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E-UPDATE RESOURCES

PRIMARILY FREE RESOURCES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

UPDATED: June 5, 2016

*Helping to Bridge the Gap Between the Wealth of Available Resources
and the Poverty Associated With People Not Knowing About Them*

In an attempt to aid reader searches, new information that has been added in this update is highlighted in yellow. As always, we are interested in receiving feedback in regard to how we might improve our publications, content and convenience of use.

*Information is believed correct at the time of insertion but are subject to change without notice.
Participants are encouraged
to use contact information to confirm information to avoid disappointment.*

*Information on submission of resources is provided on the last page of this Resource Guide.
Suggestions on how this effort might be improved are encouraged by e-mailing bps461@msn.com.
If you discover a broken link in this guide, we would appreciate it if you would let us know.*

Information About Services For Individuals and Families

Categories of Information

E-Newsletters and Calendars
General Assistance (Area)
General Assistance (State)
General Assistance (Federal)
Emergency Response
Public Safety
Health
Food
Housing
Finances

Parenting
Education
Veterans
Senior Citizens
Legal Assistance
Special Programs
General Information
Employment Related Information
Miscellaneous Federal Resources

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- **Chester County Community Resource Guide (Updated):**
www.chesco.org/DocumentCenter/View/4275.
- **Chester County Road to Employment Resource Guide:**
<http://www.chesco.org/DocumentCenter/View/3094>.
- **Open Hearth Help Book IV Services Resource Guide** in English and Spanish for the Greater Phoenixville, Spring City and Royersford areas, with many listings also serving other parts of Chester and Montgomery counties:
www.openhearthinc.org. It also can be downloaded to a cell phone.
- **TriCounty Community Network (Northern Chester, Western Montgomery and Eastern Berks counties) Resource Guide:**
www.tcnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/TriCounty-Community-Resource-Guide.pdf.
- **Berks County Guide to Services:**
www.racc.edu/BCSS/default.aspx.
- **Berks County Reentry Guide to Services:**
www.berksconnections.org/reentry.
- **Chester County Reentry Guide:**
<http://static.nicic.gov/Library/022669.pdf>
- **Delaware County Women's Resource Guide:**
www.co.delaware.pa.us/depts/WomensresourceguideWW1.pdf.
- **Montgomery County Resource Guide:**
www.health.pa.gov/My%20Health/Documents/Montgomery%20County%20Resource%20Guide.pdf.
- **Montgomery County Parent and Infant Resource Guide:**
<http://webapp.montcopa.org/hhsapps/PIRGJuly08.pdf>.
- **Community Caregivers Calendar** assists both formal and informal caregivers in identifying activities and trainings to assist them in such tasks. Organizations holding free events and workshops relevant to caregivers supporting parents or seniors in Western Montgomery, Northern Chester and Eastern Berks counties may request inclusion of the activity from the Caregivers' Support Committee of TriCounty Community Network at www.tcnetwork.org/programs/care or (610) 705-3301 x2.
- **Community Resource Guide** published by Montgomery County Community College's Student Support & Referral Team (SSRT):
www.mc3ssrt.wordpress.com/community-resource-guide.
- **Montgomery County Day Services Guide** published by the Montgomery County Office of Developmental Disabilities lists providers for various services, from adult day services and rehabilitation to employment at www.montcopa.org/DocumentCenter/View/6147.
- **Chester County Mental Health Services Mapping** assists the public and services providers in understanding how to access mental health services, including child early intervention and adults: www.chesco.org/index.aspx?NID=617.

Prison Re-Entry Resource Guide. Prison Re-Entry Network of the Philadelphia area has developed an online resource guide to assist individuals being released from prison and those seeking to assist them during the re-entry process.

In addition to resources, the initiative also includes a Learning Center and Library and information on legislation, support and advocacy, and a personal health record.

The website is available at www.prisonersociety.org/#!/prisonerreentrynetwork/c18y5.

Online Seniors Resource Guide. Kennett Area Senior Center has developed an online resources guide for seniors in Southern Chester County that includes information in three dozen categories, from groceries and meal sites to healthcare, housing, transportation, day and other services.

The guide is available at www.kennettseniorcenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=32&Itemid=37. The Center also has compiled some national resources at www.kennettseniorcenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=33&Itemid=36.

Interactive Online Chesco Transit Guide

Chester County provides an online interactive transit guide, both in English and Spanish, for passenger rail, bus, taxi and paratransit services in the County.

The tool is designed to aid county residents in finding public transportation options and a map for an area, including procedures, schedules and fares. It also provides information on discounted fares for seniors, the disabled and medical-related transportation.

It is available at www.ChescoRideGuide.org where there also is a downloadable, printable guide.

Chesco Information and Referral Services. Chester County contracts with five organizations to provide residents in larger populations areas with assistance in accessing services in a variety of situations including, but not limited to, utility and rental assistance, health insurance, and transportation, housing and domestic violence information.

Further information for both English and Spanish-speaking residents is available at Maternal Child and Health Consortium, 1003 East Lincoln Highway, Coatesville, or (484) 378-4030; La Comunidad Hispana, 731 West Cypress Street, Kennett Square, (610) 444-4545; Oxford Neighborhood Services Center, 35 North Third Street, Oxford, (610) 869-8557; Phoenixville Area Community Services (PACS), 257 Church Street, Phoenixville, (610) 933-1105; or Human Services, Inc., 330 West Market Street, West Chester, (610) 429-3033.

County Phone Apps

Area counties have iPhone and Android apps to assist individuals with obtaining information on some county services.

Chester County current links include County government news, a calendar of meetings, events and health clinics, County parks and trails, courts information, emergency alerts through ReadyNotify PA, a directory of social services, land use planning, details and locations of all Chester County government department offices, available County jobs, inspection reports for all restaurants and food handling operations, and links to Chester County's social media communication and YouTube channel.

Seasonal functions, such as election results, will be added during the year.

The free app is available for download in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store and can be found by Chesco or *ChescoCONNECT* key word search.

Montgomery County has a government app, *Go Montco*, that includes News, Calendar, Parks &

Trails, Staff Directory, Frequently Asked Questions, Requests for Proposals and Bids, Jobs and more.

A **Lancaster County Exploration Guide** also is available through the Pennsylvania Dutch Country tourism program.

AlertBerks Crime Tips App. A smart phone application allows county residents to provide anonymous tips about crimes or suspicious activity, including anonymous two-way conversations.

AlertBerks, developed by tip411, can be downloaded at no charge via the Google Play Store, iTunes App Store, or by visiting the Crime Alert Berks County Web site at www.alertberks.org.

Further information is available at www.bctv.org/special_reports/safety/crime-alert-berkscounty-launches-tip/article_51ee8ace-b55b-11e5-baa8-23552383f307.html#.VpeOrMTuKmg.facebook or (877) 373-9913.

Montco Navigates. Combination navigators and advocates serve Montgomery County residents as a one-stop location for government related needs.

Further information is available at nine county regional offices in Norristown, Pottstown, Pennsburg/East Greenville, Lansdale Sounderton, Ambler, Willow Grove and Narbeth.

Further information also is available at www.montcopa.org/index.aspx?NID=1585, thutson@montcopa.org or (484) 674-6562.

State Legislative District Resource Guide. Pennsylvania Rep. Chris Ross has published a new Resource Guide for his 158th District in Chester County that includes a wide variety of information on organizations and services in and serving the District that includes East Bradford, East Marlborough, London Britain, New Garden, Newlin, West Bradford, West Goshen Middle and South Precincts, and West Marlborough Townships, along with Avondale Borough.

The document is available at www.repress.com/Display/Display/SiteFiles/86/OtherDocuments/2016ResidentsGuide2-3-16.pdf with a few hardcopies available for those without online access through his district office at 692 Unionville Road, Kennett Square, or (610) 925-0555.

Interactive Community Profiles Website

Chester County Planning Commission provides an interactive *Community Profiles* website for resource data on people, housing, open space and development, transportation, economic development, government, and community facilities for the county's 73 municipalities and 12 public school dis-

tricts. Information is available by the entire county, a community which consists of one or more school districts, a school district, or a municipality, with data able to be displayed in tables, graphs, and maps.

Information is available at www.landscapes2.org/mapping/countyprofiles/cphome.cfm.

Delaware Valley Population Projections Through 2040. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) provides population projects for the nine-county Delaware Valley region, including Philadelphia suburbs at www.dvrpc.org/reports/ADR018-A.pdf, with an interactive web map available for viewing at www.dvrpc.org/webmaps/PopForecast.

State of the Women. Chester County Fund for Women and Girls has updated its 2010 *Blueprint Report*, a needs assessment of county females.

The 176-page document delves into *Employment and Earnings, Poverty and Opportunity, Health and Well-Being, Work and Family, Reproductive Rights, Violence and Safety, and Political Participation*.

A copy of the report, along with a summary, is available at www.ccwomenandgirls.org/research.

Local Gasoline Price Tracking. Two online tracking sites provide gas prices online:

GasBuddy.com, which also has a cell phone app(lication), uses volunteers to gather information at various locations which may result in reports with a few minutes to a couple days lag time. Information is available at www.gasbuddy.com.

Area Services Cell Phone Apps. Chester, Montgomery and Lancaster counties have developed apps for iPhone and Android to assist individuals with obtaining information on some county services and attractions.

Free apps, available for download in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store, include

- Chester County Government: Chesco or *ChescoCONNECT*.
- Montgomery County Government: Go Montco.
- *Lancaster County Exploration Guide*.

Schuylkill River Heritage Area Impact. An *Economic Impact Study* says the Schuylkill River Heritage Area generates \$590 million annually in impact for the region, including support for 6,134 jobs and \$37.7 million in state and local tax revenue, primarily as a result of tourism related activities.

The Schuylkill River Heritage Area, one of 49 in the country, encompasses the Schuylkill River watershed through Philadelphia, Chester, Montgomery, Berks, and Schuylkill counties.

The document is available at <http://files.ctctcdn.com/c471d8a7001/9afb4657-651a-4bdb-87b9-3fb37dfa4f8c.pdf>.

General Assistance (State)

Here to Help, hosted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to assist residents in learning about programs available to aid in difficult economic times. Information is available on employment, family services, housing, seniors, economic development and education at www.heretohelp.pa.gov.

Pa. Gov. Information on Pennsylvania departments and services is available at www.pa.gov.

State Human Services Information System. Pennsylvania Departments of Aging and Human Services are providing new public information and human services assistance systems that are scheduled to be further upgraded and consolidated this summer under a re-branded Link to Community Care.

The changeover, from the Link to Aging and Disability Resources, will affect 15 multi-county Links of services providers, along with new information systems and a current toll-free information line.

Current Link service areas include Bucks, Chester and Montgomery; Berks, Lancaster and Lebanon; and Delaware and Philadelphia counties.

A Human Services COMPASS website for information and online applications for various types of public assistance also is available at www.compass.state.pa.us, an information referral tool (IRT) for state services at www.humanservices.state.pa.us/IRT, and toll-free telephone assistance at (800) 753-8827.

Information about current Link service areas is available at www.adrc-tae.acl.gov/tiki-index.php?page=PAPProfile&stabrev=PA.

Ask Here PA. A 24/7 live information resource, a service of Commonwealth Libraries of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, provides a 24-hour a day, every day of the year library reference service for questions from children and adults.

The service is accessible through an online chat system, with librarians using information from the Internet and online databases to help provide answers to questions. Following a session, questioners receive a transcript that includes links to Web pages and other resources used during the session. Privacy is the same as with other public library services.

Further information and access is available at www.askherepa.org.

Office of Developmental Programs Gold Book.

The Pennsylvania Office of Developmental Programs has produced a resource guide for *Understanding the Office of Developmental Programs in Pennsylvania: Intellectual Disability and Autism Services*, known as the *Gold Book*.

The document and further information in English is available at www.temple.edu/thetrainingpartnership/pub and in Spanish at www.temple.edu/thetrainingpartnership/espanol.

State Adoption Mobile Website

Pennsylvania has launched one of the nation's first adoption mobile websites to provide easier access for those seeking to adopt one of the nearly 2,500 children waiting for a permanent home.

With the new mobile site, potential adoptive families who visit www.adoptpakids.org on a smartphone will automatically be directed to the new mobile site.

State Financial and Performance Accountability.

PennWATCH allows users to view appropriations to agencies and funds from the state budget, detailed information on payments made by agencies, including the name and address of the recipient, and the number of employees in each agency, with information on their annual compensation.

The website also provides a variety of search and reporting tools to allow users to filter and save data they are seeking, and links to other state transparency resources, such as state contracts, lobbyist and campaign finance reports, Recovery Act spending and state government websites. PennWATCH replaces the previous Open Government website. It is available at www.pennwatch.pa.gov.

Highway Safety Web Site. PennDOT provides tips on aggressive driving, bicycles/pedestrians, child passenger safety, heavy trucks, engineering infrastructure, impaired driving, mature drivers, motorcycle and school bus safety, seat belts, work zones and young drivers. Each area is highlighted as part of an interactive quiz that allows motorists to test their highway safety knowledge.

The web site, Just Drive PA, at www.justdrivepa.org, also contains educational resources, including videos, radio public service announcements and traffic safety brochures along with information on recently enacted traffic safety laws

such as "Steer Clear" and wiper and headlights statutes.

Pennsylvania FIX-ROAD Telephone Line

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) is urging motorists to report potholes and other problems on state roads, including missing highway signs, shoulder drop-offs, roadway washouts and other potential hazards, via a toll-free maintenance hotline.

Complaints can be reported at (800) FIX-ROAD (1-800-349-7623) or at the Department's Customer Care Center at www.dot.state.pa.us/pennodot/districts/district6/d6ccc.nsf?opendatabase.

Motorists also may obtain the latest road conditions, traffic and weather updates throughout the state at <http://511pa.com>.

Local highway issues should be reported to municipal road officials.

Electric Rate Shopping Guide. Pennsylvania residents can compare electric provider rates through the state Office of Consumer Advocate at [www.oaca.state.pa.us/Industry/Electric/elecomp/ElectricGuides.htm?](http://www.oaca.state.pa.us/Industry/Electric/elecomp/ElectricGuides.htm?utm_source=Listrak&utm_medium=Email&utm_term=http%3a%2f%2fwww.oaca.state.pa.us%2fIndustry%2fElectric%2felecomp%2fElectricGuides.htm&utm_campaign=House+Budget+Hearings+Continue)

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General Assistance (Federal)

Official Federal Government Web Portals. U.S. government maintains portal websites in English and Spanish to assist individuals in accessing government information.

www.USA.gov is the English version, with www.GobiernoUSA.gov being in Spanish. Gobierno is Spanish for "government".

Directory of Federal Departments and Agencies.

The *A-Z Index of U.S. Government Departments and Agencies* provides cross references to department and agency websites, any local or regional offices, and additional information on more than 450 entities from the Access Board to the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (there are no departments or agencies listed for the letters K, Q or X through Z).

Additional features include information on the President and Congressional representatives, governors and state legislatures, state and territorial contacts, military personnel locator, assistance to Ameri-

cans abroad during a crisis, e-mail queries and live online chat.

The guide is available at www.usa.gov/directory/federal/index.shtml. The service also advises that individuals can obtain information on any question about government at (800) FED INFO (333-4636).

Social Security and Health Benefits Websites in Spanish

The Social Security Administration and the federal Department of Health and Human Services have Spanish language websites for Social Security and healthcare information.

www.CuidadoDeSalud.gov provides consumers with both public and private health coverage options tailored specifically for their needs in a single tool. Similar to the English version www.HealthCare.gov, the website offers an insurance finder, explains the Affordable Care Act in step-by-step detail and offers information for families with children, senior citizens, individuals with disabilities and others.

The Social Security site, at www.ssa.gov, or www.socialsecurity.gov/espanol in Spanish, includes available applications for retirement, Medicare and Extra Help with prescription drug costs in Spanish.

National Traffic and Road Closure Website

The Federal Highway Administration provides an online resource guide for traffic and road closures information that can be used to help plan holiday travel.

Information is available at www.fhwa.dot.gov/trafficinfo/index.htm#WEAT.

Federal Consumer Information. Federal Citizen Information Center provides free or low-cost reference material on a variety of subjects, including a free weekly e-mail digest of consumer related issues. Recent highlights, for example, include *12 Riskiest Places to Give Your Social Security Number*, *Top 10 Cyber Monday Tips for Staying Safe When Shopping Online*, *Fall into Winter Checklist*, *Five Tips for Staying Safe on the Roads Over the Holidays*, *Family Health History – Collect It, Get Smart: Know When Antibiotics Work*, and *Finding a Trustworthy Kennel to Board Your Pet*.

Signups for the Digest, along with other e-mail consumer publications, is available at www.pueblo.gsa.gov.

Database Assistance for Community Advocates

A federal government website for community advocates enables them to connect with programs and benefits for those they wish to assist, including fami-

lies, youth, seniors, students, the unemployed, persons with disabilities, and veterans.

Features include searching a public database of more than 1,000 government benefits, personalizing the benefits search through a pre-screening tool, discovering little known benefits, creating, printing and e-mailing a customized list of benefits that address an individual's specific needs, and helping persons in need to use the system.

The Benefits.gov portal is at www.benefits.gov/advocates/community-advocates.

Free Tips for Parents. Federal Center for Disease Control (CDC) has revamped its Parent Information website to gather information from across all of its websites to aid parents of newborns through teens with everything from children safety at home and within the community to immunization schedules and developmental milestones. Subjects range from various illnesses and development issues to bullying and teen driving.

Information, including online videos, is available at www.cdc.gov/parents.

Education Data and Resources for All Ages. The federal government has developed a central website for education data resources including high-value data sets, data visualization tools, resources for the classroom, applications created from open data and more. Datasets have been gathered from various agencies to provide detailed information on the state of education at all levels from cradle to career and beyond.

Information is available at www.data.gov/education.

Resources for the Disabled. A federal Disability.gov website helps connect individuals with disabilities and their families to resources and services. The Pennsylvania site, that includes links to other states, is available at www.disability.gov.

U.S. Census Releases 1940 Census Records. The U.S. National Archives has released full access to individual 1940 census records, Census maps and descriptions that will aid in family history searches and other information gleaning.

The release, provided for by law 72 years after collection, along with guides to assist in finding information, is available at <http://1940census.archives.gov>.

Emergency Response Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador™. Transformation Initiative-Building Healthy Communities

Through Healthy Families is a designated Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador™ by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The endeavor involves participation in improving the nation's readiness against extreme weather potentials that can be experienced by residents and businesses throughout the region.

