

PCC Golden Anniversary: A Year of Achievement

Blessings are abundant as we move forward through this 50th year of the Presbyterian Community Center. In May, Pathways for Youth celebrated its 20th year with the annual banquet that drew children, parents, volunteers, PCC staff, and representatives from several community partners. Results received in June from the Search Institute's pre-test to post-test measurement of the success of Pathways in building Developmental Assets (40 research-based, positive experiences and qualities that influence young people's development) in our children helped to conclude a special year. Pathways successfully moved the needle on Developmental Assets from an overall score of vulnerable/challenged in September to adequate/above range in May. I salute our dedicated staff, faithful volunteers and enthusiastic partners for the difference they make in improving the lives of our children and their families.

A long-held dream of expanding adult programs to benefit Pathways parents became reality this year with the help of Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church and Carilion Clinic. I hope you will read on page 3 of this newsletter about the opportunities offered by these wonderful partners, and our introduction of the Bridges Out of Poverty series.

During the last year, Emergency Services Program provided approximately 3,000 assists with financial aid and food to keep homelessness and hunger at bay. This work is possible because of the support of this mission by hundreds of caring individuals, churches, community organizations and private foundations. As I write this note in mid-September, many of these same people have already adopted scores of our PCC families for Thanksgiving and Christmas. I can't thank each of you enough for your commitment to our mission.

Last, but not least, in this anniversary year we are happy to introduce our new annual fundraiser, the Big Lick Train Tug! I thank American National Bank for supporting this event as Title Sponsor. The Virginia Museum of Transportation is a vital partner in the fundraiser and I am grateful to Bev Fitzpatrick and staff for supporting the PCC in this effort. See below for the details. I hope each of you will join us at the VMT on October 7. Whether or not you are planning to tug the 611, this festive day will offer a fun time for all!

Karen McNally, Executive Director

Big Lick Train Tug to Benefit PCC

Get your team together or make plans to come and enjoy the fun on Saturday, October 7, at the Virginia Museum of Transportation for the Big Lick Train Tug! Funds raised by this event will benefit the Presbyterian Community Center's programs for needy families and children. The Train Tug is a "tug of war" competition to see which 12-person/6-person/1person teams can pull the Norfolk & Western 611 Class J steam engine over a measured distance in the fastest time. The 611 is the most powerful - and arguably the most beautiful - steam locomotive ever built, and it was built in southeast Roanoke in 1950 at the N & W East End Shops!

For more information, or to support this fundraiser, please see the website at biglicktraintug.com or call the PCC at 540-982-2911.

Elderly in Crisis

A married couple, ages 77 and 76, recently sought help from the PCC to avoid electricity termination. Their 38-year-old son, who helped them financially, had just died. Our clients used their available funds for burial expenses and were unable to pay the electric bill. They were also very concerned that they would not be able to continue to afford the mortgage payments on their home of ten years. Despite receiving Social Security and additional income from his part-time job, the couple lives below the poverty line. In addition to paying their overdue electric bill and supplying them with food from our pantry, the PCC case manager spent time with the couple to catalogue their needs and concerns and offered advice and referrals concerning Medicare payments and resources to address their mortgage concerns.

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*Donations listed in this newsletter were received from March 1, 2017 through August 31, 2017.
If we have inadvertently omitted your contribution, please contact Karen McNally at 982-2911.*

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Pathways high school students
 Rachel and Crysten.

Adult Programming Begins at PCC

Pathways for Youth is expanding its programming to include opportunities for the parents of our students. Last winter, PCC began hosting the LIFE (Living in Faith Everyday) Group. LIFE is a small group Bible study experience primarily designed for adult family members. Each meeting has a single focus topic, such as “How can the Bible become a more vital part of my life?” and “How can I have enough faith to trust God for my needs?” Led by Pastor Robert Stutes of Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church, the LIFE Group began in February with a six-week series, and followed up with a seven-week series in April and May. The popularity of this offering is exciting and encouraging. We will begin the third session in October. In addition to Pathways parents, there are several members of Pastor Stutes’ church who serve as mentors for the group.

