

Caught in the Act

Winning month: January 2019

Property: Malleable Heights

Management Company: Mercer County Housing Authority

Service Coordinator: Roland Barksdale-Hall

Shenira Whitaker, a resident at Malleable Heights, shared with Mr. Barksdale-Hall, her dream to have a Thanksgiving dinner for everyone. She previously attended the Life Empowerment workshops held at the property, which encouraged those in the community to dream. From her idea, a community Thanksgiving meal was held in November of 2018. Malleable Heights was the host of the Thanksgiving dinner with all the trimmings! The meal included turkey, ham, string beans, cranberry sauce, cornbread, stuffing, mashed potatoes, and macaroni and cheese. The event was scheduled the day children had an early dismissal and was planned to last two hours. Flyers announcing the event were distributed door-to-door throughout several Mercer County Housing Authority sites. Local television stations provided public service announcements about the free community meal on the day of the event. Ralph's Mini Mart provided food donations. A local church provided the sweet potato pies. Ms. Whitaker prepared the majority of the food. There were activities for attendees including turkey bingo. Lorraine Whiteside, a senior employment worker, donated creative art work as adult prizes. Shenango Valley Foundation and Winner Foundation provide sticker books and face decorating books for children's prizes. The facility was decorated in orange and white to reflect a Thanksgiving theme. The Mercer County Housing Authority expressly supported the leadership role of residents and neighbors in hosting the community Thanksgiving dinner. Children shared what they were thankful for including their siblings, parents, and grandparents. Others shared their appreciation for the turkey, ham, and Thanksgiving meal. Families were able to enjoy a holiday meal together and spend quality time together with neighbors. Everyone who attended left with a full belly and enjoyed social enrichment. In addition, volunteers delivered meals to homebound seniors. The local media recognized the role of the property as being central to positive community development. David L. Dye, a Herald Staff reporter, wrote a heartwarming story, "She had a dream: A meal for everybody," that appeared on the front page of the Thanksgiving Day newspaper. This feature highlighted how local agencies give back to the community and help those in need.



Caught in the Act

Winning month: February 2019

Property: Misty Ridge Terrace

Service Coordinator: Rachel Stine

Each summer, the Supportive Services Coordinator transports residents to three different campuses for a visit Shippensburg University, Gettysburg College, and Harrisburg Area Community College – Gettysburg Campus. The tours include presentations about admissions and financial aid, a tour of the campus, lunch provided by the school, and a Q & A session with school representatives. The schools also typically provide the attendees with a small school-themed gift. These tours are open to any resident at the property, no matter their age. Transportation is first come, first serve. Others are encouraged to meet at the campus. Three residents have enrolled at Shippensburg University after attending the tour, two recent high school graduates and one single mother. In the past, the average age of attendees is 12-14 years old. The tours have a positive impact on the youth as they are young enough to make changes in their educational habits which would help them make the transition to college. The tours promote the furthering of education to residents, improving their chances of obtaining sustainable occupations. They also have improved the relationships and camaraderie between the children who attend. The attendees have a great time bonding and learning on the tours, and share their experiences with other young residents. The students that have attended the tours in the past have also shown academic improvement and improved attitudes regarding school.



Caught in the Act

Winning month: March 2019

Property: Marietta Senior Apartments

Service Coordinator: Kristine Forry

Services Coordinator Kristine Forry takes pride in her appearance and works hard at looking good, spending time on her hairstyle and make up. She also loves spa days and thought it would be a great gift for the residents of Marietta Senior Apartments if they had their own spa day! She asked her own stylists if they would donate their time and supplies to serve her residents. They agreed! The residents were excited for the day of pampering and every time slot was filled. Kristine was able to get a hair stylist, massage therapist, and manicurist to provide services all at no charge to the residents. Kristine designed the flyers for the event, set up the room, and made snacks for the attendees. There was no cost to the property as supplies were provided by donation of the service providers. The residents were able to improve their appearance and well-being with a haircut and styling. They were more relaxed and physically felt better after the massage. The property is considering having the "Spa Day" be an annual event to treat the residents.



Caught in the Act

Winning month: April 2019

Property: The Commons at North Aiken

Service Coordinator: Carrie Leshnock

Everyone loves a little something extra on a special day such as Valentine's Day. Carrie and her team came up with the perfect way to do that while also increasing resident participation in programming: February Grams! February Grams are lollipops that are attached to handmade butterflies that state; "Thinking of You" sent to residents. These lollipop grams were delivered to residents on Valentine's Day by staff members at North Aiken. This was a way for residents to communicate to another resident that they are "thinking of you" around Valentine's Day. Resident were able to purchase a February Gram for a friend or neighbor in the building anonymously as a way to show they care. There are many residents within our building that have little family support and building a community among residents is critical. As a result of the February Grams, the building is able to create a sense of community and fellowship among one another. Residents got an extra special surprise on Valentine's Day with these lollipop grams. The proceeds from the grams will be going towards a resident event for the spring of 2019, which will be a nice way to start the springtime. This event gives residents an extra opportunity to be among friends and converse with one another with meaningful conversation.