In addition to this *E-Update Resources™* guide, along with the weekly *E-Update* and *Calendar of Events* newsletters, primary weather-related updates are distributed through Facebook at www.facebook.com/TransformationIni and educational information at www.facebook.com/TransformationInitiative.EmergencyPreparedness.

Individuals can "Like" these pages and click on "Get Notifications" in the dropdown menu next to "Like" for updates during the week, overriding Facebook mechanisms that filter posts to Timelines and News Feeds based on its own algorithms.

Area Pennsylvania Counties Emergency Alert Systems

Chester, Montgomery, Delaware and Bucks counties have new emergency alert notification system via telephone, text and e-mail to replace the current Cooper Industries ReadyNotifyPA brand.

Citizen signups for ReadyChesCo, ReadyMontco, Delco Alert and ReadyBucks have started. Those enrolled in the current alerting system will need to re-enroll in the EverBridge system by the end of the month to continue to receive emergency alerts.

The new system allows residents to choose the alerts they receive and the order of notification, along with other types of information.

Enrollment is available at:

- Chester County: www.readychesco.org
- Montgomery County: www.montcopa.org/595/ReadyMontco
- Delaware County: www.co.delaware.pa.us/delcoready/delcoalert.html
- Berks County: www.co.berks.pa.us/Dept/DES/Pages/BerksAlert.aspx

Alerts for South Central Pennsylvania counties, including Lancaster, also are available through Everbridge at www.sctfpa.org/sc-alert.php.

Pennsylvania's alert system -- Alert PA -- for any county, also through Cooper Industries, is available at <https://alert.pa.gov/index.php?CCheck=1>.

More comprehensive weather information for the region is available through our Facebook page. To

receive updates for this and other family-related information during the week, "Like" our page at www.facebook.com/TransformationInitiative.EmergencyPreparedness and "Follow" in the dropdown menu next to "Like" to avoid Facebook filtering posts to individual Timelines and News Feeds based on its own algorithms.

Facebook should not be considered a primary alerting source for emergency broadcasts if emergency alert systems are working.

"I'm Safe" App Available from Red Cross.

The American Red Cross has launched a Hurricane cell phone application that puts lifesaving information in the hands of individuals living in or visiting hurricane prone areas, including one touch "I'm Safe" messaging allowing users to broadcast reassurance to family and friends via social media outlets that they are out of harm's way.

The program, for use on both iPhone and Android platforms, gives instant access to local and real time information on what to do before, during and after hurricanes, including location-based National Weather Service alerts for the United States and its territories that users can share on social networks, location of Red Cross shelters, emergency checklists and other information.

The organization, which previously released a first aid app, encourages preparation for the hurricane season that runs through the end of November.

Further information on the applications are available at www.redcross.org/news/article/Help-is-at-Your-Fingertips-with-Red-Cross-Apps, with application available by searching for American Red Cross at the Google Play Store for Android or the Apple App Store.

Pet First Aid Cell Phone App. American Red Cross has added a pet first aid cell phone application to its list of free apps available for download.

The feature includes step-by-step instructions for first aid emergencies, a pet profile for storing a tag ID, photo and medical information, early warning signs for when to contact a veterinarian, an animal hospital locator, and how to include pets in emergency preparedness plans.

Additional apps are available for tornadoes, wildfires, earthquakes, first aid, shelters finder, swim and flood emergencies.

Further information and download links are available at www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/mobile-apps.

Registry to Aid Persons With Special Needs in an Emergency. Chester, Bucks and Montgomery coun-

ties have developed a secure, web-based Special Needs Registry to better identify to emergency responders persons of special needs who are most at risk during a disaster.

Chester County Emergency Services defines the special needs population as those "who cannot receive, understand or act upon emergency protective orders" including but not limited to those who are deaf, blind, bedridden, mentally impaired, without radio or television.

Persons within this population can be registered with County Emergency Services so emergency responders can better plan to serve them in a disaster or other emergencies. Further information and registration is available online at www.specialneedspa.org.

Emergency Assistance Signups. Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT encourages Pennsylvanians to sign up for the Yellow Dot and Emergency Contact Information (ECI) programs that are designed to save lives in emergency situations in which victims are unable to speak.

Participants in the Yellow Dot program fill out a program form with emergency and medical contact and medical information, insert it into the program folder and then place it in a vehicle's glove compartment, placing a yellow dot sticker on their vehicle's rear window. The sticker alerts emergency responders to check a vehicle's glove compartment for the folder, assisting emergency responders in providing specific care after a crash.

The ECI program offers holders of Pennsylvania driver licenses and PennDOT-issued IDs the opportunity to log into a secure database and list two emergency contacts in cases of emergency. Only law enforcement officials can view information in the system.

Information on the Yellow Dot program is available at www.YellowDot.pa.gov and individuals can join the ECI program at www.dot4.state.pa.us/mobile_emergency_contact/mobileecilogin.jsp#top?20130527151439563=20130527151439563.

NOAA Weather Radio has more than 1,000 transmitters nation-wide, including Hibernia Park near Coatesville and nearby counties, that provide 24/7 *Public Alert™* notifications of emergency weather conditions, including severe weather, hurricanes and tornados. Radios can be purchased for \$20 to \$100 and, depending on features, may include both electric and battery-powered operation, emergency alerting, and motor vehicle adaptation. In addition to homes, weather radio alert systems often are used in schools,

day-care centers, and other public facilities and businesses to warn of hazardous weather situations that may be developing in one's area. NOAA Weather radio information is available at www.weather.gov/nwr.

The National Weather Service and many area media also maintain websites, customizable for direct access to local areas, that include updated weather conditions and Doppler radar. The NOAA forecast site is at www.weather.gov.

Flood Notifications. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) can provide a WaterAlert via text or e-mail when waters are rising in rivers and streams near individual locations, along with updates about groundwater levels, water temperatures, rainfall, and water quality at sites where USGS collects real-time water information.

Further information and signup is available at <http://water.usgs.gov/wateralert>.

Online Weather Channels. Several online sites provide ongoing updates on current and projected weather conditions and related information, including:

- National Weather Service: www.weather.gov
- The Weather Channel: www.weather.com
- AccuWeather: www.accuweather.com
- Intellicast: www.intellicast.com

Additional weather information online is available from local news media sites.

511PA is Pennsylvania's official travel information service, providing current traffic and weather information, including traffic web cams, road closures and weather information, as well as links to other transportation services. Information is available at www.511pa.com or (877) 511-7366.

Similar systems also are available in some other nearby states by substituting the two letter abbreviation for the state in the website address, such as www.511nj.com, except for Delaware where such information is available at www.deldot.gov.

A 511PA mobile phone application also has been developed that covers all state and Turnpike-operated roadways, with current traffic speeds recorded on about 15,000 of the 40,000 miles of highways.

Further information about this hand-free app, also able to hear information from New Jersey and West Virginia and available for Smartphones and iPhones, is at www.511pa.com/NetworkCoverage/usingApp.aspx.

National Preparedness. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) makes available many publications to assist individuals, families including children, and businesses to prepare for potential disasters including severe thunderstorms, hurricanes, floods and tornados. Information is available at www.fema.gov.

Homeowners Insurance. Pennsylvania Insurance Department provides information in regard to insurance losses under a homeowner's policy at www.insurance.pa.gov/Coverage/Documents/homeowners.pdf.

After a Disaster. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) publishes a guide, *Recovering from Disaster*, to assist individuals with many types of issues following a disaster. It is available at www.fema.gov/pdf/areyouready/recovering_from_disaster.pdf.

Personal Flooding Response. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) notes that "(d)uring a flood cleanup, the indoor air quality in your home or office may appear to be the least of your problems. However, failure to remove contaminated materials and to reduce moisture and humidity can present serious long-term health risks. Standing water and wet materials are a breeding ground for microorganisms, such as viruses, bacteria, and mold. They can cause disease, trigger allergic reactions, and continue to damage materials long after the flood." Further information is available at www.epa.gov/natural-disasters/flooding.

Emotional Supports. Hurricanes, floods, tornados, violence, health-related issues, death of a loved one, separation or divorce, unemployment and more, occurring individually or collectively in one's life, can leave lasting effects, not only on oneself personally but for family members, including children and the elderly, co-workers and friends. Information on disaster recovery, including emotional coping is available at:

- **Federal Emergency Management Agency:** *Coping with Disaster* - www.fema.gov/coping-disaster
Immediately After a Disaster - www.fema.gov/pdf/assistance/process/help_after_disaster_english.pdf
- **Federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention:** *Maintain a Healthy State of Mind* for different populations and ages - <http://emergency.cdc.gov/preparedness/mind>

Coping with a Disaster or Traumatic Event - <http://emergency.cdc.gov/mentalhealth>.

- **Red Cross:** *Taking Care of Your Emotional Health After a Disaster* - www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m14740298_Recovering_Emotionally_-_Large_Print.pdf
The National Child Traumatic Stress Network - www.nctsn.org

Disaster Distress Helpline. National Disaster Distress Helpline (DDH) provides free, confidential 24/7 assistance for individuals experiencing stress, anxiety and depression that are common reactions after all types of disasters.

The Helpline, staffed by crisis counselors, provides crisis intervention for those in emotional distress, educational information about identifying stress and its effects, tips for healthy coping, and disaster-specific local resources and referral information.

Further information about the Helpline and signs of stress is available at www.distresshelpline.org. The Helpline may be contacted at (800) 985-5990 or (800) 846-8517 TTY for the deaf or hearing impaired, or text *TalkWithUs*.

Caring for Pets and Animals. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides tips for caring for pets and other animals during an emergency at www.ready.gov/animals.

Use of Generators. Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) urges caution in use of portable generators during a power outage and publishes a *Using Portable Generators Safely* guide, available at www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data/Hurricane_Facts/portable_generator_safety.pdf.

Lifeline Cell Phone Service for Low-Income Persons. Low-income households may qualify for a free cell phone and up to 250 minutes of free airtime per month under a federal Assurance Wireless program with Virgin Mobile. Persons receiving federal public housing assistance/Section 8, food stamps, Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), National School Lunch, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, or State Blind Pension may already qualify. Others may be accepted if total household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines, for example \$14,702 annually for an individual and \$30,173 for a family of four. The number of minutes also can be doubled

for a fee of \$5 per month. Further information and application is available at www.assurancewireless.com/Public/MorePrograms.aspx.

Exelon Nuclear Disaster Planning. Exelon Nuclear publishes a 16-page emergency preparedness guide, *Emergency Planning for the Limerick Area*, in event of a nuclear incident, including emergency alerting systems and evacuation procedures and routes. It is available at www.montcopa.org/DocumentCenter/View/461.

Meteorologist Adventure for Young People.

PLAN!T NOW's Young Meteorologist Program takes youth on an online severe weather preparedness adventure in which they encounter lightning, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and winter storms – all while learning about severe weather science and safety.

Developed in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/National Weather Service and the National Education Association, the Young Meteorologist Program is said to offer a safe, non-threatening learning environment that shows kids what they need to do to prepare now to protect themselves and help their families when a real storm comes.

The site, which also includes material for educators and information on how to become a meteorologist, is available at www.youngmeteorologist.org/?page_id=18.

Online Disaster Preparedness Videos. Online *Just in Time* videos from the Disaster Resistant Communities Group, providing information on a variety of disaster situations and responses, are available at www.drc-group.com/project/jitt.html.

Public Safety

Child Abuse Prevention Resource Guide

A 2016 Prevention Resource Guide: Making Meaningful Connections, along with other publications to aid in combating child abuse, are available at www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/prevention/month/resource-guide.

Child Abuse Worker Certifications

Pennsylvania Department of Human Services has changed the terminology for child abuse history clearances to “certification” and “strongly encourages” individuals to apply online for more efficient processing.

Volunteers working with children were relieved of fees for child abuse clearances and criminal background checks required by the state Child Protective

Services Law, effective July 25, with the cost of Department of Human Services (DHS) and Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) child abuse and criminal history record checks being reduced from \$10 to \$8 for all other applicants, effective the same date.

FBI clearances, required for all employees and for volunteers who have not been a continuous resident of the Commonwealth for the last 10 years, continue to apply.

In 2014, 23 pieces of legislation were enacted including Act 153 of 2014, changing how Pennsylvania responds to child abuse, such changes significantly impacting the reporting, investigation, assessment, prosecution and judicial handling of child abuse and neglect cases. However, organizations using volunteers raised concern about future recruitment due to the costs.

The list of persons required to obtain clearances, according to the Governor's Office, are:

- Child care service employees;
- Foster parents and adult household members;
- Prospective adoptive parents and adult household members;
- Individuals 14 year of age or older applying for a paid position as an employee responsible for the welfare of a child or having direct contact with children;
- Any individual seeking or provide child-care services under contract with a child-care facility or program;
- School employees governed by public school code and those not governed by the public school code (colleges and universities).

Additional information about clearances required under the Child Protective Services Law is available at www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov. Individuals seeking clearances can go directly to www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis to create an individual account and apply for child abuse history certifications electronically.

State Police Megan Law Absconder List. Pennsylvania State Police seeks citizen help with its list of absconded Megan Law offenders at <http://ow.ly/VroNM>. Persons with information can tip the Megan's Law Section at (866) 771-3170.

PennDOT Highway Construction Projects

A Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) provides real-time information on construction projects throughout the state at www.projects.penndot.gov/projects/PAProjects.aspx.

Travel information also is available at www.511PA.com or by telephone at 5-1-1, providing travelers with current traffic and weather information, as well as links to other transportation services.

Free Motorcycle Safety Training. Pennsylvania Motorcycle Safety Program offers free training to all state residents and active duty military with a class M permit or motorcycle license.

The course focuses on training motorcyclists of all levels, from beginning riders to intermediate, three-wheeled and advanced riders.

Further information on the year-around program is available at www.pamsp.com or (800) 845-9533.

Pass It On Campaign to Thwart Scammers. A national *Pass It On* campaign is designed to help the elderly and others from being scammed.

The Federal Trade Commission shares protective information on all types of scams and what to do about them, including spreading the word and helping others, at www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0030-pass-it-on.

State Registry of Local Dangerous Dogs

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture maintains a *Dangerous Dog Registry* of those living in communities that have attacked, inflicted severe injury to, or killed a human being or a domestic animal without provocation while off an owner's property, are located in Lancaster County, with 18.

A \$500 licensing fee, plus an administrative cost, is charged to dog owners annually for the life of the animal.

Further information and registered locations of the animals are available at www.agriculture.pa.gov/Protect/DogLaw/Dangerous%20Dogs/Pages/default.aspx#.VzffLuQaL-s.

Consumer Information Available on Charitable Donations.

A consumer information guide on how Pennsylvania residents can make the most of their charitable gifts is available at

www.dos.pa.gov/BusinessCharities/Charities/Resources/Pages/default.aspx#.VzffruQaL-s, with a searchable nonprofit database of registered charities at www.charities.pa.gov.

Organizations that are registered with the state may not have federal Internal Revenue Service charitable organization status that allows individuals to receive a tax deduction for charitable gifts on their income tax returns. A database of IRS designated charities is available at www.irs.gov/Charities-&-Non-Profits/Search-for-Charities.

GuideStar, a nonprofit organization, also provides a database of charitable organizations, including tax returns that have been filed, at www.guidestar.org.

FTC Website for Recovery from Identity Theft. U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has a website to make it easier to report and recover from identity theft.

The initiative provides a personal recovery plan that walks one through each recovery step, tracks progress and adapts to changing situations and pre-fills letters and forms for easier reporting at www.IdentityTheft.gov.

Health

Pennsylvania Low in Public Health Funding. The Trust for America's Health (TFAH) says Pennsylvania is 43rd among the states in public health funding.

The organization, describing itself as non-profit and non-partisan "dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority", said the state spent \$14.40 per capita on public health services in fiscal year 2014-15, less than half the median state appropriation of \$33.50 per capita.

Pennsylvania was said to rank 32nd in poverty in 2014, at 13.5 percent of the population; 36th in uninsured of all ages at 8.5 percent; and 26th in uninsured under 18 at 5.2 percent.

The report, including categories of health expenditures, is available at www.healthyamericans.org/report/126.

Area Hospitals Ratings?

U.S. News and World Report magazine has published its ratings for hospitals nationally, with information on area facilities available at <http://health.usnews.com/best-hospitals/area/pa>.

A separate news story on how ratings also can be confusing is available at www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2015/06/pa_hospital_quality_report_pin.html.

Hospital Patient Safety Ratings. Area hospitals have ratings from A to C in rankings for patient safety, with none receiving a D or F.

The list was released by Leapfrog, a national nonprofit founded in 2000 by large employers and other purchasers for the purpose of "driving a movement for giant leaps forward in the quality and safety of American health care."

The rankings include more than 2,500 U.S. hospitals that were assessed for medical errors, accidents, injuries and infections that are said to reflect

50 percent increased risks of avoidable deaths between bottom and top rated hospitals.

The report says that findings point to a nine percent higher risk of avoidable death in B hospitals, 35 percent higher in C facilities and 50 percent higher in D and F hospitals than those rated as A.

Pennsylvania was 33rd overall in the United States for A-rated hospitals, with only one quarter of 132 receiving that designation. Delaware was 18th place, with two out of five listed and New Jersey 22nd, with 23 out of 67 receiving an A rating. New York was 44th, with only 14 out of 143 hospitals receiving top grades. Maryland hospitals aren't listed because of no requirement to report safety information.

Further information on the report is available at www.hospitalsafetyscore.org/about-us/newsroom/display/442022, with a searchable database of hospitals and other information, including score components, at www.hospitalsafetyscore.org.

Consumer Rating System for Hospitals. Capital Blue Cross, which services Lancaster and Berks County west, along with the Lehigh Valley, and LeapFrog have started a consumer rating system for hospitals, designed to help employers and consumers make informed health care decisions.

The Leapfrog Hospital Survey is said to be the only nationally standardized and endorsed set of measures that captures hospital performance in patient safety, quality and resource utilization. Rating results will be made available online.

Further information is available at www.pnnewswire.com/news-releases/capital-bluecrossnew-hospital-recognition-program-improves-quality-of-care-for-customers-300200235.html.

Guidelines for What to Take to Hospital. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Institute on Aging has issued some safety tips for before, during and after trips to the hospital, including some guidance for family and caregivers.

The information, which also includes patient's rights, is available at www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/hospital-hints.

Hospital Discharge Planning Checklist

Medicare has published a six-page checklist to help individuals avoid being re-admitted after a hospital stay.

It is suggested by Medicare that *Your Discharge Planning Checklist* be used "early and often during your stay" and that a patient talk to their doctor and

hospital staff, such as a discharge planner, social worker or nurse, about items on the list.

