. Not having proper nutrition during this critical period often leads to diminished immunity, low energy levels, mood disorders, and behavioral changes.
3. Growing up in a food insecure household is a significant risk factor for mental health issues and substance use disorder. Additionally, many health problems associated with substance use, like heart disease, stroke, and cancer, are further complicated by poor nutrition.
4. The stress from experiencing food insecurity and living in poverty creates physical stress within the body. This has been linked to poorer health in adulthood and increased risk for cardiovascular disease, asthma, and autoimmune conditions.
5. Surprisingly (or maybe not so surprisingly), food insecurity is also linked to childhood obesity. Lack of access to healthy, nutritious food often leads to dietary choices that are cheaper and more processed, like fast food. Frequent consumption of these foods contributes to metabolic fluctuation and weight gain.

Then why, with what is known about childhood hunger and its long-term outcomes, does it persist? This is a complicated question that has many answers, including the politicizing of basic human rights, the increased cost of living, weather conditions and events that increase prices on healthy food choices, including produce and dairy, the

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use of food as a status symbol or a weapon, and so many other reasons.

However, I believe that there is a united way to end an unacceptable issue like childhood hunger. It begins with us as a community and as a society. We must decide that this is a problem worth ending and have the will to do so.

As with many public health issues, such as childhood labor, the use of seatbelts, and drunk driving, invested communities stood up and shared a unified message: “We’ve had enough, and we want things to change.”

So how do we eliminate childhood hunger in the U.S.?

First, there is education. Not only does childhood hunger exist; it’s the worst that it’s been in the past 10 years. In the Upper Perk Valley, 36% of students are low-income and at risk of hunger. Additionally, certain geographical areas in the district have a higher need than others. Currently, Hereford Elementary School has the highest concentration of students who participate in the free and reduced school meals program.

Second, there needs to be action. In the Valley, we find childhood hunger unacceptable in our community and are doing something about it. One way we are taking action is through our Summer Kids Meal Program (SKMP). By distributing meals to all children 18 and under in the Valley, we are making sure that every child receives food in the summer months. Additionally, during the school year, Paula Germinario, Food Services Director for the Upper Perkiomen School District, emphasizes that she and her

team “ensure our students have the nutrition they need to be successful throughout the school day.” The school district also partners with us to connect students and families in need with resources, as well as hosts fundraisers and food and product drives to support our Pantry.

Third, there must be policy change. There are many federal programs that can help kids and families facing food insecurity, like SNAP, WIC, and the National School Lunch Program. However, many of these programs have been cut. From last summer’s SNAP cuts alone, 11% fewer households in Pennsylvania are now receiving SNAP. 41% of SNAP recipients are children. This means that more than 80,000 children are losing or have lost this essential connection to nutritious and adequate food. In the Valley, changes in policy have contributed to the loss of free school meals, creating a challenging situation for both the school district and families in need.

To create the public outcry that will stop childhood hunger, we have a strong recipe for success, but we need the will to implement it. **This is my call to action for you.** Call your representatives and let them know that kids going hungry in America is unacceptable. Donate to your local pantries and children’s food providers so that they can fill the gaps. Support the school district in making sure every kid has at least one steady meal a day. Volunteer for The Open Link and other organizations dedicated to helping kids grow up strong and healthy. Advocate for the end of childhood hunger by speaking up. Childhood hunger is a critical issue, and it’s one that we can solve together.

Our 2026 Diamond Sponsors Make A Difference

At The Open Link, nearly 90 businesses, community organizations, and congregations support our organization as our 2026 Community Sponsors. Because of their sponsorship, we continue to expand our programs and services, help, educate, and empower our Valley neighbors in need, and build a well-connected, active Valley community.

This year, we are thrilled to have 6 Diamond Sponsors: Gillespie Electric, Inc., JRS & LBS LLC, New Goshenhoppen United Church of Christ, East Greenville Owl’s Nest 1302, Perkiomen Animal Hospital, and Stauffer Glove & Safety. As our highest tier of contributors, our Diamond Sponsors serve not only as premier benefactors of our organization, but are also leaders and changemakers within the Valley. Through their contributions to both our organization and to our community, they help to ensure that all in the Valley are welcomed and have access to the resources they may need. We sat down with 4 of them to learn more about their investment in The Open Link and what our organization means to them:



“As a community member and as a business operating in this community, it is important to give back to the organizations that help to support the people that live here and to be involved. The Open Link is a lifeline for people in need.”

