



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENTS

*The Quarterly Newsletter of the Chester County Department of Community Development
Chester County Community Action Agency*

The Power of Language in Chester County

Linda Jackson, Planner

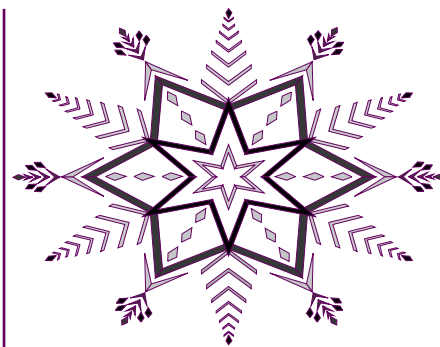
Perhaps it is surprising to learn that English is not the *official* language of the United States. In fact, our nation's founders did not see a prescription of an official language as being in the best interest of a democracy. Today, the Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons helps us to reflect on the idea that the sharing of information and the education for all people take precedence over mandating a specific language use.

English is the predominant language in the United States; this explains why most interactions are conducted in that language. This characteristic, however, prevents a significant number of citizens from receiving communication that is vital to the operations of our local and national government systems. The U.S. Department of Labor conducted a study of the LEP population using the 2000 Census data. Created based upon local Workforce Investment Areas, the data estimates the number of LEP persons within the service area (Chester County), which can be helpful with planning employment and training services, as well as other community services provided by the Department of Community Development (DCD). A person who is Limited English Proficient does not speak English as their primary language and has a limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English. The Department of Labor data categorizes the numbers of LEP persons by four levels of ability to speak English, ranging from "very well" to "not at all."

Although the data is limited and only analyzes information from 2000, there are no other data publications that include this detailed information about LEP persons in Chester County. Findings include that 85% of Chester County's population over the age of five speaks only English. Other than English, the top six languages most spoken in Chester County are Spanish (or Spanish Creole), German, Chinese, French (including Patois and Cajun), Italian, and finally "other" West Germanic languages. Spanish is spoken in 3.4% of the homes in Chester County, and 49.5% of that population speaks English less than "very well." The second most spoken language at home, other than English, is German, which makes up .7% of the population. Within those households, 71.6% of that population speaks English "very well."

While DCD strives to promote and support economic and community development opportunities in partnership with federal, state, and local agencies to all residents of the County, the department is reviewing and improving its Limited English Proficiency Policy. Executive Order 13166, titled, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency," was issued in August of 2000. This requires federal agencies to assess and address the needs of otherwise eligible persons seeking access to federally conducted programs and activities who, due to

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Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for 2006-07 opened on November 6, 2006. LIHEAP offers cash and crisis grants to homeowners and renters who are on low or fixed incomes and whose yearly income before taxes is at or below 150% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. This is the second year that eligibility for LIHEAP has been expanded to help more low-income families pay for home heating fuel and furnace repairs. This year, a family of four with an annual income of up to \$30,000 can qualify for LIHEAP. For information on household size and income, visit <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/LowInc/HeatAssistance/003670277.htm>.

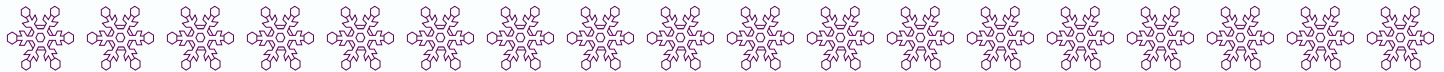
To apply for LIHEAP, call or visit the Chester County Assistance Office, (610) 466-1042, located at 100 James Buchanan Drive, Thorndale, PA. You may also apply online at www.compass.state.pa.us for the cash grant only.

LIHEAP Cash Grants

Cash grants help families pay their heating bills. The grant payment is sent directly to the utility company or fuel provider. LIHEAP cash grants are based on income, family size, type of heating fuel, and region. In addition to proof of income and household size, applicants must provide a recent bill or a statement from their fuel dealer verifying their customer status and the type of fuel that is used.

LIHEAP Crisis Grants

Crisis grants up to \$300 help families who have an emergency and are in danger of being without heat. Emergency situations include: having broken heating equipment like a furnace, or leaking lines; a fuel shortage that may leave you without heat; or having utility service shut off.