The publication, including a list of additional resources, is available at

www.medicare.gov/pubs/pdf/11376.pdf with the The Joint Commission, an independent, nonprofit organization that accredits and certifies more than 20,500 health care organizations and programs in the United States, providing additional information at www.jointcommission.org/toc.aspx.

Ride For Health

The Transportation Management Association of Chester County (TMACC) and the Phoenixville Community Health Foundation has a Ride for Health Initiatives (RFHI) in the Phoenixville area to include trips for human and social services needs in addition to the earlier healthcare focus.

Information on both initiatives is available at www.tmacc.org/public-transportation/ride-health-initiative.

RoadMAPP to Health Website. A website of *RoadMAPP to Health*, the Chester County Health Assessment, highlight efforts of county health agencies and community organizations that assess the county's health, identify major issues, and develop a Community Health Improvement Plan to address them.

Further information is available at <http://webapps.chesco.org/webapps/health/cha/home.html>, aorr@chesco.org or (610) 344-6633.

TriCounty Health Needs Assessment. An updated Health Needs Assessment for the TriCounty area that includes Western Montgomery, Northern Chester and Eastern Berks counties provides information on Pottstown Borough and the Pottsgrove, Daniel Boone, Owen J. Roberts, Spring-Ford, Perkiomen Valley and Boyertown areas.

The full report is available at www.pottstownfoundation.org/PDFs/Pottstown-CHNA-FINAL_to-print-copy-110513.pdf.

Medicare and the Health Insurance Marketplace. Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services publishes a listing of frequently asked questions (FAQs) regarding the relationship between Medicare and the Health Insurance Marketplace, with topics including general enrollment, End Stage Renal Disease (ERSD), and coordination of benefits.

It is available at www.medicare.gov/Pubs/pdf/11694.pdf.

Kids Computer Time. The National Institute of Health (NIH) provides resources for families and communities to help youth eat right, become active, and reduce computer screen time.

The *We Can! EatPlayGrow* website is available at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan.

An online *Parent Program Leader's Guide to We Can! Energize Our Families* is available at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/downloads/leadersguide.pdf.

Distracted Driver Prevention Campaign. Montgomery County Health Department and a consortium of state, county and local organizations have joined together in a yearlong campaign to reduce distracted driving.

The awareness and prevention effort adopts the AT&T *It Can Wait* campaign that includes community events, health fairs, high school and corporate outreach, and involvement in online and digital communications.

Authorities said there were 1,224 motor vehicle accidents attributed to distracted driving in Montgomery County in 2012, including five involving fatalities and 614 with injuries.

Campaign features include an online pledge to not text while driving and a texting and driving simulator, available at www.itcanwait.com.

Further information about the Montgomery County initiative is available at www.montcopa.org/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/1665, kkucz@montcopa.org or (610) 278-5117 x6787.

Parents and Distracted Teen Driving.

Parents play a direct role in distracted teen driving, with more than half of teens talking on cellphones with their mother or father while driving, according to research presented at the American Psychological Association annual conference in Washington, D.C. Parents also serve as role models for talking by a cellphone while driving, the report says.

Distracted driving is the leading cause of crashes among all drivers and contributes to 11% of fatal crashes involving teens, 21% involving cell phones, according to the presentation.

A summary of the research is available at www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2014/08/teen-driving.aspx and the presentation at www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2014/08/teen-drivers.pdf.

Parents Helping Teen Driving Safety

Safe Roads Alliance has developed *The Parent's Supervised Driving Program* to help improve teen

driver safety that includes a 70-page parent assistance guide and a *RoadReady* mobile app.

Driving Through the Eyes of Teens, a 2012 study conducted by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and State Farm Insurance, found that drivers whose parents are highly involved were 50% less likely to crash, 71% less likely to drive intoxicated, two times more likely to wear seat belts and 30% less likely to use a cell phone.

A 2010 study, *Parents, Teens and Learner Stage of Graduate Licensing*, conducted by the AAA Foundation found that only four percent of parents use any resource when teaching their teen to drive and parents stop the supervised driving process early and over-estimate time spent in supervision.

Further information on the Safe Roads Alliance program is available at

www.theparentssuperviseddrivingprogram.com, the 2012 study at

https://teendriving.statefarm.com/system/article_downloads/State_Farm_Teen_Driving_Driving_Through_Eyes_of_Teens_Closer_Look.pdf, and the AAA

study at www.aaafoundation.org/sites/default/files/ParentsTeensReport.pdf.

Driver Fatigue Safety Tips. AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety has found that more than one-in-five fatal crashes – 21 percent -- involve driver fatigue and is providing tips on how to overcome this danger.

Drivers often underestimate the risk and overestimate their ability to combat drowsiness behind the wheel, the organization says, noting that one third of crashes involving a drowsy driver result in injuries and over 6,000 fatigue-related crashes per year result in at least one fatality.

Further information on the report, including safety tips, is available at

www.newsroom.aaa.com/2014/11/one-five-fatal-crashes-involve-drowsy-drivers.

Shingles and Other Vaccinations. Health Departments in Chester and Delaware counties offer free vaccinations to income eligible, uninsured and underinsured.

Chester County's walk-in clinic is open at the Government Services Center, 601 Westtown Road, West Chester, at various times during the week and includes free shingles vaccinations for individuals age 50 and older. Further information and schedules are available at www.chesco.org/calendar.aspx?CID=24 or (610) 344-6252.

The Delaware County State Health Clinic at 151 West 5th Street, Chester, is providing free shingles

vaccinations for the uninsured and underinsured ages 60 and older by appointment at (610) 447-3250.

Community Mammograms. Mammograms are available for women and men 40 years of age and older who are uninsured or under-insured and live in the Greater Phoenixville area through a partnership among the Phoenixville Hospital, Community Radiology of the University of Pennsylvania, and Phoenixville Healthcare Access Foundation (PHCAF).

Further information is available at www.heaphoenixville.org/mammogram or (610) 935-3165.

Wellness in the Workplace. Chester County Health Department provides a six months Wellness in the Workplace initiative to help employers save health care dollars, increase productivity, reduce injuries, and decrease absenteeism.

Employees have an opportunity to participate in physical activity classes, make healthier food choices, and adopt new stress management skills.

The program includes two biometric screenings, one at the beginning of the program and one at the end to track the progress made over six months, consisting of a finger-stick test measuring cholesterol (total, HDL, ratio) and glucose, blood pressure, body composition (BMI, body fat % and hydration) checks, monthly educational sessions, and special health initiatives.

The program is free, with a \$30 fee per participant if they chose to have the cholesterol and glucose screenings.

Further information and scheduling of a wellness visit can be obtained at www.chesco.org/index.aspx?NID=1814 or (610) 344-6441,

Women's Health Care Chartbook. The Kaiser Family Foundation has released a new *Women's Health Care Chartbook* that describes key findings from its Women's Health Survey. Among findings are that one in 10 women were caregivers to frail or ill family members, with one in five of these women spending more than 40 hours per week in this area, with consequential strains on family finances.

The survey of women ages 18 to 64 provides a look at experiences of women in the health care system and presents a wide range of data on health issues of women 18 to 64, including insurance coverage, affordability of and access to care, use of health care services, prevention, and family health.

The report is available at www.kff.org/womenshealth/upload/8164.pdf.

Low-Income Community Healthcare Access in Lancaster County. Project Access Lancaster County (PALCO) provides a health care bridge for individuals with income too low to afford health insurance, but not qualifying for public assistance or Medicare. Anyone meeting program requirements may receive physician services by paying a copayment. When necessary, related health care expenses such as hospitalization, outpatient care, lab work, X-rays studies and rehabilitation medicine are provided at no cost.

The program is a coordinated volunteer effort from physicians, hospitals, pharmacies and other health care providers to prevent treatable conditions from becoming life-threatening, and to reduce the use of emergency rooms to treat non-emergent illness.

Further information as to eligibility and services, along with applications for assistance, is available at www.palcolancaster.org.

Breast and Cervical Cancer Detection Program. Free breast and cervical cancer detection examinations, along with free treatment in event cancer is detected, are available to eligible women through the Pennsylvania HealthyWoman Program (HWP).

Services include clinical breast examination, mammogram, pelvic examination and Pap smear, education on breast self-examination, and follow-up diagnostic care for an abnormal result, including free treatment through the Department of Public Welfare's Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Program. Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among women, with risk increasing with age.

Further information about the program and qualifying is available at www.health.pa.gov/MyHealth/WomensHealth/HealthyWomen/Pages/HealthyWoman.aspx#.V1LuqRYxLM or (800) 215-7494.

Community Cancer Education Programs. Two organizations are providing educational programs on risk factors associated with cancer and methods of prevention at work sites, schools, and community and faith-based settings.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health estimates that more than 60 percent of cancer deaths could be prevented with early detection and modifying risk factors.

-- A program by the **Chester County Health Department** discusses cancers such as colorectal, a leading cancer killer among both men and women, ovarian that causes more deaths in women than any other gynecologic cancer because it usually is not

diagnosed until late stages, and prostate, the second leading cause of cancer deaths among men, particularly African Americans who have a higher risk.

Additional information, including scheduling, is available from Danielle Borden, public health educator, at (610) 344-6243.

-- **Fox Chase Cancer Center** is presenting interactive English and Spanish cancer education programs, with topics including colorectal, prostate, ovarian and skin cancer, with a goal of reducing the number of persons diagnosed with late stage cancer, ultimately reducing the number of deaths.

Further information and requests for scheduling English version programs are available from Armenta Washington at Armenta.Washington@fcc.edu or (215) 214-3984 and for Spanish version programs from Rosa Ortiz at Rosa.Ortiz@fcc.edu or (215) 728-5592.

Freedom from Smoking® Clinics. Phoenixville Hospital, 140 Nutt Road, Phoenixville. American Lung Association's eight-session smoking cessation program, including nicotine replacement therapy, is held from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Wednesdays starting in February, April, June, August and October, and from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Thursdays starting in January, March, May, July, September and November.

Further information and required registration is available at (610) 983-1021.

Cancer Insurance Co-Pay Assistance

The CancerCare Co-Payment Assistance Foundation helps address the needs of individuals who cannot afford their insurance co-payments to cover the cost of medications for treating cancer. It also is affiliated with CancerCare, a national not-for-profit organization that provides free professional support services including counseling, education, financial assistance and practical help to people with cancer and their loved ones.

Further information is available at www.cancercarecopay.org, information@cancercarecopay.org, or (866) 552-6729 toll-free.

Chesco Healthcare Discount Program. Chester County is making available a program to allow residents to obtain discounts on vision care, LASIK and PRK vision procedures, hearing aids and screenings, prepaid lab work, prepaid diagnostic imaging and diabetic supplies, along with prescriptions and dental costs.

The initiative, through the National Association of Counties (NACo) in partnership with CVS

Caremark, is said to savings on auxiliary healthcare services not included currently under the Affordable Care Act.

No annual limits are placed on use, with no waiting period or forms to fill out. The plan starts at \$6.95 a month or \$69 a year for individuals, and \$8.95 monthly or \$79 annually for families.

The initiative joins discount card programs already in place for prescriptions and dental services, with the County reporting that residents have saved nearly 118,000 residents \$600,000 through the prescription program in the past five years, with the dental program, which started in 2011, having saved participants between 20 to 50 percent on services.

Further information on the new Health Discount Card, along with existing prescription and dental programs, is available through the Chester County Health Department at www.chesco.org/2670/Health-Discount-Program or (610) 344-6225.

Information Source for Latino Health Care. The federal Department of Health and Human Services has a Minority Health website, in both English and Spanish to help connect minorities with new information and resources to improve access to quality, affordable health coverage. It is located at www.minorityhealth.hhs.gov and www.minorityhealth.hhs.gov/espanol.

Fitness Program for Adult Cancer Patients.

Kennett Area YMCA is conducting a free 12-week small group program for adult cancer patients who have recently become de-conditioned or chronically fatigued from their treatment or disease.

Living Strong, Living Well takes place for one hour, twice a week, and is designed to strength the heart and muscles, improve flexibility and balance, and develop relaxation techniques. Further information and registration is available from Stacie Taylor, health and wellness director, at (610) 444-9622 x46.

Free Lyme Disease Prevention Education. Chester County Health Department is providing free educational presentations appropriate for schools, work sites, and community groups about Lyme disease.

Chester County has one of the highest incidence rates in the state. Over 800 new confirmed cases were discovered in the county in 2009, with Pennsylvania having the eighth highest rate in the United States. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that children are more at risk because they spend more time playing outdoors and

in high grass or leaves where ticks that spread Lyme disease are found.

Additional information on Lyme disease and scheduling a presentation available at (610) 344-6490.

Lead and Healthy Homes Program. Montgomery County Health Department conducts a Lead and Healthy Homes Program (LHH) to help reduce illness and injury incurred by home health hazards such as lead, asthma triggers, and fire and fall hazards

The Department provides a comprehensive Environmental Home Assessment (EHA) to families with children seven years of age for primary prevention services when the child has asthma or is at-risk of lead poisoning, such as living in a home with chipping or peeling paint).

Further information and request for assistance is available at www.montcopa.org/index.aspx?nid=1124, wrogers@montcopa.org or (610) 970-5048.

Lead Poisoning Screenings, Check Kits and Education Programs. Chester County Health Department is seeking to overcome the county's status of having the second-lowest lead screening rate in Pennsylvania with free lead level screenings for young children and pregnant women, do-it-yourself lead check kits to test for lead in homes and other locations, and lead poison prevention education programs for individuals and organizations dealing with children.

A major risk factor for lead exposure is spending time in buildings constructed prior to 1978, with more than 60% of homes in the county being built before that date. Symptoms of lead poisoning, such as irritable moods, learning and behavioral difficulties, fatigue, appetite and weight loss, abdominal pain, vomiting and constipation, often mimic other conditions and don't show up until lead levels are dangerously high.

Parents, services providers and day care centers can check paint, toys, dishes, play areas and soil with the free kit. Programs to educate organizations and staff, along with other free services are available from Lindsay Himes at lhimes@chesco.org or at (610) 344-6778. Downloadable posters in English are available at www.chesco.org/929/Childhood-Lead-Poisoning.

Chesco Lead and Healthy Homes Program

Chester County Health Department has expanded its Lead and Healthy Homes Program, increasing the children and youth qualification age for services.

Under the initiative, pregnant women and families with a child under 18 years of age that suffers from asthma, resides in a home constructed before 1978, has pests or other risks, is at 300% of poverty or participates in assistance programs such as food stamps or children's health insurance are eligible for a free home visit.

The activity is designed to identify asthma triggers, lead-based paint, pest activity and code violations that pose safety and health hazards. Health Department representatives also provide educational materials, Healthy Homes supplies to assist in making a home safer and healthier, and referrals to other housing and community health agencies for additional assistance.

Further information is available at <http://chesco.org/index.aspx?NID=2680> or (610) 344-6225.

Area Air Pollution. Chester and adjoining counties have some of the most polluted air in the United States, according to the American Lung Association.

In its annual State of the Air report, the organization gives an "F" for high ozone days exposure to Berks, Chester, Delaware, Lancaster, and Montgomery counties and lists the area among the top 18 in the U.S. for various types of pollution categories.

The association says that although gains are being made in air quality in many areas, "more than half of all Americans - 166 million people - live in counties where they are exposed to unhealthy levels of pollutants."

The full report, including definitions, comparison charting, and highest impacted populations, is available at www.lung.org/our-initiatives/healthy-air/sota, with specific information on Pennsylvania counties at www.lung.org/our-initiatives/healthy-air/sota/city-rankings/states/pennsylvania.

Lancaster County Low-Income Community Healthcare Access.

Project Access Lancaster County (PALCO) provides a health care bridge for individuals with income too low to afford health insurance, but not qualifying for public assistance or Medicare. Anyone meeting program requirements may receive physician services by paying a copayment. When necessary, related health care expenses such as hospitalization, outpatient care, lab work, X-rays studies and rehabilitation medicine are provided at no cost.

The program is a coordinated volunteer effort from physicians, hospitals, pharmacies and other health care providers to prevent treatable conditions

from becoming life-threatening, and to reduce the use of emergency rooms to treat non-emergent illness.

Further information as to eligibility and services, along with applications for assistance, is available at www.palcolancaster.org.

Pedestrian Safety Videos. Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) has produced four videos focused on educating children, motorists and parents about pedestrian safety due to 4,558 pedestrian injuries and 743 deaths being recorded in state traffic accidents in the past five years, with 33 percent of those killed being 18 years or younger.

The videos are available at www.youtube.com/pennsylvaniaDOT.

YMCA Memberships for 7th Graders.

Area YMCA associations are offering free memberships for 7th graders, with current 7th graders being eligible through August 31, prior to entering the eighth grade.

Further information is available at local YMCAs.

Children Share Parent Prison Sentences. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, a national foundation seeking solutions to strengthening families says parental incarceration is helping drain community resources and creating a devastating toll on kids, families and communities.

A *Shared Sentence* report says that "if incarceration rates hadn't increased during a 24-year period, the U.S. poverty rate would have fallen by 20 percent, rather than remaining relatively steady."

It says that more than five million U.S. children have had a parent in jail or prison at some point in their lives, which can have "as much impact on a child's well-being as abuse or domestic violence." The rate of parental incarceration is said to vary from three percent in New Jersey to 13 percent in Kentucky.

The report is available at www.aecf.org.

Ultrasound and Pregnancy Tests

Chester County Women's Services at 17 South Street, West Chester, and 1028 East Lincoln Highway, Coatesville, provides free limited ultrasound and pregnancy tests.

Further information and appointments are available at (610) 918-7088 for the West Chester office and (610) 383-0930 for the Coatesville office.

Breastfeeding Classes

The La Leche League holds monthly meetings during which a continuous series of four classes

provide mother-to-mother support, encouragement, information and education about breastfeeding.

Chester County groups include evenings in Downingtown and Exton-Lionville and mornings in Glenmoore-Elverson, Kimberton and West Chester.

Classes include *The Advantages of Breastfeeding*, *Baby Arrives: The Family and the Breastfed Baby*, *The Art of Breastfeeding and Avoiding Difficulties*, and *Starting Solids, Weaning and Family Nutrition*.

Further information and schedules are available at <http://beanmom.com/laleche/#dtm>.

In 2009, Acting Surgeon General Steven Galson, in highlighting the 25th anniversary of the Surgeon General's Workshop on Breastfeeding and Lactation, said that "(b)reast milk is the best source of infant nutrition." The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also says it is "committed to increasing breastfeeding rates throughout the United States and to promoting and supporting optimal breastfeeding practices toward the ultimate goal of improving the public's health".

The CDC also provides Breastfeeding Guidelines and Recommendations at www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding.

Free Texting Information Service for Pregnant Women and New Moms.