Caught in the Act

Winning month: May 2019

Property: New Forge Crossing

Service Coordinator: Nichelle Irvin

The service coordinator of New Forge Crossing, Nichelle Irvin, saw a need in the community for child interaction. When she discovered a chef lived on site she approached him with a volunteer idea that would spark a tasty result! The Kids Cooking Club has been a way for children to channel their creativity into dishes like: flat bread pizza, salads, sandwiches, breakfast meals and Mexican dishes just to name a few. With donations from local food pantries, stores and other organizations Nichelle is able to retrieve about 50% of the supplies used. These children look forward to this fantastic event where they can learn how make exciting dishes from scratch and attendance has increased with each class! Nichelle hopes to continue this club on a monthly basis with anticipation of larger classes in the summer months. Their goal is organize a large community meal from the children for the New Forge Crossing community by the end of the year. This cooking club has brought a sense of unity and pride to the children living in the community. Social skills and new friendships are just some of the many benefits that happen when these children get to cook together. One of the most important advantages of this club has been that the children are learning about healthier choices when it comes to nutrition. This class is also a great introduction to kitchen safety and practical skills that could apply to many real world situations and could even spark a desire to learn more about the culinary field as adults. The shining star during this whole program has been their volunteer chef that has shown these “little chefs” about compassion, hard work and dedication to a craft. This program unites the community in such a way that it sparks a new motto “the community that cooks together stays together!”



Caught in the Act

Winning month: June 2019

Property: Old Friends at New Oxford

Service Coordinator: Rachael Stine

At Old Friends at New Oxford, an hour-long community exercise class is held every Tuesday afternoon. The residents have named their group Fitness & Friends. The class is led by Supportive Services Coordinator Rachael Stine who encourages the seniors to work to the best of their abilities, whether through lifting weights, simple standing exercises or stretching and chair exercises. At the end of each class the participants walk around the property, inside or out depending on the weather, to cool down and share conversation. The program is not just about becoming physically fit but about improving emotional well-being and improving camaraderie amongst the residents. The ladies laugh, make jokes, and have a great time working out together, focusing on building healthy bodies and healthy minds. Fitness and Friends started with 4 participants and has now grown to 12 regular exercisers. Two residents have had reductions in their blood pressure, confirmed by their doctors, since they started taking the class. The ladies share healthy cooking recipes and other health tips and remark how good the class makes them feel. They laugh at each other when doing silly exercises, making participation fun instead of intimidating.



Caught in the Act

Winning month: August 2019

Property: The Residences at Hanover Shoe

Service Coordinator: Lynn Bolster

The Good Grade Parade is a program for students K - 12. There is no actual parade, rather this is a metaphor for the 'parade of grades' the child is presenting on their report card. All students are encouraged to bring their report cards to share with the property staff the week after the cards are issued. Report cards issued during the first and third marking periods are utilized. Report cards are accepted from all schools including district recognized home school programs. For each grade of B or better or satisfactory rating, the student's name is entered into a drawing to win a gift card to a local store. The more "good grades" a student has, the more entries for that student. Staff talks to students while reviewing their grades to generate excitement about learning, what they like, don't like, etc. It is a requirement that the parent come to the office with the child. During the meeting, the staff greatly praises the child's grades/achievements thereby showing the parent how encouragement is essential for the child's self-esteem and future success. This enforces the idea of high academic performance and excellent school attendance. The key to the program is each child thinks they might be one of the lucky ones to win the gift card drawing but little do they know that EVERY child gets a gift card for working hard and sharing their grades - that is the beauty of the program! This must be kept a secret by the staff - don't even tell the parents! Each April and November, students and parents are reminded that it is time for The Good Grade Parade by flyers, in the newsletter and word of mouth. They are given a week to come in after school each day to share grades with the staff. Word of mouth by participating students is the most effective promotion.



CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF OUR
"GOOD GRADE PARADE" PARTICIPANTS!

Everyone did an awesome job -
Keep up the good work until the next
"Good Grade Parade"

Caught in the Act

Winners month: September 2019

Properties: Canon house High rise for the Elderly, Laurentian Hall + Garfield Glen

Service Coordinators: Kathy Poulton , Beverly Sobezak

Kathy Poulton from Canon house High rise for the Elderly. To promote morale and healthy living Kathy purchased a box where residents can put an encouraging note in-side for other residents when they feel like they have made a difference in their lives. Every note was heartfelt and warm towards other residents. The notes expressed small acts of kindness, consideration and moments of gratitude. This practice has spread quickly among people who want more joy in their lives!