PECO's Universal Service Programs

PECO's Universal Service Programs are designed for low-income, residential customers who demonstrate or express difficulty in paying their monthly energy bill. The Company's Universal Service plan contains five components: the Cap Rate, Matching Energy Assistance Fund (MEAF), Low Income Usage Reduction Program (LIURP), Customer Assistance and Referral Evaluation Services (CARES), and the Budget Billing Program.

If you or someone you know is having difficulty paying a bill, PECO may be able to help by setting up a payment arrangement. Call 1-888-480-1533 for information regarding payment arrangements and assistance programs.

*Read more about specific PECO's Universal Service Programs at:
http://www.exeloncorp.com/ourcompanies/peco/pecores/assistance_prgs/*



Share the Blessing Tax Preparation Program... Everyone's Talking About It!

Share the Blessing Free Tax Preparation Program offers FREE assistance to those with low-moderate incomes, including persons with disabilities, limited English proficiency and older taxpayers who file Form 1040 EZ, Form 1040A, or basic Form 1040 Federal tax returns. The volunteer Tax Assistors also assist community members in claiming any special credits and deductions for which they may be eligible. Help with basic income tax returns will be offered from **February 1st through April 16th, 2007** by trained and certified community Volunteer Tax Assistors. The Volunteer Tax Sites are located at Open Arms Transformation Center (daytime operations) and at the Coatesville Memorial Community Center (evening operations). Taxpayers should contact the Director of Open Arms Transformation Center, Jermaine K. Seamon, at 610-380-9099 to make an appointment. Call today to find out how to get your taxes done for FREE and to possibly increase your tax refund!

If you or your organization would like to get involved, volunteers and Volunteer Tax Assistors are needed. Please contact Jermaine K. Seamon at the above telephone number or via email: jseamon@quietrevolution.org



DCD HOLDS 4TH ANNUAL HEALTH CAREERS FAIR

Governor Rendell designates November 13-17th as Health Careers Week in PA

On Wednesday, November 15th, Chester County DCD and its workforce partners held its annual Health Careers Fair at the Chester County Intermediate Unit's Center for Arts and Technology – Brandywine campus in Coatesville, PA. This annual event, which is organized statewide by the PA Center for Health Careers, raises public awareness to the demand and opportunities for health care professionals and develops initiatives to attract Pennsylvania residents to consider a career in health care.

Thirty local health care related organizations were represented at the event and they discussed education and job opportunities with over 200 attendees. Several local area high schools participated in the day's activities, and made the career fair a career exploration day for their students.

Attendees had the benefit of participating in small group discussions. The morning's activities included presentations from health care professionals in Pharmacy, Nursing, Respiratory/Occupational Therapy, Direct Care, Medical Imaging, and Medical Coding, where critical skill/staffing shortages exist.

The day's main event included an appearance by Brandywine Hospital's *Sky FlightCare* helicopter. After landing safely at the event, the *Sky FlightCare* crew provided individuals with an overview of their role during trauma and emergency situations. Those that were fortunate to participate also had the opportunity to ask questions regarding education and career pathways for becoming a Flight Nurse and/or Pilot of the *Sky FlightCare* team.



Brandywine Hospital's Sky FlightCare helicopter.

In an effort to raise awareness for the event, the PA Center for Health Careers held an essay contest for local area 10th grade students. This event was coordinated locally by the DCD. Students were asked to write an essay explaining why they should consider a career in health care. The top three local essays were recognized by the state and were awarded Certificates of Merit. Several quality essays were received. The top essays were received from students enrolled in the Center for Arts and Technology's Pickering Campus Allied Health Program. The first place winner was Erika Lesh, 2nd place went to Danielle Poloway and the 3rd place winner was Abbey Ivens.

The demand for qualified workers in the field of Health Care is at an all-time high in Pennsylvania. For more information on careers in Health Care, please contact DCD or visit the PA Center for Health Careers website at www.paworkforce.state.pa.us

WIB and Youth Council Elect New Leadership

The Chester County Workforce Investment Board and the Chester County Youth Council elected new Chairs and Vice Chairs at recent meetings.