National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition has developed a public-private partnership to provide pregnant women and new moms with information they need to take care of their own health and give babies the right start in life.

Text4baby is a free mobile education service to promote maternal and child health. Women who sign up for the free service will receive free health text messages each week, timed to their due date and for up to a year after the baby's birth. Enrollment is available by texting BABY (or BEBE for information in Spanish) to 511411. Further information is available at www.text4baby.org.

Helping Children with Emotional and Behavioral Problems.

The Mental Health Association in Pennsylvania (MHAPA) has published a *PA Roadmap to Help for Families of Children and Youth With Emotional and Behavioral Problems* that describes resources to aid parents with children with special needs. It is available at www.mhapa.org/children-youth/pa-roadmap-to-help.

Database for Parents of Children with Substance-Related Issues.

The Support Group Project of the Treatment Research Institute and Hope for Addiction provides an online database of support groups for

parents of children struggling with substance-related issues.

A recent survey conducted by Faces and Voices of Recovery found that nearly two-thirds of all families are affected by addiction, but parents often feel alone in dealing with the issue.

Further information and the database are available at www.supportgroupproject.org.

Depression and Aging. National Institute of Mental Health publishes *Older Adults and Depression* that outlines different forms of depression, its signs and symptoms, causes and treatments, how to talk with a loved one who may be depressed, and how to help oneself if depressed.

An online version is available at www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/older-adults-and-depression/index.shtml.

Community Conversations About Mental Health. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) hosts a resources website for information about mental health issues, including signs of mental illness, how individuals can seek help, local, state and national resources, and how communities can host conversations about mental health. It also features videos from a number of individuals sharing their stories about mental illness, recovery, and hope.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) also will be releasing a *Toolkit for Community Conversations About Mental Health* to provide consistent information and approaches in support of communities interested in holding discussions about mental health. The Toolkit will include an *Information Brief*, a *Discussion Guide* and an *Organizing Guide*.

A series of mental health myths and facts are available at www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/myths-facts/index.html.

The website is available at www.MentalHealth.gov, with the *Information Brief* available at http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA13-4763?utm_source=PEPEblast&utm_medium=social&utm_term=#MentalHealthMatters&utm_content=textlink&utm_campaign=CommunityConversationsAboutMentalHealth.

Developmental Programs Guide. A guide for *Understanding the Office of Developmental Programs in Pennsylvania: Mental Retardation & Autism Services* has been published by Vision for Equality and is available at www.temple.edu/thetrainingpartnership/pub.

Statewide Autism Resource Center. A statewide autism resource center, including a website, statewide toll-free telephone number and community outreach specialists, provides information for an estimated 30,000 Pennsylvanians and their families living with autism.

The initiative, developed by the Autism Services, Education, Resources & Training (ASERT) Collaborative, offers information about local, regional and statewide events, professional training, community resources, services, current research and other information relevant to the autism community.

The collaborative is a partnership of medical centers, centers of autism research and services, universities, community organizations, and other providers of services involved in the treatment and care of adults and children with autism.

Further information is available at www.PAutism.org or (877) 231-4244.

Autism Resources at Chester County Libraries

All Chester County libraries have a new variety of educational resources on autism as a result of a grant from West Pharmaceutical Services in Lionville.

Further information is available at the libraries or through the Find a Resource Catalog section at www.ccls.org.

Autism Webinars

The National Autism Resource and Information Center is hosting an extended series of webinars on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons to introduce or expand individual knowledge on various autism-related subjects including early intervention, safety, social security disability insurance, and information pertinent to military families.

Currently-scheduled webinars, along with prior sessions, are available at www.autismnow.org/about-us/what-we-do/webinars.

Stop Smoking Kits

Pennsylvania Department of Health is offering four-week nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) kits and counseling support to individuals trying to quit use of tobacco while supplies last.

Further information is available at www.DeterminedToQuit.com and free kits and counseling support are available at (800) QUIT NOW (784-8669).

Teen Prescription Drug Prevention ToolKit

National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE) has introduced a new online

toolkit for *Maximizing Your Role as a Teen Influencer: What You Can Do to Help Prevent Teen Prescription Drug Abuse*.

This resource includes a complete workshop module, handouts and instructions, as well as real-life scenarios, information about warning signs and symptoms, common myths about teen prescription drug abuse, brochures and sample promotional materials.

Federal reports indicate that prescription drugs – easily accessed in a family medicine cabinet -- are now abused more than cocaine, heroin, ecstasy and methamphetamines combined, with one in five teens having abused prescription drugs, one in three saying there is "nothing wrong" in using them "every once and a while." and nearly 2,500 teens abusing them every day for the first time.

Prescription drugs used for improper purposes can increase blood pressure or heart rates, damage brain and other organs, result in overdose, poisonings, addictions, breathing disruptions, seizures and death. Additional risks occur when mixing multiple drugs or combining them with alcohol.

The downloadable toolkit is available at www.talkaboutrx.org/maximizing_role.jsp.

Literature in both English and Spanish also is available at

www.talkaboutrx.org/not_worth_the_risk.jsp.

Drug Overdose Assistance Legislation

Pennsylvania allows first responders -- law enforcement, fire fighters, EMS -- or other organizations acting at the direction of a health care professional authorized to prescribe naloxone, known as Narcan, to administer the drug to individuals experiencing an opioid overdose.

Individuals such as friends or family members in a position to assist a person at risk of experiencing an opioid related overdose also may receive a prescription for naloxone. The law also provides immunity from prosecution for those responding to and reporting overdoses.

The legislation responds to a high numbers of individuals overdosing from drugs and being left by persons they are with who fear prosecution or aren't sure what to do, along with the critical time factor in obtaining assistance for those who have overdosed.

Further information from the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs about the legislation and conditions of use is available at www.ddap.pa.gov/overdose/Pages/Naloxone_FAQ.aspx#_VzjUwOQaL-s.

Online Handbook Available to Help Parent Talk with Teens About Alcohol

Mothers Against Drug Driving (MADD) has developed a new 48-page online guide to help parents start talking with their teenagers about underage drinking.

The handbook is available through http://support.madd.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pop_reg.

Alcohol Consumption Screening Tool

A free online screening tool to help individuals assess their own alcohol consumption patterns to determine if their drinking is likely to be harming their health or increasing their risk for future harm is available through Join Together, a project of the Boston University School of Public Health.

Through education and referral, the website urges those whose drinking is harmful or hazardous to take positive action, and informs all adults who consume alcohol about guidelines and caveats for lower-risk drinking

The tool is available at www.alcoholscreening.org.

Assistance for Families Addressing Addiction Issues

Pennsylvania Recovery Organization–Achieving Community Together (PRO-ACT) is hosting monthly Family Program gatherings to assist individuals and families recognize and address addiction problems in a spouse, parent, child or other loved one.

The information and support programs, facilitated by trained volunteers who have been in the same situation, are held for two hours on one evening a week for three consecutive weeks. Program locations are at:

- **Chester County** – 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. on the first three Wednesdays in Room 336 of the Government Services Center, 601 Westtown Road, West Chester.
- **Delaware County** – 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. on the first three Tuesdays at Holcomb Behavioral Health Services, 126 East Baltimore Pike, Media.
- **Montgomery County** – 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on the first three Wednesdays at Creative Health, 11 Robinson Street, Pottstown.

Sessions are confidential, using only first names. Further information and required registration are available at (800) 221-6333 or at info@proact.org.

National Drug Use and Health ReportA new report, Results from the 2008 National Survey on Drug Use and Health National Findings, has been

published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is available at <http://oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh/2k8nsduh/2k8Results.cfm>.

Training Manual for Brain Injury Survivors and Families

The Acquired Brain Injury Network of Pennsylvania (ABIN-PA) has published a training manual, *Building a New Life After Brain Injury: Peer to Peer Training by Survivors and Families for Survivors, Families and Friends* to encourage brain injury survivors to identify their unique abilities, develop new interests, and create a confident new life.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that traumatic brain injury “are often missed or misdiagnosed in older adults”. ABIN-PA also reports that brain injuries often are misunderstood within the general population. It says a brain injury means a “brain function was damaged by an event that decreased oxygen or blood to the brain. All brain injury is acquired (ABI) but some injuries result from physical trauma (TBI). These events are so common that people take them for granted, never realizing problems accumulate. Eventually, damage may equal a disability. Any brain injury requires attention. Use caution to prevent a ‘second hit’.

Potential causes of brain injury, according to ABIN-PA, can include alcoholism, anesthesia, aneurysm, a beating or a punch, bicycle crash, blow to the head, brain infection, brain radiation, surgery or tumor, cardiac arrest or surgery, a drug reaction, electric shock, explosion, gunshot, falling, high fever, impact, lightning, motor vehicle crash, near drowning or suffocation, poisoning, shaking, skateboarding or skiing crash, a stroke or whiplash.

A downloadable copy of the manual and additional information about acquired brain injury, including downloadable brochures to assist in identifying these situations, is available at www.abin-pa.org and at www.cdc.gov/TraumaticBrainInjury/index.html.

Online Depression Screening

Help Yourself Help Others, an anonymous online self-test for depression is designed to help one determine whether he or she may need assistance for health issues that affect a significant number of adults and youth each year and can lead to significant physical health problems.

Further information and the online test are available at <http://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/hyho>.

Suicide Rates Increasing. National suicide levels are the highest since 1986, with nearly all age categories impacted, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says suicide is “an important public health issue involving psychological, biological, and societal factors.”

Suicide rates increased from 1999 through 2014 for both males and females and for all ages 10–74.

Further information is available at www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db241.htm.

Suicide Prevention Training. Certified members of the Chester County Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force offer group trainings to lay persons on suicide prevention techniques.

Hour-long QPR (Question...Persuade... Refer) classes that teach a life-saving technique to apply when someone is feeling suicidal, are available to schools, businesses and other community groups.

Further information is available at www.chestercountysuicideprevention.com and scheduling is available at ccsptaskforce@gmail.com.

Helping Children Through a Traumatic Event

Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) publishes *Tips for Talking With and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event*.

Saying that “adult support and reassurance is the key to helping children through a traumatic time”, the four-page publication describes possible reactions to a traumatic event by various age groups, from infants to teens, and how parents, caregivers and teachers can support recovery, even if children and youth only are exposed to such an event via media reports or general conversations. It also provides resources, including hotlines, if additional assistance is needed.

The adult assistance publication is available for viewing or download at www.store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA12-4732/SMA12-4732.pdf.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) discusses seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a type of depression that occurs at a certain time of the year, usually in the winter, and may be caused by the lack of light. Further information is available at www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/seasonal-affective-disorder.html.

Car Seat Checks in Montco

Montgomery County Health Department conducts free safety inspections and education programs for county residents on the proper way to install a child safety seat at Limerick, Norristown, Montgomeryville, with evening hours in Gilbertsville. Further information and schedules are available at www.montcopa.org/index.aspx?NID=1132 or (610) 278-5119.

Free Opioid Overdose Toolkit.

Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has published an *Opioid Overdose Toolkit* to equip communities and local governments with development of policies and practices to help prevent opioid-related overdoses and deaths. It includes information for community members, prescribers, and those recovering from an opioid overdose, “five essential steps for first responders” and safety advice for patients and family members.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse advises in regard to pain killers that “(T)aken as prescribed, opioids can be used to manage pain safely and effectively. However, when abused, even a single large dose can cause severe respiratory depression and death.”

Numerous area forums have suggested that unmanaged prescription drugs, often taken from medicine cabinets, have become the new drug of choice for youth and adults and often leads to heroin use because of the lesser cost of heroin.

Further information on the Toolkit is available at <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Opioid-Overdose-Prevention-Toolkit/SMA13-4742>.

Preventing Child Medicine Emergency Room Visits

Information in regard to helping prevent the more than 60,000 young children ending up in emergency rooms annually due to getting into medicines while their caregivers aren't looking is available from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Information about protecting young children, including the *Up and Away* campaign, is available at www.cdc.gov/Features/MedicationStorage.

In addition, kids and even adults are raiding home medicine cabinets, getting hooked on prescription drugs which often become a gateway to heroin due to its lower cost.

Information about prescription drug abuse and prevention is available from the federal Food and Drug Administration at

www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm272905.htm

Unused Prescription Drug Drop Boxes

No-questions-asked drop boxes have been installed at dozens of area law enforcement agencies for year around collection of unused prescription drugs.

The initiative is designed to help keep unauthorized prescription drugs out of the hands of children and adults and out of public water supplies.

Prescription drugs are being described as the gateway to heroin and other illegal drugs, with youth and adults of all ages taking pills from unlocked medicine cabinets and ingesting them indiscriminately. When prescription drugs no longer are available, users turn to heroin because it currently is cheaper than prescription drugs, officials report. Law enforcement says the problem is particularly acute in white, middle and upper-income families.

Traces of drugs also are turning up in municipal water supplies according to the federal Environmental Protection Agency, presumably due to persons disposing of them in sinks and toilets.

The Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Services provides an online list for local collection locations throughout the state at www.ddap.pa.gov/Prevention/Pages/Drug_Take_Back.aspx#.VzjYPuQaL-s.

Food

Chester County Farm Products Guide

Chester Country Agricultural Development Council publishes *A Guide to Local Farm Products in Chester County* that includes a list of farm markets and other sites for purchase of local products, information sections on apples and mushrooms, agriculture-based science education, and feeding neighbors in need, some recipes and more.

The guide replaces the former county *Buy Fresh Buy Local* publication of listings, although participating sellers in the local products initiative may still display the logotype. The publication is available at

www.chesco.org/index.aspx?NID=1124.

Consumer Publications and Food Saving Tips on Healthy Eating

The federal government provides publications and information, including recipes and budget shopping tips, to assist with healthy eating.

- Recipe publications are available at <http://publications.usa.gov/USAPubs.php?NavCode=XB&Sub2ID=46&CatID=6>.

- Diet and physical activity tracking, differences in food groups, and nutrition tips are available at www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.
- Healthy recipes with fruits and vegetables, developed by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are available at www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating/recipes.html.
- Tips for stretching a fruits and vegetable budget also is available at www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/downloads/Stretch_FV_Budget.pdf.

Food and Meal Programs

The Chester County Food Bank has published brochures that highlight food and meal programs available in the county.

Chester County Food Cupboards and Discount Food Purchase Programs provides more than three dozen locations and *Hot Meal Programs in Chester County* details nearly 20 sites.

Downloadable copies for display and distribution of the Food Cupboard brochure is available at www.chestercountyfoodbank.org/find-a-food-cupboard.

Food and Other Assistance for Companion Pet Owners.

Animal House Project, known as the Chester County Pet Food Pantry, distributes donated pet food, pet care items, and veterinary vouchers for spaying/neutering and vaccines, when available, to families in crisis or within 200% of federal poverty guidelines.

Further information and applications are available at www.animalhouseproject.org, info@animalhouseproject.org or (484) 558-0467.

FDA Tips for Kids Lunchboxes. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) provides a tip sheet for a healthy and stress-free lunchbox for kids at www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm411663.htm?source=govdelivery&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery.

Venison Program Benefits Food Banks

Chester County Food Bank has partnered with Hunters Share the Harvest to distribute venison to the 90 food cupboards, meal sites and social services organization that it serves.

Under the program, hunters donate deer that is processed without charge by area butchers and then given to the food bank.

Further information is available at www.sharedeer.org, info@sharedeer.org or (717) 545-1188.

Pet Health

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) publishes a two-page tip sheet on foods, drugs, and other issues involving pet health at www.fda.gov/downloads/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/UCM427140.pdf.

Housing Services

HUD Housing Locator Mobile App. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has a Resource Locator mobile app and website to expand and enhance traditional services by providing real-time HUD housing information, connection with building managers, public housing authority representatives, and property management companies to inquire about housing availability, and other housing-related questions.

Further information is available at http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/press/press_releases_media_advisories/2015/HUDNo_15-106.

Free Homeowner Assistance for Mortgage Relief.

Federal Departments of the Treasury and Housing and Urban Development have created a website to assist struggling homeowners obtain mortgage relief through a variety of programs that aid in mortgage modifications, interest rate reductions, refinancing, deferred payment or transitioning out of an existing home while avoiding foreclosure.

The Making Home Affordable site, which provides a variety of assists, is available at www.makinghomeaffordable.gov.

Homeless Data. Chester County Department of Community Development (DCD) conducts an annual January Point-in-Time count of homeless in the county which is available at www.decadetodoorways.com.

Homeless Emergency Housing Assistance. Open Hearth and Gateway Housing Group of Spring City enlists local services providers interested in quick turnaround housing assistance subsidies for homeless persons engaging in drug and alcohol or mental health treatment. The program, previously available in the Greater Phoenixville area, has been extended to all of Chester County.

Two levels of housing subsidies are offered, including short-term emergency rent assistance for hotels, motels, boarding houses or transitional living

programs, and zero interest/zero payment security deposit loans.

Agencies must be a collaborative associate before funds can be provided, with no direct requests being processed from consumers. Further information is available from Open Hearth at (610) 792-9282 x201.

ConnectPoints. A Homeless Coordinated Assessment System that provides a single point of contact for issues involving the homeless or those at risk of becoming homeless is being provided by Family Service of Chester County under a 18-month contract to make it easier for individuals and families in or approaching a homeless state to obtain mitigation services. Vacancies at county shelters receiving county funding also will be coordinated, although an overall purpose is to transition the homeless to permanent housing as soon as possible.

Information and homeless mitigation services are available on a 24/7/365 basis at www.connectpoints.org or (800) 935-3181. Information on Decade to Doorways and the homelessness situation in Chester County is available at www.decadetodoorways.com.

Low-Interest Homeowner Repair Program.

Genesis Housing Corporation has started a low-interest loan program to assist Pottstown residents with general home repairs.

The initiative, which provides a three percent loan of up to \$5,000, with up to a five-year repayment schedule, is available for owner-occupied properties, with no income-eligibility or home equity requirements.

Further information is available at www.geneshousing.org/pdfs/home_improvement_loan_press_release.pdf, info@geneshousing.org or (610) 275-4357.

Shared Housing Program for Women.

Low income women are matched in a shared housing environment that provides affordable housing for women and extra income for persons who would like to share their homes for financial, security or safe companionship purposes.

Application process includes references, a criminal background check, and a child abuse clearance, if applicable. There is no time limit for the program, with further information available at www.homeofthesparrow.org/services, info@homeofthesparrow.org or (610) 647-4940.

Housing Counseling Classes. Genesis Housing Corporation is providing housing counseling classes to assist prospective homeowners in acquiring their own homes, including affordable units the organization has renovated.

