

## We Won Nonprofit of the Year!

Thank you to The UPV Chamber of Commerce for this Honor

On September 17, alongside The Upper Perkiomen Valley Chamber of Commerce, we celebrated our win as Nonprofit of the Year at The Chamber's Annual Celebration!

This award honored our presence as the heart of social services in the Upper Perkiomen Valley for over 50 years. As the only multi-service organization in the Valley, we work to meet the needs of our community daily while simultaneously taking both accessibility and a comprehensive, whole-person approach into great consideration.

In addition to acknowledging our longtime support services and presence in the Valley, this award also highlighted some of the recent changes we have implemented within our programs and services to better serve our community members. These include the debut of our Code Blue shelter in partnership with the Upper Perkiomen Homelessness Coalition last winter, serving over 20,000 meals to local children during our 2025 Summer Kids Meal Program, and the expansion of our Pantry hours and visits to 2 times per month in July 2025. Alongside these changes, we continue to work with both our local community members and partners to adapt, expand, and evolve our programs and services to best meet the needs of our current and future clients.

Thank you to The Chamber not only for selecting us as Nonprofit of the Year and honoring our work within the Valley, but for your longtime support of The Open Link. We are thrilled to continue serving our neighbors in need!



Marianne Lynch, our Executive Director, and Leanne Engle, Executive Director of The UPV Chamber of Commerce, are all smiles as the Nonprofit of the Year award is honored.



Dale Westwood (At-Large Member-Board Executive Committee), Matt Tomlin (Board Vice President), Rev. John Buckley (Board President), Marianne Lynch (Executive Director), Brooke Harvey (Nutrition Services Manager), and Sheila Salvidar (Administrative Assistant) celebrated our win as Nonprofit of the Year at The Chamber's Annual Celebration.



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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

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**The Center**  
517 Jefferson Street  
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## Supporting Our Seniors: How The Open Link Is Preparing for an Aging Community



Pennsylvania is home to about 3.4 million older adults, the fifth-highest number of seniors in the country. According to Aging Our Way, PA – A Plan for Lifelong Independence, by 2030, the number of Pennsylvanians over age 60 will outnumber those under 20. In our own Valley community, individuals over 60 already make up about 40% of the population.

This demographic shift means services for older adults will not only continue to be needed, but also need to grow. At The Open Link, we have been looking closely at how we can better serve seniors in the years ahead. By examining the state's plan and its eight priority areas, we see that many of the goals already align with the work we are doing locally:

**Respect and Social Inclusion** are core values at The Open Link. Every program we offer aims to create a welcoming environment where people feel they belong. Whether it's sharing lunch at The Center, volunteering alongside other active adults, or choosing food at our Pantry, we work to ensure everyone is treated with dignity and inclusion.

**Housing** is an emerging challenge for many seniors. Fixed incomes often fail to keep pace with rising costs for rent, home repairs, and property taxes, making it harder for older adults to remain in their homes. We provide financial support for individuals struggling to pay rent or utilities and co-host a Code Blue shelter, which has served a disproportionate number of older men this winter. Housing will remain a major focus for our organization moving forward.

**Transportation** is another ongoing issue in the Valley. Limited public transit can make it difficult for seniors to access groceries, healthcare, and community activities. While we continue to advocate for improved transportation options, we also help bridge the gap through DoorDash Pantry delivery and our Transportation Assistance Program, helping residents reach essential services.

**Outdoor Spaces and Buildings** also play a role in healthy aging. Recently, we completed a remodel of The Center's Lower Level and celebrated with an open house. The renovated area provides a comfortable place for seniors to

gather, play games, craft, host book clubs, or simply enjoy coffee and conversation with friends.

**Communication and Information** are essential for maintaining independence, but can be challenging, especially for those less comfortable with technology. The Open Link supports seniors through our Benefits Acquisition Program, which helps individuals apply for SNAP, LIHEAP, tax rebates, veterans' benefits, Medicaid, and other programs. At the Center, we also offer one-on-one technology assistance for phones and laptops. To keep the community informed, we share information digitally, in print, and through local media each week, and we regularly host programs highlighting resources available to older adults.

**Social Participation, Civic Participation, and Employment** often overlap at The Open Link. Many seniors who attend The Center's daily lunches also volunteer in other programs, such as the Pantry or our Summer Kids Meals Program. For those seeking employment, we offer support through an employment counselor, who helps with online applications, digital skills, and interview preparation. These services are especially important, as older job seekers frequently encounter barriers in the workforce.

Finally, **Health and Community Supports** are at the heart of everything we do. From Meals on Wheels to the Pantry and more, we focus on providing comprehensive, holistic support for our senior community members. As the senior population grows, ensuring that these programs work together seamlessly will be critical for helping older adults thrive.