Thomas G. MacNamara, vice President for Human Resources at Puresyn, Inc. of Malvern, PA was elected by the WIB membership to serve a two-year term as WIB Chair. Puresyn, a privately owned purification technology company focused on gene-based therapeutics, is among a number of biotechnology companies located in the Chester County region. Mr. MacNamara succeeds Peter Krech of Brandywine Hospital, who served as Chair from 2004 to 2006. Mr. MacNamara was initially appointed to the WIB Board by the Chester County Commissioners in March of 2006, and has been a strong proponent of the workforce needs of the Life Science industry. Isidoro Gonzalez, Jr., Executive Director of La Comunidad Hispana in Kennett Square, was elected to succeed Dr. Alan Slobojan of the Chester County Intermediate Unit, as WIB Vice Chair.

Laurie Todd, President of Wings for Success in West Chester, was elected by the Youth Council to succeed Cindy Scott of the Chester County Department of Children, Youth, and Families, as the new chair of the Chester County Youth Council. Anne Morris was elected Youth Council Vice Chair.

The Workforce Investment Board and Youth Council are required under the Federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA). They are charged with overseeing activities and services provided to employers and job seekers utilizing WIA funds awarded to the Chester County area, as well as overseeing the operation of the PA *CareerLink*-Chester County office, in Coatesville, PA. DCD serves as staff to the WIB and Youth Council and also serves as fiscal agent for all WIA funds received.

\$50,000 HUD Award to Community Impact Legal Services, Inc.



(Left to Right) Pat Bokovitz, Guy Ciarrochi, Dave Collins, Carolyn Johnson, Dolores Colligan, Bob Adams, and Robert Mulhern

On October 20, 2006, Guy Ciarrochi – the Regional Director of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – presented a \$50,000 check to Community Impact Legal Services (CILS), which will be used to educate the public and housing providers about their rights and obligations under federal, state, and local fair housing laws.

"This grant will help us continue our efforts to educate the public and housing industry about their rights and responsibilities under the Fair Housing Act," said Guy L. Ciarrochi, HUD's Regional Director. "No one should be denied the opportunity to live where they want because of how they look, or the religion they practice, or because they have a disability."

Specifically, Community Impact Legal Services was awarded an education and outreach initiative grant, which will be used to sponsor four major anti-predatory lending community education events in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery Counties. CILS will provide the leadership, staffing, and fund development for these events. These events will provide homeowners and future homeowners with tools to combat predatory lending in neighborhoods and communities that are most vulnerable.

"The grant to Community Impact Legal Services will further educate vulnerable communities to ensure fair lending practices and equal access to housing for all," said Carolyn E. Johnson, Executive Director of Community Impact Legal Services.

COATESVILLE HOMEOWNERSHIP FAIR

Over 150 individuals participated in the Coatesville Homeownership Fair on Saturday, October 28, 2006 at the Olivet United Methodist Church in Coatesville. This second annual Coatesville Homeownership Fair provided participants with information about acquiring a home and information about the programs available to assist with homeownership. Specifically, the Fair covered topics ranging from the first-time homebuyer program to predatory lending. Fair participants were also informed about credit counseling, family savings, home repair, real estate tips, loan products and emergency mortgage assistance programs.

There were over \$7,000 in prizes awarded at the end of the Fair through the generous support of the following Sponsors: Breuninger Insurance, Brandywine Health and Wellness Foundation, Brandywine YMCA, Chetty Builders, Citadel Credit Union, Coatesville Savings Bank, First National Bank of Chester County, Susquehanna Bank/Patriot Bank, The Community Builders, Wachovia Bank, Wells Fargo Home Mortgage and Willow Financial Bank.

If you are interested in participating in next year's Homeownership Fair as a partner or participant, please contact Dave Norwood, Construction Coordinator, at (610) 344-6900.



Participants registered for informational workshops and prizes.

The Department of Community Development would like to especially thank the following agencies for their significant role in making the Coatesville Homeownership Fair a huge success:

- ✦ Alliance for Better Housing
- ✦ City of Coatesville's Weed and Seed Program and TALL Team
- ✦ Chester County Assistance Office
- ✦ Community Impact Legal Services
- ✦ Community Youth and Women's Alliance
- ✦ Consumer Credit Counseling Service
- ✦ Good Works
- ✦ Habitat for Humanity
- ✦ Housing Authority of the County of Chester
- ✦ Housing Partnership of Chester County
- ✦ Life Transforming Ministries
- ✦ Open Hearth
- ✦ Residential Living Options



WINTER 2007

2006 CAAP SELF-SUFFICIENCY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

On October 26 2006, the Community Action Association of Pennsylvania (CAAP) honored Lyndsey May with a 2006 Self-Sufficiency Achievement Award. CAAP's Self-Sufficiency Achievement Award is awarded to individuals like Ms. May who had the courage to make a change. With determination, a thread of hope and access to a multitude of supportive services throughout our area, Lyndsey successfully seized the opportunities placed before her to overcome the barriers to self-sufficiency and a better life for her family.