Classes on *Understanding Credit, Money Management and Home Buying Basics* are offered monthly in Norristown and periodically in Pottstown, with further information available at <http://geneshousing.org/counseling>, info@geneshousing.org or (610) 275-4357.

Housing Locator Service for Searchers and Providers.

The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) provides an online housing search tool and a telephone call center to aid persons in finding apartments best suited to particular housing needs. A small number of homes associated with affordable housing initiatives and foreclosure prevention programs also will be available using the locator service.

Over 62,000 housing units, representing nearly 600 landlords, have been listed at the site to date, with 1,200 units vacant and available. Additional listings are added daily.

Most of the listings on the site are for available apartments, with a small number of for-sale homes being included. Homes available for purchase are limited to those that are a part of an affordable housing initiative, a foreclosure prevention program, or other specific community development or stabilization efforts. General for-sale housing is not available on this website.

The locator is available at www.PAHousingSearch.com, with the telephone call center also being available from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays at (877) 438-8844 for those without Internet service.

Home Weatherization Programs

Weatherization programs for Chester and Lancaster counties have transferred from the Housing Development Corporation MidAtlantic in Lancaster to the Community Action Agency of Delaware County.

Income-eligible home owners and renters can obtain free home energy audits, attic insulation, heater service repairs and replacement, weather stripping and caulking, window and door repair and replacement, and more.

Further information is available at www.caadc.org/index.php?/services/energy/v1/weatherization_home_improvement or (610) 521-8770.

Consumer Electric and Natural Gas Shopping Guide.

Pennsylvania Office of Consumer Advocate is providing comparative information for consumers to aid in determining the best electric supplier to meet their needs as a result of PECO Energy electric rate caps expiring December 31 that will result in energy cost increases. Shopping guides for both electric and natural gas are available at www.oca.state.pa.us.

Finances

Credit Reports

Consumers can obtain a free copy of his or her credit reports annually from Equifax, TransUnion and Experian, the three primary national credit reporting organizations. Incorrect information can impact one's ability to obtain credit, employment and more.

A quick Federal Trade Commission video that explains the service and provides the website and contact telephone number is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXgMLpc7ivE&list=PLrcvzEeHM66sw9_kqYzxIDy_MJ3IprUbl&index=13.

Finances Materials

The Federal Reserve publishes a variety of educational resources for individual and school classroom use on the economy and finances. These are available at www.federalreserveeducation.org.

Unclaimed Property

Pennsylvania Treasury reports over \$1.9 billion in unclaimed property, belonging to an estimated one out of 10 state residents, is available for recovery, without cost. Only some \$100 million is claimed each year.

Unclaimed property is any financial asset that has been left with a holder such as a bank, insurance company or other business or organization, without activity or contact for a period of about five years.

Individuals who have moved may have unclaimed property in other states in which they have resided. Statutes vary as to how long unclaimed funds are maintained.

Authorities warn that some organizations attempt to solicit individuals for help in making unclaimed property claims although the information and recovery is available through state authorities at no cost.

Further information on recovery of Pennsylvania unclaimed property is available at www.patresury.gov/Unclaimed/Search.html. In other states, an Internet search can be made for unclaimed property or unclaimed funds repositories.

FTC Resource to Help Recover From Identity Theft

Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has developed a new website to help consumers identify steps and follow a process to recover from identity theft.

Identity theft has been the top consumer complaint reported to the FTC for the past 15 years, it says, with the Commission receiving more than 330,000 complaints in 2014 from consumers who were identity theft victims.

The online guide and checklist are available at www.identitytheft.gov, with a Spanish version at www.robodeidentidad.gov.

IRS Dirty Dozen Tax Scams List

The Internal Revenue Service has issued its annual ranking of tax scams, reminding taxpayers to use caution during the filing season to protect themselves against a wide range of schemes ranging from identity theft to return preparer fraud.

Although resident scams, including senior citizen targets, occur throughout the year many schemes peak during filing season as people prepare their tax returns, according to the IRS.

The *Dirty Dozen* list is available at www.irs.gov/uac/Newsroom/IRS-Wraps-Up-the-Dirty-Dozen-List-of-Tax-Scams-for-2016.

Parenting

Parent Assistance Internet Portal

Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has created a Parent Portal to provide easy access to health care information for families at various stages of life.

The web site is designed to be a consolidated CDC source for information to help parents raise healthy kids and provide a safe home and community. It also serves as a resource for information about diseases and conditions, as well as information on developmental milestones and schedules. The web site is at www.cdc.gov/parents.

Pennsylvania Mobile Child Support

Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) provides a mobile version of its Pennsylvania Child Support website to simplify screen navigation and case details for people accessing child support program information with a smartphone or tablet.

The website provides access to child support program information and case details, including the status of their cases, making payments, viewing upcoming appointments, requesting materials, calculating estimated child support payments, and locating local domestic relations sections.

More than 18,000 people visit the child support website daily, according to the department, with 67 percent using mobile devices as their primary means of accessing online content.

Further information is available at www.childsupport.state.pa.us.

iPhone Child ID App

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has created a Child ID application for iPhones that enables parents to store pictures and physical identifiers about their children to make them readily available to police or security officers in event a child becomes missing.

The application, currently available only for iPhones, will be expanded to other mobile devices in the future, along with additional features being created, including the ability to upload other photos stored on mobile devices. The application is available for free download from the iTunes App Store.

Further information about the initiative is available at www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2011/august/child_080511.

Free Early Learning Opportunities Resources

Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten (PEAK) Strong Kids in Pottstown (SKIP) Network, has published a resources brochure of *Pottstown Early Learning Opportunities*, available online at www.peakonline.org/pdf/Peak_Trifold_10-%204-12.pdf.

Children-Family Reading Programs at Area Libraries

Many area public libraries provide reading programs for children of all ages, including adults and families.

Further information and schedules are available through various library websites and calendars at:

- Berks County: www.berks.lib.pa.us
- Chester County: www.ccls.org
- Delaware County: www.delcolibraries.org
- Lancaster County: www.lancasterlibraries.org
- Montgomery County: www.mclinc.org

Autism Access at Philadelphia Airport

Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) is collaborating with the Autism Inclusion Resources and other autism specialists, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Transportation Security Administration (TSA), The Gray Center, and

participating airlines in an Airport Autism Access Program that provides opportunities for children with autism and their families to become familiar with traveling through PHL.

Further information is available at www.phl.org/passengerinfo/Accessibility/Pages/AirportAutism.aspx or accessibility@phl.org.

Classes in English and Spanish.

Chester County Women's Services at 17 South Street, West Chester, and 1028 East Lincoln Highway, Coatesville, offer ongoing parenting classes in English and Spanish that provide parent coaching and interactive discussions designed to help break past struggles and move forward, building better relationships with children. Participants also earn free diapers, wipes, baby shampoo and clothing by participating in the classes.

Further information and appointments are available at (610) 918-7088 for the West Chester office and (610) 383-0930 for the Coatesville office.

Free Youth Alcohol Screening Guide

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, in collaboration with the American Academy of Pediatrics, has developed an *Alcohol Screening and Brief Intervention for Youth: A Practitioner's Guide* for health and mental health care professionals, educators, juvenile justice personnel and others who manage the well-being of children and adolescents.

Further information, along with a downloadable version in full or pocket form and a hard copy ordering form is available at www.niaaa.nih.gov/PUBLICATIONS/EDUCATION/TRAININGMATERIALS/Pages/YouthGuide.aspx.

Top New Baby Names. Noah, Liam and Mason are the top boy names for 2015, says the federal Social Security Administration, with Emma, Olivia and Sophia being the most popular for girls.

In Pennsylvania, the rankings are a bit different. A complete list of the top 10 names nationwide, by state, the top five in each of the last 100 years, and more are available at www.ssa.gov/oact/babynames.

Parenting and Children's Programming. Holcomb Behavioral Health System, through state and county funding, is offering several programs to schools and community organizations to help increase family cohesiveness, communication between parents and their children, and parenting skills to aid in overall family health and wellness. Several are available for Spanish-speaking children and families.

Parenting Wisely – Two, two-session programs are available for parents of children three to eight years of age and parents 10 to 18 years of age that teach effective parenting methods with multiple solutions to common problem behaviors.

Children in the Middle (CIM) – A skill-based program aids middle school youth and their parents minimize a child's negative reactions to divorce. CIM focuses on reducing parental conflict, loyalty pressures, and communication problems that place significant stress on children.

Active Parenting of Teens (English) and **Paternidad Activa de Adolescentes (Spanish)** - This program helps provide parents with confidence and courage to meet challenges of their children's teen years. Topics include technology and social networking, teen bullying, improved communication and discipline, and teen brain development.

Padres Activos de Hoy (Spanish) – An interactive video-discussion program helps Spanish-speaking parents learn to encourage cooperation, courage, and responsibility in their five to 12-year-old children.

Beginning Awareness Basic Education Studies (BABES) - This seven-lesson program on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs uses interactive dialogue among hand-puppets. It is used in elementary schools and after-school/community programs for kindergarten through second grade youngsters.

Say It Straight (SIS) - This interactive, energetic 10-session evidence-based program for elementary, middle, and high school students focuses on empowering communication skills and behaviors.

Project ALERT - A nationally recognized seven-lesson substance abuse program gives middle school students insight, understanding, and actual skills for resisting substance abuse.

Children's Program - This four-session program is designed for middle and high school students who have been identified as having substance abuse issues in their families. Educational and reflective activities help children cope with the stresses of family problems and strengthen their potential for resilience.

Safe Dates - A six-session interactive, evidence-based program for middle and high school students is designed to stop or prevent initiation of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse between individuals in a dating relationship. Teens learn to recognize the differences between caring, supportive relationships and those that are controlling, manipulative or abusive.

These prevention and education programs are designed specifically to meet needs of youth from diverse backgrounds and unique family situations. Sessions may be implemented in schools or after-

school programs, with youth/community groups, or in other community settings.

Further information about the programs is available at (484)444-0412.

Stop Bullying Prevention Information.

The federal Department of Health and Human Services has re-launched a web site providing information and assistance to encourage children, parents, educators, and communities to take steps to prevent and respond to bullying.

It is available at www.stopbullying.gov.

Bully Prevention App and Other Resources for Parents

A free bullying prevention phone app for parents now is available from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

KnowBullying is a tool designed to help encourage conversations between parents and children that can assist in identifying situations of bullying.

Further information and links to downloads are available at

www.store.samhsa.gov/apps/knowbullying/index.html.

A four-page *Stop Bullying Before It Starts* publication and a *Parent's Guide to Internet Safety* also are available at

<http://publications.usa.gov/USAPubs.php?PubID=2238>.

Teen Driver License Plates. Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) is making available a Teen Driver license plate, described as an optional tool for parents and guardians with teen drivers.

The plate design reflects the "Family of Plates" color scheme of blue, white and yellow. Pennsylvania is printed at the top and the words "VisitPA.com" is printed on the bottom. The logo on the left side of the registration plate depicts an inverted triangle in red, with the words "Teen Driver" appearing in yellow letters in the triangle. The phrase "Please Be Courteous" is featured in blue letters on the sides of the triangle.

Further information is available at www.dmv.pa.gov/VEHICLE-SERVICES/Registration%20Plates/Specialty-Plates/Pages/default.aspx#_Vzmy8-QaL-s, with a plate cost of \$20.

Education

Free Library Services. Public libraries offer a host of seminars, workshops, computer classes, computer use, databases, reading programs for children from birth up, language learning, online book, and both traditional library and other services, either online or at individual libraries throughout the area.

Information about services and programs at individual libraries and through county consortiums, including rules for obtaining library cards required for some services, are accessible directly or through links at:

- Berks County Public Libraries: www.berks.lib.pa.us
- Chester County Library System: www.ccls.org
- Delaware County Library System: www.delcolibraries.org
- Library System of Lancaster County: www.lancasterlibraries.org
- Montgomery County Library & Information Network Consortium: www.mclinc.org

Ask Here PA, a project of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Commonwealth Libraries, Bureau of Library Development, also maintains for Pennsylvania residents a 24/7 reference service chat line with live librarians, available at www.askherepa.org.

Digital Discovery Center, Henrietta Hankin Branch Library, 215 Windgate Drive, Chester Springs (Ludwigs Corner), has a Digital Discovery Center to allow consumers to try out digital devices or receive instruction about their uses.

The Center includes a 23-inch Windows 8 computer with large type keyboard and ergonomic mouse, Microsoft Surface tablet, iPad Air, Samsung Galaxy Note tablet, Kindle Fire HDX and a Nook Simple Touch eReader.

Patrons can try out the devices during weekly drop-in hours or sign up for one-on-one appointments with a staff member during which one can use his or her own device or practice with a library unit.

Further information and individual appointments are available at www.chescolibraries.org/using-library/digital-discovery-center, hhreference@ccls.org or (610) 321-1710.

The library and its parent Chester County Library also have launched a new website at www.chescolibraries.org.

Online Continuing Education Courses. Pottstown Regional Public Library is offering over 500 online

continuing education courses for the price of a free library card.

A wide variety of offerings for professionals and others, including job-seekers, business owners and housewives, including topics such as business, office skills, web development, arts and photography, alternative medicine, crafts, pet and animal care, home and garden, teacher tools, writing help, self-help, and homeschooling, according to reports.

Further information is available at <http://pottstownpa.universaclass.com> or (610) 970-6551.

Libraries Offer Museum Passes. Chester County Library and its Henrietta Hankin Branch are making passes available to patrons for admission at six different museums and historical sites in a three-county area.

The initiative, funded by library Friends groups, will provide access to the Chester County Historical Society and American Helicopter museums in West Chester, Elmwood Park Zoo in Norristown, National Iron and Steel Museum in Coatesville, and the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University and Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia.

Customers with valid library cards in good standing can borrow museum passes for one day, with no renewals. Passes, with availability varying for each library, must be borrowed and returned, at the same facility.

Further information is available at the Chester County Library at 450 Exton Square Parkway, Exton, and the Hankin library at 215 Windgate Drive, Chester Springs (Ludwigs Corner) or at (610) 280-2620.

Visual Assistance Library Equipment. Chester County Library, 450 Exton Square Parkway, Exton, has a 12-power magnifier with various features to help use printed materials, an iPad Air to help individuals read online books, and noise-cancelling headphones to enable access to audio materials without interruption from outside sounds or providing distraction to other library patrons. Library patrons may request equipment and training from a library staff member.

Four other libraries also have been provided with similar equipment, including the Warminster, Ridley, and Horsham township libraries and the Free Library of Northampton Township in Richboro.

Additional information on the Access Beyond Stacks program, administered through the Institute on Disabilities at Temple University, is available at www.disabilities.temple.edu/programs/assistive/acces

sLib_iod@temple.edu, or by telephone at (215) 204-1356 voice or (215) 204-1805 TTY.

Scholarship Information. Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA), which lends money to students to help finance higher education costs, also provides online information for scholarships and grants to help students and parents avoid heavy debt.

The FastWeb national scholarship search engine, along with information on careers, higher education institutions and more, for students, parents and counselors, is available at www.EducationPlanner.org.

School Performance Profiles. The Pennsylvania Department of Education provides online access to performance rating for every public and charter school in the state.

Ratings and other information about individual schools are available at www.paschoolperformance.org.

System of Care Trainings. A series of seven trainings to acquaint individuals and organizations with best practices associated with developing a System of Care to aid individuals and families in need are provided at the Government Services Center, 601 Westtown Road, West Chester.

System of Care, a philosophy versus a program of how care should be delivered, includes development of a coordinated network of community-based organizations and natural supports that are organized and tailored to meet the unique needs of individuals, youth and families. Care recipients work in partnership with public and private organizations so services and supports are effective and build on recipient strengths, thereby helping them to function better at home, in school, in the community and throughout life.

Trainings are available for facilitators, planning, dynamics, natural supports, trouble-shooting, followup meetings and supervisors.

Further information about System of Care is available at www.chesco.org/DocumentCenter/View/4276 or from Tracy Johnson, Chester County System of Care coordinator at tjohnson@chesco.org.

Online Reading Program for Children. Chester County Library System libraries have access at local facilities or at home with a library card to *BookFlix*, an online e-reading program from Scholastic that pairs classic fictional storybooks with similarly

themed nonfiction e-books to make reading more engaging for children ages three to eight.

The program, designed to build early reading and comprehension skills, is made available through , made available through POWER Library, Pennsylvania's online resource,s and features 105 multi-media fiction-nonfiction pairs, of which more than 30 are available in Spanish.

Further information is available at www.powerlibrary.net/Secure/Promo/Resources.pdf.

Free Online Courses, Textbooks, Language Lessons and Movies. Two websites provide reference catalogs for over 500 courses from U.S. colleges and universities, along with links to textbooks, language learning lessons, movies and more.

Links are available at www.openculture.com/freeonlinecourses and www.coursera.org.

Free Education Data and Resources for All Ages.

The federal government has created a new central website for education data resources including high-value data sets, data visualization tools, resources for the classroom, applications created from open data and more. Datasets have been gathered from various agencies to provide detailed information on the state of education at all levels from cradle to career and beyond.

Information is available at www.data.gov/education.

Online Student Aid Guide. An online basic Student Aid Guide, including deadlines for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is available at www.studentaid.ed.gov, with federal and state deadlines under various circumstances available at <https://fafsa.ed.gov>. Assistance from the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) in filling out the application and other information is available at www.pheaa.org.

Selective Service Registration for Student College Aid Recipients. The federal government reminds that most men between the ages of 18 and 25 must register with Selective Service to be eligible for federal student aid and grants, including college work study.

One who fails to register, if prosecuted and convicted, can face a fine of up to \$250,000 and/or a prison term of up to five years. Late registrations are accepted up to age 26, although men not registering within the 60-day window technically are in violation of the law and should register as soon as possible.

One registering will not be inducted automatically into the military. In event of a crisis that requires a draft, men would be called in a sequence determined by random lottery number and year of birth and then examined before being exempted or inducted into military service.

Further information about requirements is available at www.sss.gov/default.htm.

NOOK Loan Programs. Patrons at 18 Chester County Library System sites now can check out an e-reader NOOK, preloaded with popular eBooks titles, for three weeks.

Each local library has seven different genre based NOOKs, with patrons being able to choose from mystery, romance, science fiction, thrillers, non-fiction or biography titles. One also may search the library catalog for titles available on each themed NOOK.

Each member library also received, as part of \$30,000 Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Innovative Projects Grant from the Office of Commonwealth Libraries, a Nook Simple Touch, Kindle and Sony e-reader for a “petting zoo” to enable one to become familiar with the devices.

State Web Site for Transitioning Youth

The Bureau of Special Education of the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) provide an online *Pennsylvania Secondary Transition Guide* for youth transitioning to adult life, particularly those with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and their families.