While The Open Link already addresses many areas outlined in Pennsylvania's plan, there are significant opportunities for us to expand. Future efforts may include exploring new housing solutions, such as master leasing, and/or advocating for more senior housing in the region. We also plan to broaden opportunities for volunteering, social outings, and activities at The Center.

Above all, The Open Link will continue to prioritize respect, inclusion, and clear communication in all of our services. By doing so, we can help ensure that older adults in our community remain supported, connected, and empowered.

Pennsylvania's Aging Our Way plan offers a thoughtful vision for supporting seniors across the state. It's worth exploring, not only because it highlights the needs of today's older adults, but because one day, each of us may benefit from its success.

## UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE OPEN LINK

### 2026 Garden Party:

We are thrilled to announce this year's Garden Party! On Sunday, April 26, from 12:30-3:30 PM, join us at The Museum at Hoppenville, 4363 East Campbell Road, Pennsburg, PA 18073. Tickets are available for purchase at [events.readysetauction.com/openlink/2026planthopebrunch/shop/tickets](https://events.readysetauction.com/openlink/2026planthopebrunch/shop/tickets).

### HSE Spring Sessions:

Our Spring HSE sessions begin Thursday, March 26! Prepare to earn your HSE diploma with free courses. Choose from online or in-person classes. Visit [theopenlink.org/get-help/adult-education.html](https://theopenlink.org/get-help/adult-education.html).

## WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE OPEN LINK

**Give Online:** Gifts can be made online at [www.theopenlink.org](http://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!



SCAN ME!

## The Center Debuts Newly Refurbished Lower Level.

The refurbishments at The Center's Lower Level are now complete! Changes include a new coffee bar and kitchenette, new floors, new countertops, new cabinets, electrical updates, and new lighting with adjustable settings. Thank you to the many volunteers and donors who have helped make these upgrades possible!

Because of these updates, the Lower Level is now more organized and functions better for both Center programs and community organizations that use the space, including Sew Many Projects and Project Live. The Center now has 2 spaces for activities, making it possible to host separate activities and programs at the same time on each level.



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## Young Leaders, Fresh Perspectives:

*How The Valley's Young Professionals Are Catalysts for Change in Our Community*



Cory Burkhart



Brandon Stauffer

At The Open Link, we are incredibly thankful for the variety of community members active in the growth and support of our organization. We are especially grateful to the young leaders in the Valley who are fostering innovation, providing fresh perspectives, and empowering fellow young professionals to remain active in our community, plan for the Valley's future, and give back to local causes like ours. We sat down with two of our Board Members and the Valley's most influential young leaders—Cory Burkhart, Estimator and Business Development at Gillespie Electric, and Brandon Stauffer, Vice President of Marketing and Technology at Stauffer Glove and Safety—to discuss their support of and involvement with The Open Link, empowering this generation of young leaders, and their vision for the future of our organization and the Valley.

Cory, 30, was first introduced to The Open Link as a student volunteer at our Pantry, which showed him firsthand how important our work is to local families. Cory later became involved in the Upper Perkiomen Valley Chamber of Commerce, further connecting him to The Open Link and encouraging him to stay active within our organization. Meanwhile, Brandon, 40, and his family have been involved with The Open Link “for as long as [he] can remember”; his father was also a fellow board member, which inspired his own involvement in The Open Link.

Cory and Brandon are passionate about making change in the Valley. Cory remarked that he is driven by the belief that strong communities don't happen by accident; they are built intentionally. Seeing firsthand how support systems, like those provided by The Open Link's programs and services, can change someone's trajectory motivates him, especially through difficult times. Brandon, a native of the Valley and having worked in Red Hill for over 15 years, noted the importance of giving back to the community, as well as a shared degree of accountability among local Valley businesses to support the community in which they operate.

Both agreed that among the evolving needs and growing population of the Valley, the stability and dignity provided by The Open Link, especially in meeting the fundamental

needs of and investing in the long-term health and resilience of the Valley. In a time where many young professionals have been drawn to cities and/or more populated suburban areas, Cory and Brandon encouraged area young professionals to actively shape the future and growth of rural-suburban hybrid areas like the Valley. Thoughtful leaders and strong organizations have a clear opportunity to make a major impact on these areas by investing long-term and actively helping to build these communities' next chapters.