Lyndsey May was a young single mother with no high school diploma and little family support. Lyndsey's major form of support, her grandfather, had passed away when Lyndsey was 19 years old, leaving her homeless, uneducated and jobless. But her strong will to succeed, coupled with the assistance of the Chester County Department of Community Development (DCD), proved to be Lyndsey's key to success.

When her grandfather died, Lyndsey knew she would have to find work. In hopes of supporting herself and her daughter, she found a job at a convenience store. "Walking into my first day on the job," Lyndsey says, "I asked myself 'where will this job get me in ten years?' I quickly walked out and began to cry".

It was at this point that Lyndsey focused on goals and what she needed to do to achieve them. She wanted an education and a career that would make her happy, one that would provide a good life for her and her daughter. First on her list was getting a high school diploma.

Lyndsey found help at the PACareerLink located in Coatesville, and in six months, obtained her General Equivalency Diploma. After that accomplishment, she signed-up for and completed computer classes so that she could pursue employment in the business field.

During this time, she also learned about the Single Point of Contact Program (SPOC), administered by DCD. She participated in their driver's license classes, passed her driver's test and received her license. She was accepted into the Pennsylvania Home of the Sparrow's Transitional Housing Program, also funded through DCD with Department of Public Welfare Homeless Assistance Program (DPW-HAP) funds. PA Home of the Sparrow offers a twelve to eighteen month residential program for single women and mothers with children. Through participation in the PA Home of the Sparrow program, Lyndsey was able to access parenting, budgeting and financial management classes in collaboration with the YWCA of Chester County, and nutrition classes through the local WIC program, administered by the Chester County Health Department.

Two years after finding herself homeless, uneducated, and jobless, Lyndsey is well on her way to achieving the goals she set for herself. She moved into her own apartment with subsidy assistance from the Community, Youth, and Women's Alliance and was hired part-time as the front desk receptionist for DCD. After only six months with DCD, Lyndsey was promoted to a full-time administrative position within the department.

Lyndsey feels that she would not have been as successful if not for the compassion and help of all the agencies previously mentioned. She says, "I want to spread the word to all young mothers that there is help out there. These organizations have helped me to realize the joys in life, how to appreciate each and every day with my daughter and to NEVER GIVE UP! There will always be someone to help you and most of all that it really is okay to ask for help."

CONGRATULATIONS LYNDSEY!!!

WINTER 2007



DCD CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FEBRUARY

2/9 **Youth Program RFPs Available**

MARCH

3/9 **Youth Bidder's Conference
9:00 AM, Suite 250**

3/14 **Case Managers' Meeting
10:00 AM**

3/21 **Youth Council Meeting
9:00 AM**

3/28 **WIB Meeting
8:30 AM**

**Non-Profit Housing
Meeting, 8:30 AM**

For more information about DCD program or activities, please call 610 344-6900, or email: ccdcd@chesco.org, or visit our website: www.chesco.org/ccdcd.

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LEP, cannot fully and equally participate in or benefit from those programs and activities. Executive Order 13166 requires that each federal department or agency "prepare a plan to improve access to... federally conducted programs and activities by eligible LEP persons." As a recipient of federal funding, DCD encourages all contracted agencies and partners to examine how they serve people who are limited in their English proficiency and determine what measures can be taken in their direct contacts with LEP individuals that would increase meaningful access to services. Executive Order 13166 is based on Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and all programs and operations of entities that receive assistance from the federal government (i.e. recipients and sub recipients) must comply.

Recognizing the need to increase access to our community members acknowledges our growing diversity and demonstrates support for reducing language barriers that prevent access to vital government services. There are several resources

available to assist with the implementation of an effective LEP policy, and DCD is available to offer guidance and suggestions for planning and assessing the need for language assistance services. For further information about Executive Order 13166 or for detailed agency-specific guidance, go to www.LEP.gov. This website offers tools for understanding and effectively applying the requirements under the Title VI regulations.



Board of Commissioners
Carol Aichele, Chair
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Patrick C. O'Donnell

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INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