The website includes age-based information on post-secondary education and training and employment and community living, along with links to other Pennsylvania agencies and departments that support secondary transition.

The website is at www.secondarytransition.org.

Free Childcare Openings for Moms Continuing Education

Mom’s House of Greater Philadelphia, 145 South Main Street, Phoenixville, has childcare openings in infant/toddler and preschool for single, income-eligible parents who are continuing their education in high school, GED programs, or college or technical school. Care is available between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. with participants having to be enrolled in school full-time and receiving passing grades, provide three hours of service weekly to Mom’s House, and attend monthly parenting meetings.

Further information is available at www.momshouse-phoenixville.org or (610) 935-7711.

Parent-Child Home Visiting Program. Friendship House in Pottstown provides a Parent-Child Home Visiting Program with twice-weekly visits to at-risk families in the greater Pottstown area to enhance early literacy and school readiness skills in children. New books and toys are provided as part of the activity.

Families with a child between 16 months and 35 months by September 1, and potential home visitors may obtain further information from Stacy Dori at (610) 327-2200 or sdori@friendshiphousepa.org.

Online Latino Student Opportunities Directory

Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) has published its 6th *National Directory of Scholarships, Internships, and Fellowships for Latino Students* to provide a comprehensive list of opportunities for students and young professionals.

The online guide, including information on various aspects of applying for opportunities and financial aid, is available at www.chci.org/education/the-national-directory-of-scholarships-internships-and-fellowships-is-now-online.

Homeless School Student Toolkit

The Education Law Center of Pittsburgh, in partnership with the Homeless Children’s Education Fund, has published a *School Success for Students Without Homes: A Toolkit for Parents and Providers* to assist children who are homeless.

The Toolkit offers a variety of resources to identify a student’s educational needs, address needs of unaccompanied youth, help ensure immediate enrollment in school and school stability, and provide a dispute resolution process guide for parents, along with specific sections on accessing pre-school, special education, and Title I services.

The online guide is available at www.elc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/School-Success-for-Students-Without-Homes-Toolkit-ELC-HCEF-Published-2011.pdf.

Families Advocacy Support Related to School Exclusionary Discipline Practices.

The Arc of Chester County, a nonprofit advocate for rights of individuals with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities, monitors the use of inappropriate exclusionary disciplinary practices, such as suspensions and expulsions, for school children of all ages and can serve in an ad-

vocacy capacity. Further information is available at (610) 696-8090.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, recently developed a training publication, *Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion*, that indicates use of school suspensions and expulsions are inequitably applied in some schools and may lead to lower academic achievement and greater delinquency. The report on alternatives is available at

www.pattan.net/category/Resources/PaTTAN/Publications/Browse/Single/?id=4dd3ed26150ba04c55100000, with information on *School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Systems* available at www.pattan.net/category/Educational%20Initiatives/Behavior/page/what_is_school_wide_positive_behavior_interventions_and_supports.html.

Low-Cost Computers for Families.

TeamChildren, a non-profit organization, provides low-cost refurbished computers to families, school and organizations.

Located at 960 Rittenhouse Road, Audubon, the organization also requires two hours of volunteering on the day the computer is picked up.

Further information and application forms are available at www.teamchildren.com or at (610) 666-1795.

Discounted Internet Service and Computers for Low-Income Families.

Comcast, under a Federal Communications Commission order resulting from the merger of Comcast and NBC, is offering an Internet Essentials program that provides low-income families with an economy Internet service and a low-cost computer.

The program is available to families in Comcast service areas that have at least one child receiving free school lunches, have not subscribed to Comcast Internet service within the past 90 days and do not have an overdue Comcast bill or unreturned equipment. The service costs \$9.95 per month, plus tax, without activation or equipment rental fees, with participants also being able to access online, in print, and in-person digital literacy training. A netbook style computer that supports both wired and Wi-Fi access also will be available for purchase at \$149.99 plus tax. Signups will be available for at least three school years but the rate will continue after that for anyone who already is enrolled in the program and continues to qualify

Further information on the service is available at www.internetessentials.com, with application forms available at (855) 846-8376.

Free Telecommunications Equipment for Persons with Disabilities

The Institute on Disabilities at Temple University, with support from the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and the Public Utility Commission, operates the Telecommunication Device Distribution Program (TDDP) that provides free equipment to help persons with disabilities make phone calls.

Individuals with disabilities include the deaf, hard of hearing, speech impaired, blind, and those with visual problems or physical or intellectual disabilities. Income-eligible persons with a Teletypewriter (TTY) or other equipment needed for telephone service, including broken equipment, can obtain equipment if they are six years of age or older, live in Pennsylvania, have a phone line in their home and are unable to use a regular telephone.

Further information and application forms are available at www.disabilities.temple.edu/programs/assistive/tddp/equipment.shtml, (800) 204-7428, (866) 268-0579 TTY, or TDDP@temple.edu.

Free Language Learning Program.

Chester County Library System has an online learning program for patrons that teaches conversation and cultural awareness for 35 of the world's most popular languages, including Spanish, French, Japanese, Brazilian, Portuguese, German, Mandarin Chinese, Greek, Italian and Russian. Mango Languages also includes English as a Second Language (ESL) for some of the more commonly spoken languages, along with a translation tool.

Library card holders can access the service at www.ccls.org.

Foundation Center.

The Chester County Library, 450 Exton Square Parkway, Exton, and Pottstown Regional Public Library, 500 East High Street, Pottstown, are area Cooperating Collections of the Foundation Center, providing free public access to the *Foundation Directory Online Professional*, *Foundation Grants to Individuals Online*, and *Philanthropy In/Sight*. A collection of print materials also is available on topics such as grant-seeking basics, proposal writing, how to approach a foundation, and non-profit fundraising.

Further information for Exton is available at http://ccls.org/cwo/Find_a_Resource/Databases/DB_ref@ccls.org or (610) 280-2600, or at Pottstown at <http://ppl.mclinc.org/nonprofit.html> or (610) 970-6551.

Public Events Videos

3CTV, a Chester County community online television enterprise, posts online videos of various Chester County public events.

Recent postings include the nearly three-hour 10th anniversary commemoration of 9/11 in the Lukens National Historic District, home of the returned steel trees from the Twin Towers that were originally manufactured in Coatesville, and the three-hour Coatesville Historic Commission's remembrance and reconciliation of the 100th anniversary of the murder of Edgar Rice and the lynching of Zachariah Walker. Video is available at www.3ctvlive.com.

Veterans

Streamlined VA Benefits Process. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is using standardized forms for filing disability claims and compensation appeals.

Further information is available at www.explore.va.gov/file-claim?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_campaign=claimsandappeals&utm_content=18marcHB.

Additional information on Veterans Affairs is available at www.va.gov.

State Veterans Benefits Portal. Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) has established an online application that allows veterans to obtain information about state benefits, programs and services.

Registrant information will be shared with County Directors for Veterans Affairs and other Commonwealth of Pennsylvania agencies to help facilitate local connections.

Officials say the PA Veterans Registry is the department's first step of a long-term strategy to achieve a higher level of communication with veterans and partner providers supporting them.

Further information and registration is available at www.register.dmva.pa.gov.

Local Veterans Resources Guide. Coatesville Veterans Affairs Medical Center publishes a 230-page online resource guide for a wide range of federal, state and local services available to veterans and families, many of them also available to the general public in need.

The document is available at www.coatesville.va.gov/visitors/veterans-resource-guide.asp.

Homeless Veterans Assistance Center. The Veterans Multi-Service Center (VMC) and Catholic Social

Services hosts a Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) at the St. Cecilia School building at 605 East Lincoln Highway, Coatesville from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays.

The facility is designed to assist homeless veterans and their families, and those at risk of becoming homeless, with developing a personal/family plan for permanent housing, obtaining Veterans Administration (VA) and other public and agency benefits and services, and providing follow-up and general case management.

Further information is available from Maura (Mo) Gillen, program coordinator at mo.gillen@pvmsec.org or (610) 384-8387 (VETS).

Veterans Temporary Assistance. Up to three months of emergency assistance to veterans and their beneficiaries is available under the Pennsylvania Temporary Assistance program. Recipients must have suffered a sudden and unexpected loss of income or other source of support such that results in a direct and immediate demonstrable financial need for assistance in order to provide themselves and their families with food, shelter, clothing, required medical care and other necessities of life.

Further information about the program, accessed through application to county veterans affairs officers, is available at www.dmva.pa.gov/veteransaffairs/Pages/Programs%20and%20Services/Veterans-Temporary-Assistance.aspx#.Vzm6SOQaL-s.

Veterans and Families Medical Benefits. Veterans Administration, including the VA Medical Center in Coatesville provides outreach to veterans, spouses and family members to acquaint them with eligibility for veterans medical benefits. Thousands of potentially eligible veterans are unaware services are available.

Veterans can contact an eligibility and enrollment specialist for a personal appointment at (610) 384-7711 x5008 or can attend regular eligibility workshops.

Veteran Service Office partners also will schedule individual appointments at (610) 384-7711 x4239 with veterans already enrolled for VA healthcare to help them file claims with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), such claims often being related to education, compensation and pension, and home loans.

Veterans are encouraged to complete an application to determine eligibility, with further information and an application form, available at www.coatesville.va.gov/patients/eligibility.asp.

Veterans Adult Day Health Care Services.

Coatesville Veteran Affairs (VA) Medical Center maintains an adult day health care program at the American Legion Post 602 in Spring City, the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 845 in Downingtown, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 106 in West Chester.

Elderly or disabled veterans participate in the social and supportive program which takes place one day a week at each location. A typical day consists of some combination of coffee, social time, music, therapeutic exercise, current event discussion, trivia, art and other leisure activities.

Activities are designed to help veterans stay in their homes and engaged in life, and also provides caregiver respite.

Veterans must be enrolled and eligible for VA health care to participate, with further information available at www.coatesville.va.gov/services/Mobile_Adult_Day_Health_Care.asp.

Veteran Birth and Death Certificates

Active military personnel, veterans, and eligible family members can order veteran birth and death certificates online, without paying a \$20 certificate fee, although a \$10 processing charge will continue to apply.

Pennsylvania Department of Health says the new state process allows Pennsylvania-born military personnel stationed throughout the country and world to order and receive the same processing time as those who are stateside, with online and telephone ordering said to be an average of three weeks faster than mail orders.

Further information on the state system is available at www.media.pa.gov/Pages/Health-Details.aspx?newsid=259.

Persian Gulf Veterans Benefit

Pennsylvania veterans who served in the Persian Gulf War from August 2, 1990, to August 31, 1991, have received a three year deadline reprieve for filing for a financial benefit for such service.

Gov. Tom Wolf has signed legislation retroactively extending the application deadline from August 31 to August 31, 2018.

A one-time benefit of \$75 per month, up to \$525, for each month of active service in the Persian Gulf Conflict Theater of Operations during the covered period, with an additional one-time benefit of \$5,000 if the service member was declared a prisoner of war at any time during that period previously had been in effect. It also is available to eligible beneficiaries.

Over 10,000 claims, totaling more than \$3.5 million, had been approved at the end of last year, with many eligible veterans not aware of the benefit.

Further information is available at www.dmva.pa.gov/veteransaffairs/Pages/Programs%20and%20Services/Persian-Gulf-Bonus-Program.aspx#.VjSlvyu9ASl%20or%20866-458-9182.

Military & Family Support Initiative. Phoenixville Community Health Foundation provides an online information website to assist members of the military, veterans and their families in obtaining services they may need, including health, education, housing and employment opportunities, along with various benefit application forms.

Information is available at www.militaryfamilyinfo.org.

Veterans Health Care Professionals Training.

Health care professionals are able to use a free online course developed by the federal Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Defense (DoD) to help serve veterans and service members.

The eight-hour *Military Culture: Core Competencies for Health Care Professionals* training covers a variety of topics through interactive features, video vignettes, case examples and treatment planning scenarios.

Each of the four modules within the course was developed using research, surveys and extensive interviews with service members and veterans.

Information and registration for the training, along with other military culture-related materials, are available at www.deploymentpsych.org/Military-Culture.

Veterans Discount Cards. Chester and Montgomery counties Recorder of Deeds are offering a veterans identification card that can be used for discounts at county businesses.

Over 100 businesses in Montgomery and over 40 business in Chester have agreed to take part.

Further information about the Montgomery County program is available at www.montcopa.org/478/Veterans-Photo-ID-Discount-Card or (610) 278-3294.

Further information for Chenango County is available at www.chesco.org/1361/Veterans-ID-Program, veteransid@chesco.org or (610) 344-4344.

Veterans Transportation from Western Montgomery County to Coatesville VA Medical Center. Bucks County Veterans Affairs Department provides transportation from East Greenville and

Pottstown in Western Montgomery County to the Coatesville Veterans Administration Medical Center.

The van will pick up veterans and spouses on Wednesday through Friday mornings as it passes through those areas.

Further information about the service and required reservations is available at <http://mcva.montcopa.org/mcva/site/default.asp> or (610) 278-3287.

Veteran Designation on Driver License.

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) is issuing driver licenses and identification cards with a veteran designation applied directly to the document.

Qualified applicants for a Veterans Designation include those who have received a Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty/DD214 or equivalent for service in the United States Armed Forces, including a reserve component or the National Guard, who were discharged or released from such service under conditions other than dishonorable.

There is no fee for the designation, but qualified applicants must pay any initial issuance, renewal or duplicate driver's license or identification fees. Once the designation has been added, it automatically will appear each time the license is renewed.

Further information is available at www.dmv.pa.gov/Information-Centers/Military-Veterans/Pages/Veterans-Designation.aspx#.Vzm8McQaL-s.

Veterans Employment Website.

Federal Office of Personnel Management has unveiled a new main source website for veterans employment in the federal Civil Service and for hiring officials.

www.fedshirevets.gov, a collaboration of OPM, the Departments of Defense, Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security, and other Federal agencies, is designed to provide consistent and accurate information, useful training and other resources for veterans, transitioning service members, their families, federal human relations professionals and hiring managers.

Resources to Aid Employers Desiring to Hire Veterans.

U.S. Department of Labor has released a new online Toolkit of available hiring resources, including tax incentives, to assist and educate employers who wish to include veterans and transitioning service members into their recruitment and hiring initiatives.

The America's Heroes at work website is at www.americasheroesatwork.gov.

Database of Chester County African American Civil War Soldiers.

A database on more than 900 African American men from Chester County who served in the Civil War now is available online.

Cliff Parker, archivist in Chester County Archives and Records Services, identified and documented the servicemen as part of the Chester County Historical Society's exhibit *On the Edge of Battle: Chester County and the Civil War*.

Unlike their white counterparts, black soldiers did not muster into local companies, authorities note, with Chester County volunteers fighting with more than 30 different units, including those of the United State Colored Troops (USCT) and the Massachusetts 54th regiment, featured in the movie *Glory*.

The database is available at www.chesco.org/index.aspx?NID=2273.

Senior Citizens

Senior Services and Rights. *Benefits & Rights for Older Pennsylvanians* is available at www.aging.pa.gov/publications/benefits-and-rights/Documents/2016BenefitsRights.pdf.

SEPTA Providing Senior Transit Passes

Seniors are able to use state photo driver licenses or identification cards for free rides on Southeast Pennsylvania Public Transportation Authority (SEPTA) buses, trolleys and subways or \$1 for trains.

Magnetic-striped photo identification cards for non-drivers are being phased in.

Individuals requiring a SEPTA photo pass can receive them at the Authority's main office at 1234 Market Street in Philadelphia or obtain a card when a mobile van visits legislator offices or senior fairs.

Further information on the free and reduced ride program is available at www.septa.org/fares/discount/seniors-ride-free-info.html or (215) 580-7800, or (215) 580-7853 TDD/TTY for hearing or speech impaired.

Top Eldercare Focuses

A federal agency *Snapshot of Older Adult Issues & Needs in America* finds that transportation is highest on the list for immediate or future needs, followed close behind by home and community-based services.

The *2014 Eldercare Locator Data Report* from the Administration for Community Living found that 19% of elderly, caregivers and others contacting its national Eldercare Locator call center were seeking

answers to questions about transportation, followed by 18% for home and community-base services. Housing at 15%, medical services and supplies at 11% and health insurance at nine percent rounded out the top five.

Legal and tax assistance, elder abuse, long term care, caregiver resources and employment services were other areas of interest.

The report stresses, however, that even though individuals may contact the call center for one purpose, other interconnected needs often become apparent.

Examples given include someone inquiring about home-delivered meals also may be lacking transportation to the grocery store, or an individual exploring housing options actually needing to move because they are unable to afford home modifications that would allow them to stay in their home.

A copy of the report is available at www.n4a.org/files/EldercareLocatorDataReport.pdf. The Eldercare Locator is available at www.eldercare.gov or (800) 677-1116.

Online Retirement Toolkit. U.S. Department of Labor, in cooperation with the Social Security Administration and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, hosts an online toolkit to help workers identify key issues related to retirement planning and understand important decisions related to employment-based plans, Social Security and Medicare.

The toolkit includes a timeline illustrating key decisions to be made about retirement benefits, Social Security and Medicare; general guidance; and a list of publications and interactive tools to assist with planning and is available at www.dol.gov/ebsa/pdf/retirementtoolkit.pdf.

Choosing a Good Nursing Home Guide. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality provides information and guides on *Choosing a Good Nursing Home* and other long-term care at <http://healthcare411.hhrq.gov/radiocastseg.aspx?id=1244&type=seg>.

Older Adults Financial Security Toolkit. The National Council on Aging has released a guide to assist seniors with basic money management.

It's in the Cards, part of the Savy Saving Seniors® program, provides information on how to use, manage, and protect government-issued and prepaid debit cards. It joins *Becoming Resource-FULL with the Help of Benefits & Peace of Mind Savings* that covers budgeting tips, money

management applications and tricks, benefits of banking, budget busters to avoid, and how to find and apply for benefits, along with *Steps to Avoiding Scams*, an overview of popular scams targeting seniors, tips for avoiding them, and next steps for victims of financial fraud.

Further information and free downloads, with a charge of hard copies, are available at www.ncoa.org/enhance-economic-security/economic-security-Initiative/savvy-saving-seniors/#toolkit3.

Assisted Senior Programs

The Kennett and Downingtown area senior centers provide a non-medical, social-model program to enable seniors experiencing cognitive and/or physical decline an opportunity to engage in traditional senior center programming.

The Kennett Assisted Senior Program (ASP) and the Downingtown Circle of Care, are fee-for-service programs that provide more structure to Center activities for individuals experiencing reduced independence due to declines in physical or cognitive health and, over time, may transition to licensed adult day services.

