

Caught in the Act!

Property: Malleable Heights

Management Company: Mercer County Housing Authority

Service Coordinator: Roland Barksdale-Hall

Project description: 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.

