



Homeless Awareness Month

Are you aware that in 2009, there were 524 known unduplicated homeless individuals in different areas of Mercer County? Men sleeping under a bridge; several individuals sleeping in cars; a women with two children living in a car; a man in a tent; families that risk losing their homes because they have someone sleeping there without their landlord knowing about it. This is what we hear and see daily: "I've lost my home because of losing my job." "I have left my abusive husband." "I am a recovering addict who lost everything." **November is Homeless Awareness Month** and the Prince of Peace Center is one of a few core organizations trying to make an impact on those that do not realize or acknowledge that homelessness is a real issue in Mercer County.

The Center's Director of Family Supportive Services, Natalie Higbee, has worked alongside several members of the MC Housing Coalition for several months to prepare and organize a November full of events to help raise awareness. In previous years, various grade levels of the public and parochial schools were invited to participate in an educational project. This year students

in grades 2-4 are asked to collect 524 hygiene items - each item to represent a homeless individual. The first classroom to contact the Coalition will receive a pizza party. Activities like this provide students with a visual representa-



2009 Walk A Mile in Their Shoes participants

tion of those 524 homeless. There are several other events planned for the community; those who share our compassion and interest are always invited to attend. On Tuesday, November 16th, Dr. Jim Withers from Mercy Health Systems of Pittsburgh will present in the auditorium of Penn State Shenango at 11:00

AM. He is the founder of Operations Safety Net, the first full-time comprehensive medical service of its kind for unsheltered homeless. This event is free and open to the public.

3rd Annual Walk A Mile in Their Shoes

WHERE: Downtown Sharon
WHEN: Sunday, November 7th
TIME: 3:00 PM

There will be a short program before the walk. We hope to have at least 524 people walking - one for each homeless person we encountered last year.

To register, schedule a presenter, or get more information, contact Natalie Higbee, 724-346-5777.



Get Connected @ POPC

The Prince of Peace Center is very excited to announce the launch of our new website! Thanks to the hours of effort on the part of Steve Ireland, our site designer, we have a new look, a great new logo, and several additional methods of communication. Our site address remains the same.

In addition to the web page, you can now find us on:

Facebook: Prince of Peace Center

Twitter: PrincePeaceCtr

Youtube: PrinceOfPeaceCenter

Flickr: Prince of Peace Center

(informational video)

(photos from our events)

Soon we will have separate pages for the Project RUTH and HOPE Advocacy programs. Everything looks excellent so far, and we are thrilled to present a more modern, connected, user-friendly image to our online community.



Kavon Wright, PA Workwear Program Coordinator, gives Jim Martin a tour of the PA Workwear department, another program available at Prince of Peace Center.



Jim Martin, Community Affairs Director of the NW PA Region for Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, visited the Prince of Peace Center as a representative of the Highmark Foundation. Mr. Martin oversees Community and Health initiatives for Highmark, and is responsible for the grants received by the Prince of Peace Center for use in its **Assistance With Education, Shelter, Organization, Money Management, and Employment (AWESOME)** program.

The Center turns the grant funds into stipends, contingent on program completion, which successful participants may use to pay their utility bills. These contributions have allowed over 100 men and women to complete classes in the AWESOME program, giving them the tools to make a measurable difference in their lives and communities.

The Olive Branch

Honoring our Volunteers

2010 Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

This year's dinner was held at St. Joseph's Church on October 14. Volunteers, staff, board members, and guests spent the evening enjoying delicious food and listening to moving, motivating presentations. Our guest speaker, Ms. Naomi Brown of Sharon, is a HOPE Advocacy and Project RUTH success story; she communicated to all in attendance the importance of picking up the pieces whenever things fall apart, and moving forward. We were honored to show our appreciation for our Volunteer of the Year, website designer, DVD creator, and one exemplary youth volunteer. Most importantly, everyone shared some of the best company available to this community: a group of people motivated to give of themselves from the heart.



Despite our best efforts to mail the invitations to the dinner in an efficient manner, they were lost to the new bulk mail system and may yet arrive on some doorsteps. We are very sorry we could not reach our full roster of volunteers because of an error on the part of the postal system, and we hope that every person who volunteers their time and energy for POPC is aware of how much we appreciate everything he or she does for us: **we could not continue serving this great community without the help we receive from so many good people.**

Would you like to VOLUNTEER at Prince of Peace Center?

Here's how to get in touch with us:

- Use our **new** online volunteer sign-up form!
- Call the Center (724-346-5777) and ask for Erica.
- Come visit us and fill out a volunteer application in person!

We would like to thank **Christopher & Banks** of the Shenango Valley Mall for partnering with Prince of Peace Center for Charity Week! Enhancing our presence in and cooperation with the community is always one of our top priorities. If you or your business would like to coordinate an event with the Center, please call 724-346-5777 or send an email to popc@princeofpeacecenter.org.

Lessons Learned

by Natalie Higbee,
Director of FSS

Family Supportive Services (FSS) focuses on the foundation of building supportive relationships with those we serve. Through these relationships, we encounter trust and respect as we encourage commitment by *all* parties. We often refer to the process moving through the program as a "journey." During the journey, we provide opportunities that empower the participants to make the changes they longed for, as outlined in their individual Family Growth Plans. The staff expects that participants will be honest with themselves as they accept new behaviors and embrace the challenges that they encounter. FSS staff members know that in this program the teaching, and learning, goes both ways. The families we work with are constantly teaching us through sharing the smallest, yet most impressionable moments.

Most recently one of them asked in a whisper, "What is a boutonniere?" She was too embarrassed to ask the woman in the flower shop after she placed her order. Another received a gift card to a local grocery store and was not even aware of how to use it. Hearing that really opened my eyes; I would have assumed he knew.

We recently accepted a mother of two into our program. When she was told of her acceptance, she was shaking and crying as she said, "You guys don't know what you just did for me." My response was that we *did* know, and that she was unaware of all the opportunities



that were about to come her way. I also explained that it's not all about what we have to offer. What we have to *learn* from each other, through their courage to overcome adversity and a mutual willingness to communicate in a non judgmental setting, is just as important. I am blessed to work with our families and search deeper into the meaning of each of the relationships I encounter; they teach me lessons every day as we journey together.

The holiday season is on the way! Prince of Peace will begin displaying stocking trees for this year during the first week of November. Give a child the gift of a little extra love this holiday by picking up a stocking!

Upcoming Events

Thursday 10/ 21 Food Day Pick up food bags in the Soup Kitchen.	Thursday 10/ 21 Bag Day Fill POPC bags with Thrift Store goods—\$2 a bag.	Friday 10/ 29 \$1 Jeans Day Jeans on sale in the Thrift Store for \$1 a pair.
Sunday 11/ 7 Walk a Mile in Their Shoes Walk for homeless awareness.	Tuesday 11/ 16 Dr. Jim Withers, Mercy Health Systems, speaking at Penn State Shenango	Thursday 11/ 18 Thanksgiving Food Distribution
Monday 11/ 22 Thanksgiving Dinner in Soup Kitchen	Thursday 12/ 16 Christmas Food Distribution	Friday 12/ 17 Christmas Toy Day