Programming includes incentives to participate in activities the senior centers currently offer, creation of additional opportunities to improve skills necessary for activities of daily living (ADL), specialized activities that focus on individual strengths, and regular monitoring of an individual's improvement or decline.

Further information about the Kennett Square program, held at the Center at 427 South Walnut Street is available at www.kennettseniorcenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=20&Itemid=19, adiaz@kennettseniorcenter.org or (610) 444-4819, with information about the Downingtown program, known as Circles of Care, conducted at the Center at 983 East Lancaster Avenue, is available at <http://www.downingtownseniors.org/services/circle-of-care> or (610) 269-3939.

Older Driver Insurance Savings Trainings.

Several workshops for older drivers at least 55 years of age that provide at least five percent savings on car insurance for three years are available in the Chester County area.

AARP (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons) holds eight hour classes over two days in Downingtown, Phoenixville, Pottstown and other locations, along with a four-hour refresher that must be taken every three years. No tests are re-

quired. A schedule of the fee-based classes, given throughout the year, is available at (888) 227-7669 or www.aarp.org/applications/VMISLocator/searchDspLocations.action.

Links to other Pennsylvania-approved programs also are available at www.dmv.pa.gov/Driver-Services/Mature-Drivers/Pages/Mature-Driver-Improvement-Course.aspx#.Vzm_WuQaL-s.

Extra Help Prescription Program for Low-Income Medicare Recipients

Low-income Medicare recipients may be eligible for lower prescription co-pays and premiums, and coverage for the labeled Donut Hole gap in coverage under the Extra Help Program.

The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services estimates that over two million Medicare recipients may be eligible for but not receiving this benefit to enable purchase of generic drugs at no more than \$2.50 and brand names at no more than \$6.30. Savings of up to \$3,900 may be available. Further information and qualifications are available at www.ssa.gov/medicare/prescriptionhelp or at (800) 866-1807.

Persons who may have been turned down in the past due to income or resource levels are being encouraged to reapply.

Suicide Prevention Kit for Senior Living Communities

The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has published a new *Promoting Emotional Health and Preventing Suicide: A Toolkit for Senior Living Communities*, to aid in mitigating suicide among the highest susceptible population.

The kit includes guidelines for integrating suicide prevention into ongoing programs, hands-on tools and training manuals, activities and programs of benefit to the emotional well-being of residents, and procedures for appropriate responses to suicide deaths and attempts.

Older adults have the highest rate of suicide after the age of 65 and particularly among men, with the percentage of successful suicide attempts being much higher with seniors than among others who attempt to take their own lives.

Further information and ordering information is available at <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA10-4515>.

Ongoing Medical Conditions Health Workshop for Seniors

National Council on Aging has introduced a new evidence-based online workshop for mature adults

with ongoing medical conditions such as diabetes, arthritis, high blood pressure, heart disease, chronic pain, anxiety and others to aid them in taking better control of their health and their lives.

Better Choices, Better Health™ is based on Stanford University's widely tested Chronic Disease Self-Management Program and is designed to help identify ways to deal with pain, fatigue and stress, discover better nutrition and exercise choices, make informed treatment decisions, learn about better ways to talk with a doctor and families about an individual's health, and obtain support that is needed.

Further information and registration information is available at www.ncoa.org/healthy-aging/chronic-disease/chronic-disease-self-management-program/better-choices-better-health.

Seniors and Disabled Property Tax/Rent Rebate.

Eligible applicants can claim credit for the Pennsylvania Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program for persons or spouses 65 years of age or older, widows or widowers 50 years of age or older; and permanently disabled 18 years of age or older.

The income eligibility level also has been raised from \$15,000 a year to \$35,000 annually, excluding half of Social Security income, and the maximum rebate is increased from \$500 to \$650 for homeowners. Maximum income for renters is \$15,000.

Applications are due by June 30 of every year, with the deadline often being extended to December 31. Further information and downloadable forms are available through www.revenue.pa.gov/GeneralTaxInformation/PropertyTaxRentRebateProgram/Pages/default.aspx#.VznAtOOaL-s, senior centers or at offices of state legislators.

Older Driver Safety Awareness: Starting the Conversation With a Parent or Loved One

American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), the American Automobile Association (AAA), the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and The Hartford Financial Services Group are seeking to raise awareness of ways to keep seniors safe while driving.

Noting that over 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 each day, a trend that is expected to continue for the next 19 years, they are encouraging families of older drivers to start conversations about important topics related to driving, including driver safety, when to stop driving and transportation options for seniors no longer able to drive safely.

Further information, including free guides to help understand the need and how to approach a

conversation is available at www.aota.org/Conference-Events/Older-Driver-Safety-Awareness-Week/Tuesday-full-article.aspx.

Legal Assistance

Legal Services of Southeastern Pennsylvania provides legal representation to low-income and vulnerable populations in Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties, along with public legal education in housing, consumer, family, elder and public benefits law.

Further information is available at www.lasp.org or (877) 429-5994.

Pennsylvania Farmworker Project of Philadelphia Legal Assistance provides legal assistance to migrant and seasonal farm workers throughout Pennsylvania and is available to meet with new clients from 2:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Mondays at the Kennett Area Senior Center, 427 South Walnut Street, Kennett Square. In addition, outreach activities include visiting labor camps, educating workers about their rights, and providing training to regional and local service providers.

Further information is available at www.philalegal.org/PFP or (888) 541-1544.

Aid for Farm Workers, Immigrants and Unskilled Workers.

La Comunidad Hispana coordinates a free legal assistance program for Chester County farm workers, laborers and other unskilled workers and immigrants.

Attorney John Winicov will provide a half hour of legal consultation, advocacy, education and assistance bi-weekly for up to four clients, in a legal and social problems collaboration with social workers and medical professionals on topics such as immigration, civil and consumer issues, landlord-tenant problems, domestic relations, auto accident claims and moving violations, and labor and employment issues.

Further information and appointments are available at (610) 444-4545.

Family Guide to State Juvenile Justice System

Family Involvement Committee of the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers has created *A Family Guide to Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System* to help families understand Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system and be better prepared to work with juvenile justice staff to promote positive outcomes for justice involved youth.

The 28-page document, written by a team of family advocates and juvenile justice practitioners, is

available for download at www.modelsforchange.net/publications/344.

Protections Against Scams and Fraud. State and federal agencies provide assistance to consumers in guarding against scammers and other fraud.

Scam alerts from the Federal Trade Commission are available at www.consumer.ftc.gov/scam-alerts.

General consumer protection information on many subjects is available at www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Brochures_and_Publications.

Special Programs

Funding for Nonprofit Mergers Studies. Nonprofit Repositioning Fund, serving Chester, Montgomery, Delaware and Philadelphia counties, is providing funding to assist nonprofits to improve capacity, effectiveness and financial health through mergers, acquisition, consolidation of back office operations, and development of programmatic joint ventures.

Further information is available at www.repositioningfund.org, nadya@repositioningfund.org or (215) 790700 x16.

The Factory House Provides Holistic Community Assistance. The Factory House, a community assistance network, has opened at its renovated building at 3098 Lincoln Highway East in Paradise.

The facility, associated with The Factory Ministries and The Factory Youth Center, will serve as a hub and network for organizations, churches and businesses to offer practical assistance to the Pequa Valley School District community, including life and job skills workshops for adults, after school tutoring for students, crisis intervention and assistance for individuals and families, programs for persons with special needs, professional counseling and spiritual guidance and assistance.

The facility is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and other hours by appointment.

Further information is available at www.thefactoryministries.com/Factory_House, info@thefactoryministries.com or at (717) 687-9594.

Community Blight Toolkit. The Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania has created *Blight to Bright: A Comprehensive Toolkit for Pennsylvania*, a data-driven manual that identifies key strategies to help eradicate harmful effects that abandoned and lighted properties have on communities.

Further information and the link to an online version are available at www.housingalliancepa.org/node/1859.

I Speak Language Cards. City of Philadelphia makes available an *I Speak* card in some 20 languages, including a fill-in-the-blank version that individuals with limited English skills who live or work in Philadelphia and need to contact city government agencies can obtain interpretation assistance.

The city uses bilingual employees, telephone interpreters, and other language access services to help ensure all Philadelphians obtain needed services.

Online versions are available to assist individuals in asking for assistance in Amharic, Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Burmese, Cambodian (Khmer), Chinese (Traditional), French, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Mandinka, Nepali, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Ukrainian, or Vietnamese on one side and English on the other, with online versions available at www.welcomingcenter.org/immigrants/language-access.

PennDOT Processing Missing Identification Applications Online. Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) now accepts online applications for duplicate non-commercial driver's license or photo identification cards when one is stolen.

No additional fees are charged for online transactions, with applicants having to provide their driver's license or ID card number, last four digits of their Social Security number and date of birth in order to complete the transaction for which there is a regular charge.

Online driver and vehicle transactions are available at www.dmv.state.pa.us.

Angel Car Services Repair. Repair Angel, a nonprofit organization started by Downingtown mechanic Scott Carter, is offering basic car repair and maintenance services to those in need but unable to afford them.

Further information is available at www.repairangel.org, repairangel@yahoo.com or (610) 873-1077.

Cell Phone Service for Low-Income.

Low-income households may qualify for a free cell phone and up to 250 minutes of free airtime per month under a federal Assurance Wireless program with Virgin Mobile.

Persons receiving federal public housing assistance/Section 8, food stamps, Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), National School Lunch, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, or State Blind Pension may already qualify.

Others may be accepted if total household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines, for example \$14,702 annually for an individual and \$30,173 for a family of four. The number of minutes also can be doubled for a fee of \$5 per month.

Further information and application is available at www.assurancewireless.com/Public/MorePrograms.aspx.

Toll-Free Legal Helpline for Low-Income Persons.

Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania (LASP) operates a toll-free legal helpline for income-eligible Chester, Montgomery, Delaware and Bucks counties residents from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. weekdays at (877) 429-5994.

Further information is available at www.lasp.org.

Chesco Register of Wills Making "House Calls".

Chester County Register of Wills Terri Clark will make pre-scheduled appointments to hospices, nursing facilities, hospitals, and private homes to execute legal documents pertaining to marriage licenses and notarizing power-of-attorneys for those who are nonambulatory or in last stages of life.

There is no cost for the on-site visit but standard service fees will apply.

Further information and scheduling is available at (610) 344-6335.

Traditions Fulfilled for Grieving Children

Family Lives on FoundationSM serves as an umbrella organization for Mommy's Light® and Daddy's Light Tradition Fulfillment Program of Lionville that helps young people annually, through age 18, and their families cherish traditions as a therapeutic tool that enables them to move beyond death to celebrating the life story of the loved one who has died.

Further information is available at www.mommyslight.org, info@mommyslight.org or (610) 458-1690.

Energy-Efficiency Program Assistance for Smaller Local Governments.

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) is offering circuit rider assistance to local governments serving less than 35,000 residents in Chester, Montgomery, Delaware and Bucks counties

to aid in reducing energy costs in municipal buildings, outdoor lighting, water/sewage treatment facilities, and vehicle fleets.

The initiative will provide direct technical assistance, workshops and training for water and sewage treatment operators, along with a quarterly seminar series highlighting energy-efficiency topics. A LED Traffic Signal Conversion Program will enable municipalities to replace incandescent traffic signal lamps with energy-efficient LED lamps, lowering operating costs and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Information is available at www.dvrpc.org/EnergyClimate/CircuitRider or (215) 238-2897.

Community Bike Share. Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area has three locations for consumers to borrow bicycles to tour the Schuylkill River Trail.

Bike Schuylkill and Bike Pottstown are two versions of the same program available in Schuylkill River Heritage Area communities of Phoenixville, Hamburg and Pottstown.

Ages 16 and over can borrow a bike for a short period of time or an entire day by providing a driver's license or valid state ID to a program administrator.

Further information, including locations, is available at www.schuylkillriver.org/Detail.aspx?id=5509 or (484) 945-0200.

Fishing and Boating Reports. Pennsylvania State Fish and Boat Commission provides regional fishing, boating and waterway reports for areas throughout the state at www.fish.state.pa.us/splashes.htm.

General Information

Insight on Local Governments.

Local Government Commission of the Pennsylvania General Assembly provides quick links to information about local government laws, bidding practices, taxation, municipal statistics and other governmental operations at www.lgc.state.pa.us.

Chesdco Multi-Model Circulation Planning Handbook

Chester County Planning Commission has a Multi-Model Circulation Handbook on how to incorporate all transportation modes into contemporary land development site design.

The 246-page publication is intended to assist municipal officials, planners, traffic consultants, designers, land owners and developers in how to accommodate all modes of transportation into land use and land development design.

It is available at www.chesco.org/documentcenter/view/26940, with additional planning publications at www.landscapes2.org/publications/PubTrans.cfm.

Area Demographics Information Tools

Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) are providing free online tools to assist in finding demographics information for areas within their regions.

Map Your Community is a mapping interface developed by PolicyMap and provided by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia that allows users to easily create custom maps for user-defined locations. These maps provide a snapshot of current and historical economic and demographic conditions and can be used to conduct data analysis for community development activities. Information is available for many socioeconomic variables, including poverty and income levels, housing, and education levels, at www.philadelphiafed.org/community-development/map-your-community.

The Census Data Profile Webmap, developed by DVRPC, allows users to quickly access Census Data Profiles, including recently released municipal-level American Community Survey (ACS) profiles. Information is based on a sample collected over the most recent five years and is not based on the 2010 decennial Census.

The nationwide survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, provides information on age, race, ethnicity, veteran status, household social characteristics such as relationships, languages spoken at home, and marital, educational, and disability status, economics such as income, employment, occupation, and commute time to work, and housing characteristics such as occupancy, tenure, year built, and value and cost.

The Webmap is available at www.dvrpc.org/asp/CensusMap.

Study Finds Community Revitalization Can Create a Greater Wealth Gap

Researchers at Franklin & Marshall College's Floyd Institute for Public Policy say that per capita income in the City of Lancaster has dropped in all areas around its Center City development area which, in contrast, has shown a significant increase.

In *Lancaster Prospers? An Analysis of Census Data on Economic Opportunities and Outcomes*, the study finds "a complex but clear geography of growing inequalities in the City, brought about by changes in the types and job opportunities available to City residents, notably the loss of middle class jobs

and their disproportionate replacement by less well-paying jobs.

“These trends have affected Blacks and Latinos disproportionately, but by no means exclusively,” researchers say, reporting that “poverty and unemployment have increased and remain elevated for Lancaster City’s White residents.”

Such results “manifest themselves in inequalities of outcomes in terms of income, poverty, and home ownership” and, consequently, may also affect the socio-economic fabric of neighborhoods, the study says.

Further information is provided by Lancaster Online at www.lancasteronline.com/news/local/has-revitalization-created-lancasters-f-m-study-says-city/article_d7c2488a-42cd-11e5-bc7e-abbf771a5fef.html#.VdHJJAukR80.facebook, with the study at www.lancasteronline.com/lancaster-prospers-an-analysis-of-census-data-on-economic-opportunities/html_3c5ab0dc-41f4-11e5-bdc8-273e37615f3b.html.

Brandywine Battlefield Preservation Plan.

Chester County Planning Commission has prepared a *Brandywine Battlefield Preservation Plan: Revolution in the Peaceful Valley* that includes an inventory of more than 200 historic resources within the Battlefield including buildings, meetinghouses, fords, and landscapes that were locations of combat and battle-related events during the Revolutionary War, together with a map atlas.

The document, which presents recommendations on how to better preserve the battlefield's open spaces and historic landscapes, including how municipal partnerships can achieve a strategy for protecting the nationally-significant resource, is available at www.landscapes2.org/publications/historic/bbpps.cfm.

Chester County Sustainability Website.

Sustainability promotes a positive balance of economic, environmental and lifestyle factors that can affect quality of life.

The website, providing information for residents and businesses on maintaining agricultural, rural, urban, suburban and natural landscapes within the county, is available at www.chescopagreen.org.

Transportation Priority List. Chester County Planning Commission has updated its list of Transportation Priority Projects, including public transit, pedestrian and bicycle, and roadway capital development.

The report is available at <http://pa-chestercounty.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/2599>.

Area Counties Under Wood Products Movement Quarantine

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has placed a quarantine on the movement of all wood products out of Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties, expanding a 2011 quarantine for Bucks County.

The Thousand Canker Disease was found in fields with black walnut trees in Franklin, London Britain, and Lower Oxford townships in Chester County, with samples being verified by the state and federal departments of agriculture. Officials say it poses a “significant threat to the state’s nation-leading hardwood industry.”

Although the quarantine restricts the movement of all walnut material including nursery stock, budwood, scionwood, green lumber and firewood, along with other walnut material living, dead, cut or fallen including stumps, roots, branches, mulch and composted and uncomposted chips, all hardwood firewood is considered quarantined due to the difficulty of distinguishing between species of hardwood firewood. Hardwood imports from some states also have been affected.

Non-compliance with the quarantine order can result in criminal penalties of up to 90 days imprisonment and a fine of up to \$300 per violation, or a civil penalty of up to \$20,000 per violation.

Further information is available at www.agriculture.pa.gov/Protect/PlantIndustry/spotlight/lanternfly/Pages/default.aspx#.VznHEOQaL-s.

Women and Girls Issues Report. The Chester County Fund for Women and Girls has issued a *Blueprint Report 2016* on issues and needs of women and girls in the county. The report, an update of a document first developed in 2005, includes statistical data and identifies the critical economic, social and health needs within the female population.

A downloadable copy of the report, along with a summary version of key findings, is available at www.ccwomenandgirls.org/research.

County Public Ride Guide. An interactive online public transportation guide that provides information about taxi, bus, and SEPTA-ADA paratransit services, along with paratransit and medical-related travel in Chester County is available at www.chescorideguide.org, with a hard copy version at www.chescorideguide.org/chescorideguide.pdf.

West Chester Pike Transit Service Report.

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission report focuses on improving transit services between West Chester and the 69th Street Transportation Center in Philadelphia.

Boosting the Bus: Better Integration Along West Chester Pike attempts to identify a set of best practices to improve the quality of transit service in the West

Chester Pike corridor, with a focus on SEPTA Route 104, along with its integration with corridor development, including speed and running ties.

A copy of the report is available at www.dvrpc.org/reports/10033.pdf.

Area Gas Prices. Prices at gas stations in areas of residence or travel are updated during the day, but not on a regular basis, by volunteer posters at www.gasbuddy.com.

Electricity Monitors

Patrons at Honey Brook Community Library and Bayard Taylor Memorial Library in Kennett Square now can check out a Kill A Watt™ Electricity Monitor to see how much electricity home appliances use and where money might be saved.