For other young leaders looking to become involved in The Open Link and the advancement of the Valley, Cory and Brandon emphasized the variety of opportunities available and the need for consistency. Volunteering, financial support, and assistance with promotion and advocacy were listed as concrete ways for these individuals to participate. However, simply investing one's time, energy, skills, and new ideas into the community were also suggested as ways to act as catalysts for change. Additionally, by trusting young professionals with real responsibility and change, embracing authenticity, inclusivity, and a degree of grace, have a willingness to listen to, learn from, and understand the varying perspectives of community members, communities like the Valley can allow these young professionals to lead their communities with integrity and purpose.

As for their vision for the future of the Valley, Brandon and Cory both hope to continue building and improving sustainable programs, services, and systems that address the evolving needs of and opportunities within the area. In doing so, they hope to expand the reach and effectiveness of The Open Link's and other community initiatives' programs and services, help our neighbors in need achieve long-term stability, and make every dollar invested in the community count. Motivated by The Open Link's longtime presence in the Valley and the desire to honor the Valley's roots, alongside the realities of an expanding and transforming population, Cory and Brandon aim to remain grounded and forward-thinking in their ongoing efforts.

Cory and Brandon encourage those interested in creating lasting and impactful change in the Valley to take the first step and contact organizations like The Open Link to learn more about community initiatives, programs and services provided, and opportunities for active involvement.

**Ready to be a positive influence in the Valley?**

Contact us at [info@theopenlink.org](mailto:info@theopenlink.org)  
or 215-679-4112  
to learn how you can help!

## Scouting for Food Drive Collects 13,455 Pounds of Food for Our Pantry



It has been a busy time for our Pantry! From the pause of SNAP benefits in November, to our yearly Thanksgiving meal bag distribution, to an increased number of clients this past fall, our Pantry has been hard at work in feeding our neighbors in need. Among all the busyness and change, one consistent element has remained: the support of our community partners, including Scouting America.

On Saturday, November 15, the annual Scouting for Food Drive was hosted by our local Scout troops and packs, including Troop 108 East Greenville, Cub Scout Pack 244, Pack 170, Pack 79, Troop 79 Pennsburg, Troop 79 (all girls!), Troop 90 Green Lane, and Troop 591.

Groups of Scouts collected items door-to-door, as well as delivered and helped process these donations in our Pantry. Together, the Scouts collected 13,455 pounds of food, breaking the previous record of 13,088 pounds!

We are grateful to not only the Scouts and Scout leaders, but to each of you who donated food, funds, and other wish list supplies to both this drive and the numerous other food and supply drives throughout the year. We couldn't do it without you!

**Interested in hosting your own food and/or supply drive?**

You can view our wish lists and our Food Drive Tool Kit on our website, [www.theopenlink.org](http://www.theopenlink.org).



Laura Dzugan, Program Director

## Benefits Application Assistance Program Helps Connect Clients to Vital Programs and Services

At The Open Link, we are dedicated to connecting our neighbors with available resources, programs, and services to assist them in their time of need. One of the many ways we do this is through our Benefits Application Assistance program. Through this program, we help our community members learn about and apply for a variety of benefits, including Cash Assistance, CHIP, Medical Assistance, SNAP, LIHEAP, and more!

Once enrolled, Laura, our Program Director, or Linda, our Case Manager, will sit down with each client to assess their needs and determine their and/or their dependents' benefits eligibility. If eligible, Laura or Linda will assist the client with benefit applications, determine required documentation, provide updates on applications, and refer clients to alternative sources of assistance if deemed ineligible.

Last year, The Open Link assisted 107 households in applying for benefits. This year, help us serve even more of our neighbors in need! Donate via the QR code in the “Ways to Get Involved With The Open Link” section or visit [theopenlink.org](http://theopenlink.org) to make your gift.

**Interested in participating in our Benefits Application Assistance Program?**

Contact Laura Dzugan, Program Director,  
at 215-679-4112 or [laurad@theopenlink.org](mailto:laurad@theopenlink.org)

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## A Time To Remember: Your Generosity Made An Impact This Holiday Season!

The 2025 holiday season was one of generosity, community, and most importantly: impact. We are deeply grateful for the many Valley community members who donated funds, Thanksgiving meal supplies, and toys, stocking stuffers, and gift cards to our Operation Holiday Cheer Toy Room; those who volunteered in our Pantry, as holiday activity hosts at The Center, or in our Toy Room; and to our community sponsors for fostering goodwill in the Valley this holiday season!

Your generosity fed 613 individuals this Thanksgiving, helped 481 kids wake up to presents under the tree for the holidays, and raised \$8,797 on Giving Tuesday for our Rent and Utility Assistance program. Most importantly, you made the holiday season a time of happiness and celebration for our Valley community members in need.

Your outpouring of kindness, support, and dedication has transformed our community.

Thank you, and may 2026 be another year of kindness, commitment, and connection!