During the summer, Carilion Clinic hosted a six-week “Wellness Workshop” for Pathways parents and other PCC clients. The workshop explored the benefits of exercise, healthy eating and cooking, and weight management. This workshop will also be offered again beginning in September.

In February, we will offer “Getting Ahead” courses to Pathways parents as part of our new “Bridges out of Poverty” program. Classes will be held in the early evenings. Dinner will be served at each meeting and a stipend will be paid to each person completing the course. More information on this program will be available in January.

Tom MacMichael Retires

Tom MacMichael, founder of the Pathways for Youth program at the Presbyterian Community Center, retired at the end of May. Shortly after joining our organization in 1995, Tom designed and implemented a comprehensive assessment of the conditions and needs of Southeast Roanoke, the PCC’s primary service area. As a direct result of the findings of that assessment, he created Pathways in 1997, meeting first at neighborhood churches until space could be created and repurposed at the PCC. The rest is history.

This year, Pathways celebrates its 20th year of providing academic after-school programming that takes aim at the generational poverty in Southeast by keeping our students happy, healthy, and in school through graduation.

On June 9, the PCC held a party celebrating Tom’s service and Pathways’ 20th anniversary. Guests included current and former students, parents, volunteers, and many friends from the community.

We wish Tom and his wife, Mary, all the best as they enjoy a happy and well-deserved retirement!



Tom with his retirement cake from PCC staff.



Tom with the Woody family. All of the Woody children attended Pathways!



PCC staff poses for group photograph during Tom MacMichael’s retirement party.



Tom’s most popular PCC Halloween costume.

Parents' Marriage Affects SSI Benefits

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program pays benefits to disabled adults and children who have limited income and resources. SSI benefits also are payable to people 65 and older without disabilities who meet the financial limits. Despite this seemingly straightforward definition, there are many caveats to continuing as a qualified recipient.

Five years ago, a Southeast Roanoke family enrolled their 3 children in Pathways for Youth. A blended family, the parents were making plans to marry. One of the children qualified for SSI due to a disability. At that time, as a single parent, the mother received a benefit for the child to assist with costs incurred due to the child's disability, such as therapy and special education. When the parents married, the benefit was revoked. Despite the fact that this family of five earns less than \$34,000 per year (both parents work) the child no longer qualified.

The financial fallout from marriage did not end there.

Another of the children had been diagnosed with a chronic condition that required expensive medication each month. With a single parent, the child was eligible for Medicaid, which helped to pay for the medication. After the parents married, none of the children qualified for Medicaid. Now, not only have they lost the income to help with services for the disabled child, they must also pay for private insurance, which only covers a small fraction of the cost of the necessary medication.

Many are surprised to learn that other hurdles to receiving benefits include some types of living arrangements, or having a savings or checking of more than \$2,000. Fortunately, our Pathways family has pressed on and overcome many of the obstacles they face. PCC may be able to help them financially as emergency needs arise. In addition to financial aid, PCC offers all Pathways families access to parent education programs, community counseling, food, and clothing. We strongly encourage everyone to be aware of the fine print when receiving any government benefit.

Nicole Jennings, Director of Family Programs

Did You Know?

Many PCC clients receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to help purchase food. SNAP benefits can only be used for food or for plants and seeds to grow food. SNAP benefits cannot be used to buy: any nonfood item, such as pet foods; soaps, paper products, and household supplies; grooming items, toothpaste, and cosmetics. As such, our clients desperately need many of these items. Two members of First Evangelical Church have taken on the mission of providing toilet paper, detergent, bath soap, dish soap, toothpaste and shampoo to the PCC each week. We welcome additional donations of any of these items.



Matthew Joseph and his mom enjoy Pathways banquet.

Overwhelmed by Illness, Layoff

A 45-year-old man came to the PCC seeking assistance with an electric bill. He had moved to Roanoke several years ago due to a job opportunity. Last year, his wife was diagnosed with cancer. Despite treatments, the cancer has persisted and is terminal. Three weeks ago, he lost his job when all employees were sent home after being notified at noon on a workday that the business was closing. The next week, a deer ran in front of his car and totaled it. He is now unemployed, has no vehicle to use in searching for a new job, and has yet to receive his first unemployment check. His wife has been waiting six months to receive disability payments. They are in the process of moving in with her parents who can help with her care. The PCC was able to help with the electric bill and provided food from the pantry. He will use his first unemployment check to pay his last rent payment. Very hopeful about securing new employment, he hopes to be able to help out at PCC in the future.