The device is easy-to-use and includes a spreadsheet for recording purposes. Further information is available at the libraries at 687 Compass Road (Route 10), Honey Brook, (610) 273-3303, or at 216 East State Street, Kennett Square, (610) 444-2702.

Research Your Chester County Home.

Chester County Archives and Records Services has published a new online guide, *Researching Your Chester County Home*, that provides an in-depth explanation of how to perform research on the history of Chester County properties at www.chesco.org/documentcenter/view/33089. An abridged printable guide also is available on the site.

Speaker Podcasts.

Phoenixville Library makes available audio files of selected speakers that have provided presentations at the library during the past year on a wide range of subjects. They are available online at www.phoenixvillelibrary.org/category/adults/view.

Regional Planning Handbook

Inter-Regional Planning Cooperative (IRPC), comprised of inter-municipal planning groups from the Upper and Central Perkiomen and Indian Valleys, and the Pottstown and Phoenixville Regions, have published a *Regional Planning Handbook* as a primer

for regional planning in the five contiguous areas. The IRPC is a voluntary and advisory body comprised of representatives of the regional planning organizations in those northern Chester and western Montgomery counties that meets to share information, identify areas of mutual support and cooperation and promote the cause of regional planning.

A copy of the *Handbook* is available at www.montcopa.org/documentcenter/view/2062.

Employment-Related Information

PA CareerLink and Job Search Services. Free monthly workshops and other services are available to job-seekers through PA CareerLink offices in area counties:

- Berks: www.co.berks.pa.us/dept/careerlink/Pages/default.aspx
- Chester: www.pacareerlinkchesco.org
- Delaware: www.delcoworks.org
- Lancaster: www.jobs4lancaster.com
- Montgomery: www.montcopa.org/2114/PA-CareerLink-Montgomery-County

Many of these services are available to out-of-county residents.

Support Groups for Unemployed and Underemployed

Several networking/support groups (open to everyone) are available at area churches for persons who are unemployed or underemployed, with each providing its own variety of specific services in support of those who attend:

- **Downingtown** (Exton/Lionville) -- Barnabas Group provides a holistic approach to assistance for job-seekers at Calvary Fellowship Church of Downingtown, 95 West Devon Drive at Route 113. Activities include workshops, in-depth networking and support, and information about free resources and job leads. Further information is available at jkeeney@cfdowningtown.com or (610) 363-7171.
- **Wayne** -- A one-on-one Employment Guidance Ministry, along with periodic special employment related events to aid jobseekers is available at St. David's Episcopal Church, 763 South Valley Forge Road, Malvern. Further information is available from George Vosburgh at gbvosburgh@aol.com or (610) 688-7947.

- **West Chester** -- Unemployment support group meets bi-weekly from 5:45 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church, 130 West Miner Street, West Chester, to learn tips and techniques related to job searches. Additional information is available from Elisabeth Hartwell at (610) 696-0554 or ehartwell@firstpreswc.com.
- **Area Affiliates of Joseph's People** meet during the month:
 - **Upper Uwchlan Township** -- 7 p.m. on the first and third Mondays at the School Education Center, St. Elizabeth's Catholic Church, 100 Fellowship Road, Chester Springs. Further information is available at (610) 321-1200 or at longtobefree2@hotmail.com.
 - **Media** -- 7 p.m. on the first and third Tuesdays at Hassler Chapel, Media Presbyterian Church, 30 East Baltimore Pike. Further information is available at (610) 566-3944.
 - **Downingtown** -- 7:30 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesdays, at St. Joseph's Parish, 338 Manor Avenue (Route 322), in the parish meeting room behind the school at the back of the property. Further information is available by leaving a message at (610) 873-7117.
 - **Springfield** -- 7 p.m. on the third Tuesdays at St. Francis Church Parish Rectory, 136 Saxer Avenue. Further information is available at (610) 543-0848.
 - **West Chester** -- 7:30 p.m. on the first Thursdays in the Fellowship Hall, Trinity Assembly of God Church, 1022 Pottstown Pike, West Chester. Resume review, interview practice, cover letter preparation, and job search strategies provided by volunteers. Further information is available from Dennis Cheek at ststoday@comcast.net or (484) 459-1981, or Geri Lessley at (484) 716-7123 or geri.lessley@gmail.com.

Additional information on Joseph's People and its individual units is available at www.josephspeople.org.

Job Locator Services

PA CareerLink--Chester County is making available a job locator at its offices at 250 East Harmony Street, Coatesville, to assist income-eligible job-seekers with employment placement.

The service will help job-seekers better understand employer activity, employment recruiting in the local labor market, identify job opportunities, receive placement assistance, and access other resources available through the agency.

Further information and appointments are available at (610) 384-9393.

Pennsylvania JobGatewaySM Website. Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry a JobGatewaySM website to better connect people looking for work with local employers.

The free service, to both job seekers and employers, is obtained through a simple registration process, with individuals seeking employment then having access to:

- Automatic job recommendations based on individual preferences;
- A dashboard that makes it easy to track and manage job applications;
- PA Career Coach, a career exploration tool with valuable employment data such as estimated earnings and local educational programs to help prepare for a specific occupation;
- New search technology, including the ability to share job postings via email, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+; and
- Jobs from a mobile phone.

The site has an average of 200,000 job openings at any one time, with 3,500 new postings daily. More than 300,000 job seekers used the site in the past month, with more than 2.5 million job applications being posted since it became live.

Further information is available at www.jobgateway.state.pa.us.

Online Job-Seeker Computer Technology Training

Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission are offering more than 100 online courses and 500 educational videos to job-seekers through Online Broadband and Technology Training.

Available topics include online and e-mail marketing, website development, social media, advanced wireless technologies, cloud computing, internet security, information security for end users,

Quickbooks, Microsoft applications including Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint and Access, graphics and graphic design, business skills and project management.

Further information and enrollment is available at www.paobtt.com.

JobNow Online Service

Pottstown Regional Public Library, 500 East High Street, Pottstown, offers the *JobNow*, live interactive online help and resources for job-seekers who have its library card. Services include *Live Career Coaching*, *Career Resources*, *Expert Resume Assistance*, and the *Adult Learning Center*. Additional library on-site services for job-seekers include printing, scanning, and faxing, with a fee applicable to printing and faxing.

Further information and resources are available at <http://ppl.mclinc.org/business.html> or (610) 970-6551.

Mobile Job Lab. A monthly Mobile Job Lab will be held from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. the first Monday of each month in Room 114 at the University Center, 95 South Hanover Street, Pottstown.

Montgomery County Community College's University Center, its Career Services and TriCounty Community Network (TCN) hosts the activity, with attendees being able to search for jobs and obtain resume writing and other job-seeker and career support services. Representatives of the University Center's college and university partners also are available to discuss admission processes.

Further information is available at http://calendar.mc3.edu/EventList.aspx?fromdate=2%2F1%2F2016&todate=2%2F29%2F2016&display=Month&type=public&eventid=12720&view=EventDetails&information_id=19532 or (610) 850-0181, with additional information on the University Center at www.mc3.edu/universitycenter.

GED Testing Site. PA CareerLink – Chester County is the county's first site for General Educational Development (GED), also known as General Equivalency Diploma testing.

Testing will be held from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays and from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Thursdays in Suite 500, 479 Thomas Jones Way in the Oaklands Corporate Center, Exton.

Additional information and appointments at Suite 500, 479 Thomas Jones Way in the Oaklands Corporate Center, Exton, are available from Chester County Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) at (484) 945-4084.

Online Assistance for Entrepreneurs. Aspiring entrepreneurs can learn the basics of *Starting Your Own Business* through an online program developed by Montgomery County Community College (MCCC) for the Pennsylvania Business and Entrepreneurial Initiatives Collaborative.

The self-paced program allows individuals to explore five modules on topics such as business basics, financial and legal considerations, and marketing, as well as an in-depth case study. The final module guides learners through the process of developing a customized business plan.

Individuals who successfully finish the program and business plan will earn a proof of completion certificate and may be eligible for three credits at MCCC through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), with other colleges and universities also able to evaluate the completed course and business plan for possible PLA credit toward one of their programs.

The program is available at <http://betheboss.org/beic.html>, with further information at <http://mc3.edu/about-us/news/87-about-us/news/8739-free-online-course-for-aspiring-entrepreneurs>, dcollins@mc3.edu or (215) 619-7313.

Bilingual Business Mentoring

Chester and Delaware counties Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) has its first Spanish language-based mentoring location at the Bayard Taylor Memorial Library, 216 East State Street, Kennett Square.

SCORE volunteers will be at the library Thursday mornings to provide free counseling assistance to Spanish-speaking individuals who are in business or are considering going into business. The business group's initial English language mentoring location at the Southern Chester County Chamber of Commerce, 217 West State Street, on Friday mornings will continue.

In addition to the two Kennett locations, volunteers also provide assistance at its office in the Government Services Center in West Chester, along with the Exton Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Chester County Economic Development Council in the Eagleview Corporate Center, both at Exton; the Phoenixville Regional Chamber of Commerce, National Penn Bank in Oxford; and the Lincoln University satellite campus in Coatesville.

Further information and counseling appointments are available at www.chesterdeleo.score.org or (610) 344-6910.

Free Services to Aid Youth Job/Career Preparation. Services to assist Chester County

youth in realizing their full career potential are being offered in West Chester.

The House of Original Dreams (H.O.O.D.) is serving federally eligible youth ages 16 to 21 at facilities at 530 East Union Street.

The T.E.A.M. at the HOOD offers assistance with GED preparation, job readiness training including adult mentoring and supportive services, career counseling, and college preparation including assistance in completing college applications and financial aid research.

Free transportation is available from the Coatesville and Phoenixville areas and transportation assistance is available from other areas of the county.

Additional information is available at (610) 344-4225, at teamthehood@live.com or at www.thehoodonline.org.

Careers Exploration Web Site.

ExploreYourFuture.org is a website that provides assistance in exploring careers in health care, engineering and bio-tech. The site includes videotapes of different career fields and a gifts-careers matching program that assists persons in looking to the future as they plan potential jobs. www.ExploreYourFuture.org.

Career Webinar Series for Most In-Demand Jobs.

The Chester County Regional Career Education Partnership (RCEP), in collaboration with RCEPs in Montgomery, Delaware, Bucks and Lehigh counties has started a monthly webinar series, *The Virtual Reality Career Webinar Series: Bringing You Real-Life Career Information on Pennsylvania's Most In-Demand Jobs*.

These free online information sessions, created for students, parents and educators will provide information about Pennsylvania careers, along with follow-up resources for ongoing career exploration.

Further information and a webinar series schedule are available at www.careerreality.wikispaces.com.

Guide to Scholarships for Minorities

The DFW International Community Alliance publishes a free *Guide to Scholarships for Minorities and New Americans* that includes information on available scholarships and applying for college. The document is available at www.dfwinternational.org/resource_center/Scholarship_Guide.pdf.

Labor Market Information System.

Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry has introduced a re-vamped website to aid job

seekers and employers obtain employment-related information.

In addition to market information and career and recruitment services, the site now has job spidering technology that grabs job postings from any site and lists them to a common job board. The new site is available at <https://paworkstats.geosolinc.com>.

One-Stop Career Information Center.

Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor is sponsoring a *CareerOneStop, Pathways to Career Success*, website that provides a variety of consolidated job search, unemployment and other benefits, education and training, and other state-by-state information for those seeking employment.

Information is available through www.careeronestop.org.

On-the-Job Training Funds Available to Employers.

An On-the-Job Training Program that will reimburse employers for up to 50% of a new employee's salary while in training, up to \$6,000, is available through PA CareerLink®-Chester County.

Occupations with growth potential that result in permanent, full-time employment for qualifying employees are eligible for consideration.

Further information is available at the Chester County CareerLink office at 250 Harmony Street, Coatesville, or at (610) 384-9393.

Computer Workshops and Online Learning Opportunities.

Chester County Library at 450 Exton Square Parkway, Exton, provides online courses for several Microsoft, Adobe and WordPerfect software applications, along with other learning skills assistance programs, through library card holder services at www.learnatest.com/LEL/index.cfm/?HR=http://www.ccls.org/databases/azdbsip.htm.

Resume and Cover Letter Assistance. The Business Reference Department at the Chester County Library, 450 Exton Square Parkway, Exton, provides assistance to job-seekers for resumes and cover letter writing.

Melissa Straka, business outreach librarian, and Fred Wright, business volunteer, will provide the free one-hour service on a first-come, first-served appointment basis. Further information and appointments may be obtained at mstraka@ccls.org or (610) 280-2624.

Job Search-Related Assistance Classes. Area libraries.

Various local libraries and county library systems offer on-site training courses and online services, with a library card, that can help job-seekers with employment-related needs, including general computer tutoring, Microsoft Office Suite classes, company database information and speakers on various employment-related and networking subject topics.

Vocational Rehabilitation Assistance Available in Phoenixville.

Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is providing assistance in Phoenixville to individuals with disabilities in finding work, maintaining employment and supplemental services.

This free activity is available by appointment from noon to 3 p.m. Mondays and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays at the Phoenixville Public Library, 183 Second Avenue, Phoenixville.

Appointments may be made at (484) 250-4340 x136, with further information on services available at www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/vocational_rehabilitation/10356.

Federal Site Assists Disabled Wanting to Go to Work.

A federal website, highlighting an initiative to help disabled Social Security beneficiaries go to work, obtain employment that may lead to a career, save money, and become financially independent, all while keeping their health coverage, has been revamped.

Individuals 18 through 64 years of age who receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits due to a disability are eligible to participate in the free, voluntary Ticket To Work Program that is designed to give beneficiaries choices that can help create and lead better lives.

The website is at www.socialsecurity.gov/work.

Assistance for Persons with Disabilities to Obtain Employment.

Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare has a resource website for persons with disabilities who want to obtain employment.

*Works for Me*TM can direct persons to agencies and programs that help Pennsylvanians with disabilities who want to work and improve their financial security. Caseworkers will review an individual's specific situation and provide guidance to resources to help find a job, obtain training, retain

health insurance, obtain assistive technology, or find other support that may be needed, without losing benefits.

Information is available at www.worksforme-pa.org.

Additional Resources for Job Seekers.

Chester County Workforce Investment Board provides links to several resources that may provide assistance to the unemployed and underemployed, including career exploration guides, green jobs information, and lists of the county's top employers and high priority occupations, at www.chesco.org/wib.

Free Business Support Services for Owners and Startups.

Montgomery County Community College new Center for Entrepreneurial Studies (CES) that includes a business incubator is offering entrepreneurs an array of free support services, including legal, accounting, marketing and technology. Representatives of the Small Business Association and Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) also available by appointment to answer business questions.

SCORE, a resource partner of the federal Small Business Administration (SBA) also holds *Business Ownership Basics – Live Your Dream* workshops from 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. on the first Tuesday of the month in Room 104, Parkhouse Hall, 340 DeKalb Pike, Blue Bell. Representatives discuss the importance of having a vision, strategy and structure, as well as methods to develop and grow a business, with participants doing a self-assessment and evaluation to determine whether being an entrepreneur is a good fit.

Further information is available from CES Director Ayisha Sereni at (215) 461-1140.

Grants Available for Energy-Related

Employment. Smart Energy Initiative of Southeastern Pennsylvania, a program of the Chester County Economic Development Council, has \$5,000 to \$6,000 grants available to hire unemployed Pennsylvanians for eligible "green", energy-related positions. Funding must be confirmed prior to hire.

Further information is available from Will Williams at (610) 458-5700 x259 or wwilliams@cceconomicdevelopment.com.

Interview Clothes for Women

Two sites are available to provide free interview clothing for women seeking employment.

Soroptimist International of Pottstown and the Salvation Army are collaborating in a First Impressions Women's Career Clothing Closet at 137

King Street, Pottstown, to outfit women with attire for job interviews, entering or re-entering the workplace, college interviews, court appearances and other business-related needs.

First Impressions will provide an outfit for the first interview and one for a second interview/first day of work, with women having secured employment receiving five outfits.

Appointments are available from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays through vouchers from authorized referral agencies. Further information is available from Lee at (610) 326-8442.

A second women's outfitting initiative is available with Wings for Success in Malvern. Further information is available at www.wingsforsuccess.org.

Young People's Self-Sufficiency Guide

U.S. Department of Labor provides a *Mentoring Youth and Young Parents: A Guidebook for Programs Helping Youth and Young Parents Navigate a Pathway to Self-Sufficiency* guide at https://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText_Documents/Mentoring_Youth_and_Young_Parents_Guidebook.pdf.

Miscellaneous Federal Resources

The federal government publishes an overwhelming amount of information on all types of initiatives and programs. Recent promotional postings include:

- **Help for Difficult Financial Times:** www.usa.gov/edgesuite-staging.net/citizen/topics/family/help-for-difficult-financial-times.shtml. A website serving as starting points for unemployment, jobs and training information, family support, housing, health care and insurance, and debt and credit information.
- **Books That Shaped America:** www.loc.gov/bookfest/books-that-shaped-america
An exhibit by The Library of Congress, said to be the world's largest repository of knowledge and information, started a multiyear Celebration

of the Book with this list of books from 1884 to 2002.

- **Keeping Baby Safe in the Sun:** www.fda.gov/forconsumers/consumerupdates/ucm309136.htm
U.S. Food and Drug Administration provides safety tips for babies, including whether to use sunscreen.
- **Feeding Your Family on a Budget:** www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Health/Food.shtml#EHC1
Tips on healthy eating includes how to do so when funds are tight.
- **Ask Karen: Your Food Safety Expert:** www.foodsafety.gov/experts/askkaren/index.html
Online chat service and e-mail connections provide answers from a food safety expert, along with other resources.
- **Federal Benefits, Grants and Loans:** www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Benefits.shtml
A primer is provided to assist individuals of all ages and backgrounds in determining government programs they may be eligible for.
- **Free Government Grants Scams:** www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/alerts/alt134.shtml
The Federal Trade Commission and other agencies also warn of many new and old scams related to purported government assistance.
- **Consumer Action Handbook:** www.usa.gov/consumer-action-handbook/order-form.shtml
A free publication in English or Spanish, also available online, that answers questions about credit cards, bank accounts and managing debt, and aids in creating a smart money management plan, get a handle on finances, and successfully file a complaint with a company.

Information in this E-Update Resources™ is designed to highlight primarily free resources that can help enhance Christian principles relative to development of healthy child, individual and family relationships. Recipients are encouraged to print and post this Resources Guide to employee and public bulletin boards for benefit of others.

Information included in this publication is gathered from various submissions and other sources. No representation is made as to accuracy or value. Due to changes that may occur from time to time, users are encouraged to contact organizations prior to participation in any activity.

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