Beverly Sobezak from Laurentian Hall + Garfield Glen This property has partnered with "412 Food Rescue" to accept surplus food that other wise would have been thrown out. The food is distributed to the elderly, disabled residents and low income families. Beverly has been able to build a resident volunteer team to con-tact residents when food to be received as well as assist in delivery of friend, veggies, meat, poultry and baked goods. In addition to all this they provide holiday meals to the residents and host an annual cookout. With a mission to eliminate hunger, this has been a great partnership with 412 food reserve. Check them out here <https://412foodrescue.org/programs/>



Caught in the Act

Winners month: October 2019

Properties: Misty Ridge Terrace & Townhomes, Coal Township Elderly

Service Coordinators: Rachael Stine, Allison Wetzel

This summer we started a community garden for the residents at the Misty Ridge campus. Residents who expressed interest in the project maintain the multiple plots. The plots are raised planters and are accessible for residents of different ages and physical abilities. One of the plots is designated for the kids of the community (with the help of the adult participants). They are able to plant fruits, vegetables, and flowers. There is a central watering station that is filled weekly for the residents to use. The children at the property have learned how to plant different fruits and veggies, while learning about the responsibility of keeping those plants alive. The residents who use the garden have an increased sense of community from the positive interactions with the other gardeners, both kids and adults. It is a great community project, where the residents can ask questions and learn different techniques from each other. We partnered with our local Gleaning Project for technical support for the garden.



Two years ago, Allison introduced a new program to Coal Township Elderly, the Easy-To-Use Mass Messaging Platform – from One Call Now, an automated notification system that provides emergency and routine phone, text, email or app group messaging for any size or type of group/organization. This system is similar to the messaging systems utilized by schools for the inclement weather delays/cancellations. Not only used it for emergencies, but Allison utilized this service as a way to increase participation in all activities and services that are going on within the community. Now, to effectively remind residents of the schedule of events, inspections/maintenance, and emergencies, all residents can have these reminders at their fingertips!



Caught in the Act

Winners month: November 2019

Properties: Metowers

Service Coordinator: Sharon Svoboda

One year ago, each resident who wished to participate completed a survey about him/herself of their likes/dislikes, pets, favorite snacks, etc. Then each person drew the name of another resident who they would buy gifts and other surprises for, and ultimately become their Secret Neighbor for the next year. The residents agreed on a schedule of 9 different holidays to share gifts, like Halloween, St. Patrick's Day, Fourth of July, etc., and they decided that about \$5 per gift was suitable (although many residents splurged!)

Residents got very creative with the gift giving, and even more creative with keeping their identity a secret! We had residents dropping presents at apartment doors - knocking loudly, then hiding in the stairwell waiting until the package was taken inside. Other residents would wait until they knew their neighbor was out of the apartment to drop off the gift. Sometimes curious dogs inside the apartment made it especially difficult to be stealth!

Recently, we had a Secret Neighbor Reveal Party where we shared who each resident's Secret Neighbor was. Some residents thought for sure they knew who it was, and they were often very surprised when their real identity was revealed! We played some games to learn more about each other and had strawberry shortcake, then each resident received a box with a tag inside that when pulled, it revealed who their Secret Neighbor was. There were some fun reactions!

The residents have decided to do it again next year, and they are currently drawing names for their new Secret Neighbors and preparing to come up with new ways of keeping secrets!

Residents were able to build relationships with others not in their immediate social circles. New friendships were formed, and a positive community atmosphere has been fostered. Overall, bullying and gossiping has decreased because residents know more and feel more invested in one another's lives and in the Metowers community.



Caught in the Act

Winners month: December 2019

Properties: Trinity House, Century Village Associates

Service Coordinators: Elizabeth Burke , Debra Clark

TLC: Trinity Learning Community

Collaboration with Bloomsburg University Students.

Bloomsburg University Students enrolled in the Special Education/Exceptionalities Program at Bloomsburg University.

A collaborative endeavor developed by parents, adults with disabilities, BU and Community Strategies Group that addresses the critical need for housing options and creative supports for adults with disabilities. Our efforts have resulted in a plan to create a unique housing opportunity that will directly improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities, provide learning experiences for university students and enhance our community.



Century Village Associates, LLC:

Starting in May after school on Monday and Thursdays we had an after school reading program. I reached out to local people and found young woman who is going to school for Education and wants to be a Teacher of elementary students. Her name is Kaitlin Clark and she is currently in college to be a Teacher. She has written lesson plans and came up with a physical activity, two book readings, and a craft/ lesson activity to do with each book. It started just one hour a day two days a week after school in May and in June after school let out we made it two hours a day twice a week on Tuesday and Thursdays. After each reading program they are given a healthy snack and a bottle of water and are sent home with their craft and work papers. Kaitlin has done such wonderful interactive book readings. She has set up a tent and camping things for a book about camping. Kaitlin also set up a Christmas in July and each child left with a gift. Kaitlin has been very creative and engaging with the children to try to get them interested in the books they read.