Pathways Annual Banquet

Each year Pathways for Youth has a special end of the year banquet to celebrate and recognize students, parent, tutors, volunteers, and many others. This year we celebrated the 20th anniversary of Pathways as well as the retirement of Tom MacMichael, founder of this wonderful program.

Tom was inspired by Psalm 119:105: "Your word is a lamp to guide my feet, a light to my path." This verse was used as a foundation to create a program that would be a light and guide for youth and families in Southeast Roanoke. Using this verse, the staff planned and created a beautiful banquet that focused on those that "guide" us every day in our universe, and encourage students and parents to be a light for others in the world.

The Spirit of Pathways award is given annually to students in each group. Chosen by their peers and staff, the students have earned the respect of others through hard work and dedication to their community. This year the awards went to: Tyesha Wright of our Elementary Group, Jayden Hall of the Middle School Group, and Matthew Joseph, a junior in the Phase II High School Group. It was only fitting that we presented one more Spirit of Pathways award this year to Tom MacMichael. The award will now be known as the "Thomas MacMichael Spirit of Pathways Award."



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What Really Goes Into a Food Order at PCC?



TOP 10 Healthy Recipes delivered by Family Service of Roanoke Valley's Teen Outreach Program

Volunteers and supporters come to the Presbyterian Community Center bringing interesting talents and perspectives. While they initially come to stock the pantry shelves, “man” the front desk or tutor Pathways’ students among other tasks, they each leave their unique mark that helps shape the services offered through Emergency Services and Pathways for Youth. This mark is visible in each food order that is prepared and distributed daily.

Stocking the pantry with basic staples is a necessity for the successful operation of any food pantry. The list is simple enough but remains the backbone of each food order: chicken noodle and tomato soup, assorted canned vegetables, mac & cheese, peanut butter, tuna and canned chicken, other proteins like beans and beef stew; fresh vegetables and frozen meats are an added bonus. There are however certain items when delivered at just the right time enhance the food order. This was the case recently on a sweltering, hot day when a donation of several cases of KoolAid and powdered lemonade was received. This simple act of timely generosity most definitely sweetened the food order as it also quenched the thirst and spirit of many recipients this summer.

In the spring a food donation arrived with a clever twist when Family Service of Roanoke Valley’s (FSRV) Teen Outreach Program (TOP) delivered colorfully decorated cotton bags filled with cans of food and a cookbook, Healthy Treats/Healthy Living - TOP 10 Healthy Recipes. TOP students from Forest Park collected the food,

Patrick Henry High School TOP students prepared the cookbook and a FSRV project at the YMCA provided decorated bags. Thinking out of an ordinary food box turned this community service project into a memorable healthy living lesson for the creators as well as the PCC recipients.

For two PCC volunteers, Ken and Von Staiger, it was their labor of love, gleaning for the Society of St. Andrew (SOSA), that brought them to the PCC over ten years ago when they registered the PCC food pantry to receive gleaned produce through SOSA. It wasn’t long before the Staiger’s were assisting with other PCC food deliveries along with delivering turnips and potatoes and apples. Together, Ken and Von have paired their own special interests with that of the needs at PCC. They have painted; helped with yard sales; Von has even dressed as a Christmas elf for Pathways students. While unloading food one day, Ken noticed that the PCC dollies were in dismal condition. On the next trip to PCC, he brought a surprise...an adjustable two wheel/four wheel dollie. Now he plans to customize the dollie further to accommodate smaller boxes along with repairing the wheels of the older dollies.

One might ask, “What really goes into a food order? The answer is simple: A lot of thoughtful planning; generous and timely donations; the labor of love by all volunteers and donors who are just as excited as PCC clients when the pantry shelves are stocked full. It is a winning combination for Southeast Roanoke.

If you have not been to the PCC, please call for a tour to see how your unique talents can flavor the food orders or other programs and services offered for those in need.

Cheryl Poe, Director of Volunteer Services

The Presbyterian Community Center is an equal opportunity provider.