Brandon Stauffer
VP, Marketing and Technology
Stauffer Glove & Safety



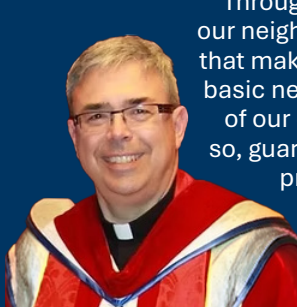
“As the cost of living has gone up, everyday people have enough trouble paying their bills, let alone affording extras like holiday presents. Through programs like Operation Holiday Cheer and the Pantry, The Open Link is here for anyone who needs help. As a club, we’re happy to support our local community – it’s what we’re all about.”

Brandon Long
President
East Greenville Owl’s Nest 1302



“We choose to sponsor The Open Link because of all their work in the Valley. It’s important to remember that constant support of our community is needed, not just in emergencies. By giving annually, sponsors can know that they are keeping The Open Link’s programs going.”

David Burkhart
President and PLC Programmer
Gillespie Electric, Inc.



“Through our support, we are reminded that our neighbors do need assistance for services that make life bearable. Among rising costs of basic needs, The Open Link meets the needs of our community creatively, and in doing so, guarantees that funds are used wisely to provide the best care they can.”

Rev. Dr. David Williams
Senior Pastor
New Goshenhoppen UCC

Code Blue Works: A Second Year of Success

Alongside the Upper Perk Homelessness Coalition, we are thrilled to share that Code Blue 2025-2026 was another year of community, connection, and providing life-saving shelter to our unhoused community members!

Returning for its second season, our Code Blue shelter served 14 unique individuals between November and May, doubling the number of guests served since the 2024-2025 season. The shelter was open for 88 Code Blue nights and hosted 93 “bed nights,” meaning that the beds were used 93 times.

We would like to thank the 86 dedicated volunteers who served at the shelter this winter and made this season possible. Whether it was serving meals, organizing donations, or sharing a smile or conversation with shelter guests, thank you for your dedication and kindness this season!

We would also like to share our gratitude for the 40+ community partners who gave their time, funding, dinners, and supplies to the shelter, including New Goshenhoppen Church, Red Hill Christian School, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Red Hill Fire Company Social Club, and St. Philip Neri. Your support is invaluable and greatly appreciated.

The shelter plans to return for its third season beginning in November 2026.

For more information regarding the shelter and the 2026-2027 season, stay tuned for our next print newsletter this fall!

Announcing Our Back To School Drive and Distribution 2026—We Need Your Help!

The 2026-2027 school year is just a few weeks away, so we’re preparing for our 2026 Back to School Drive and Distribution!

During the week of August 24th, we will be distributing backpacks and school supplies to Valley students in need. We are currently collecting new supply donations and need your help!





Code Blue Shelter

2025-2026 Impact Report

14

The number of unique individuals that used the shelter this season.

112

The number of nights that Montgomery County called a Code Blue Declaration. Thanks to volunteers, our shelter was open for 88 Code Blue nights!

86

The number of unique volunteers who served at the shelter this winter.

93

The number of “bed nights” at the shelter, meaning that beds were used 93 times.

40+

The number of community partners who have given time, funding, dinners, and supplies to the shelter, including New Goshenhoppen Church, Red Hill Christian School, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Red Hill Fire Company Social Club, St. Philip Neri, and more.

12

The number of women who needed emergency shelter during this time and were not able to be accommodated.

Items can be dropped off at our Penn Street office at 452 Penn Street in Pennsburg, Monday-Friday, 8:00 AM- 4:00 PM, with additional evening hours until 7:00 PM on Tuesdays.

Please check our website, www.theopenlink.org, for finalized distribution dates.

School Supplies Needed:

- New backpacks (all sizes, but especially for students in middle and high school)
- 3 ring binders (1” and 2”)
- Pocket folders
- Colored markers (washable)
- Colored pencils
- Crayons
- Dry erase markers
- Highlighters
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Spiral notebooks
- Composition books
- Looseleaf paper
- Pens (black or blue)
- #2 pencils
- Block & pencil top erasers
- Hand sanitizer
- Gift cards (Walmart, Target, Amazon)