

# Phoenixville Area Community Services Overview

***“PACS aspires to be the lead resource for food insecurity in the community.”***

## **History**

PACS' history begins in early 1970 when a group of concerned citizens met for lunch to discuss the delivery of human services in the Phoenixville area. After several meetings, it was determined that many people with serious needs were not receiving available services because of difficulty of travel to West Chester, where most of the services were located, and lack of knowledge about those services. The problem had been identified, but no solution was proposed.

In the fall of 1971 the Phoenixville Area Clergy Association, chaired by Rev. Hamilton G Reeves, and the Chamber of Commerce, chaired by William West, convened a series of community meetings to explore the possibility of forming a volunteer group to provide social services information to residents of the Phoenixville area. The program was presented by Don Burr of the Chester County Health and Welfare Council, which had just started Chester County CARES to provide information and referral services county-wide. (Neither of these organizations are in existence now. Chester County Department of Human Services manages the I&R services contracts county-wide.) By the end of that year, a governing board had been elected, with its first meeting held on February 21, 1972. On March 24<sup>th</sup> the Board met again to choose a name and prepare a statement of purpose. Rev. Reeves was elected the first president of the board of the newly-named Phoenixville Area Community Services.

In April of 1974, PACS obtained office space on the second floor of the Baptist Church (now Grace Crossing Community Church). The enlarged space allowed the beginning of a food pantry with goods supplied by local churches. In 1975, PACS began operating full-time. Lois Gould became the full-time executive director and was now joined by a part-time assistant. It also began cooperating with the Civic Center and other area organizations to act as a clearing house for holiday giving, a program which PACS still runs today.

As economic conditions worsened in 1981 and the community began to feel the effects of unemployment and rising prices, the demand for PACS' services increased. Individuals, families and community groups provided funds for PACS to help people with heating emergencies and emergency shelter. PACS became recognized as the local instrument for disbursing funds and delivery services to anyone in the community who found themselves in a crisis situation.

In 2002, Lois Gould stepped down as Executive Director. Carol Berger was hired as Executive in April, 2002 and continued through April, 2019. Mary McGown was hired as Interim Executive Director April, 2019.

## ***The Next Chapter for PACS***

In 2017, PACS board began to focus on the services provided by other non-profit agencies in the community. During the 1st quarter of 2019, PACS board approved a change in mission to focus solely on food and Information & Referral services, and no longer provide financial aid. The new mission “PACS aspires to be the lead resource for food insecurity in the community” was adopted July, 1, 2019. One of the first actions taken was to organize all food providers in the community to produce and share a monthly calendar. The calendar will provide pantry and food distribution locations and times for the community. This group is called, Phoenixville Food Insecurity Team (PFIT) and includes representatives from the Phoenixville Clergy Association, PASD and Phoenixville Hospital.

The multi-year plan for PACS, in support of the new mission, is based on the action steps compiled by the House Select Committee on Hunger, chaired by Rep. Tony Hall (D-OH). In 1992, Resolution 302 was passed endorsing these steps and encouraged communities to solve the hunger and malnutrition problems of their residents. It was suggested, in order to become hunger free, communities should work toward these steps.

In support of the change in mission, PACS has adopted a new logo to better communicate to the community what we do (see next page).

# Steps to a Hunger Free Community

*Blue shading denotes steps PACS has committed to implementing in fiscal year 2019/2020.*

<p>1. Having a community-based emergency food delivery network that coordinates the services of programs such as food pantries, food banks, and congregate meals facilities;</p>	<p>8. Having initiatives for alleviating food shopping constraints through the development of creative food resources such as community gardens, buying clubs, food cooperatives, community-owned and operated grocery stores, and farmers' markets;</p>
<p>2. Assessing food insecurity problems and evaluating existing services in the community to determine necessary strategies for responding to unmet needs;</p>	<p>9. Carrying out activities to identify and target food services to high-risk populations;</p>
<p>3. Establishing a group of individuals, including low-income participants, to develop and to implement policies and programs to combat food insecurity, to monitor responsiveness of existing services, and to address underlying causes and factors related to hunger;</p>	<p>10. Having adequate transport and distribution of food from all resources;</p>
<p>4. Participating in federally assisted nutrition programs that should be easily accessible to targeted populations, such as the Federal programs that provide school breakfast, school lunch, summer food, child care food, and food for homeless and older individuals;</p>	<p>11. Coordinating food services with park and recreation programs and other community-based outlets to which residents of the area would have easy access;</p>
<p>5. Effectively integrating public and private resources, including local businesses, to alleviate food insecurity;</p>	<p>12. Improving public transportation, human service agencies, and food resources;</p>
<p>6. Having an education program about food needs of the community and the need for increased local citizen participation in activities to alleviate food insecurity;</p>	<p>13. Having nutrition education programs for low-income citizens to enhance good food- purchasing and food-preparation skills and to heighten awareness of the connection between diet and health; and</p>
<p>7. Having available information and referral services for accessing both public and private programs and services;</p>	<p>14. Having a program for collecting and distributing nutritious food, either agricultural commodities in farmers' fields or foods that have already been prepared, that would otherwise be wasted.</p>



**PACS**  
Nurturing  
Food Security