

THE SHARE

Quarterly Newsletter | Nourishing Our Community...Awakening Hope!



SPRING 2026



Project SHARE and the Carlisle Arts Learning Center celebrated the 35th anniversary of the community-loved event Empty Bowls on the evening of Monday, March 23. Over 200 patrons gathered to enjoy locally made soups and bread while supporting our mission to reduce food insecurity.

Featured Stories

Celebrating National Nutrition Month

Nutrition Coordinator Rebekah Becker, MS, RDN introduces new SHARE the Health Nutrition Counseling for clients to meet their nutritional goals.

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A spotlight on our growing ReEntry Bag program



Nutrition Support That Meets People Where They Are



BY REBEKAH BECKER, MS, RDN
NUTRITION COORDINATOR

In March, we celebrated National Nutrition Month and highlighted the power of nutrition in our pantry and Farmstand! Throughout the month, we featured additional signage, handouts and social media communications on how our foods can be used to create familiar, nutritious meals that support the health of our clients experiencing chronic disease.

Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) are trained to translate nutrition science into practical, real-life strategies to support disease prevention and management. In our pantry, this may look like posting signage about saturated fat and heart health near our ground turkey, then offering recipes that utilize ground turkey at

the Nutrition Corner for clients with heart disease to browse. These small ‘nudges’ help clients turn pantry items into meals that support their overall health and wellness.

Nutrition Corner also displays our Recipe of the Month which began this past fall. March’s recipe featured Shepherd’s Pie, a dish traditionally made with ground beef that’s often high in saturated fat and sodium. By utilizing pantry staples such as ground turkey, potatoes, carrots and canned vegetables as healthier alternatives, I worked with our dietetic intern to transform the dish to better accommodate the nutritional needs of clients managing conditions like Type 2 Diabetes and hypertension. Participants in our Slice of the Month cooking class prepared the healthier version during our March session while also learning about common nutrition myths.

Earlier in the year, as we were determining how else we could support our clients’ nutritional needs, we spoke to individuals who experienced Type II Diabetes or cared for family members who’ve been recently diagnosed. As a result, we hosted a diabetes-focused cooking demonstration and provided opportunities for participants to learn more about the disease and how certain foods in the pantry could help. They learned about topics such as glycemic control, sugar-free beverages and the role of insulin in the body. Based on the positive feedback we received, we realized classes like these would be helpful.

However, while these group education opportunities can be impactful, we recognized that many clients may benefit from more individualized support. In March, we announced our SHARE the Health Nutrition Counseling Services, available to Farmstand and pantry clients who want to improve their health. While

we offer an abundance of healthy, nutritious food options, research shows that pantry patrons may lack the necessary nutrition knowledge or confidence to translate the ingredients they select into meals that support their health. Additionally, food insecurity is linked with a wide variety of adverse health outcomes, including obesity, malnutrition, chronic disease and inadequate dietary quality.

SHARE the Health Nutrition Counseling takes these educational efforts a step further through one-on-one sessions between clients and an RDN. These counseling sessions utilize motivational interviewing, a goal-oriented communication style that can empower individuals to make lasting changes. Through open-ended questions, reflective listening and affirmation, clients are encouraged to explore their motivations, identify barriers and begin implementing changes in their daily lives.

This process typically follows four key stages:

Engaging – Build trust and establish rapport.

Focusing – Identify areas for change collaboratively between client and provider.

Evoking – Discover and discuss the client’s own motivations for change.

Planning – Build a plan together with time-sensitive action steps that encourage healthier behaviors.

Depending on an individual’s needs, this process may unfold over several weeks or months through weekly 30–60 minute sessions. Change is hard, so this process is almost never linear. Clients may progress through the stages of change with one goal but remain in the “Focusing” stage for several weeks with others. As an RDN, I can provide the accountability, support and knowl-

edge necessary to help clients stay motivated throughout the process.

After each session, clients are sent home with a SHARE the Health Box, a free meal kit containing pre-measured ingredients to prepare two healthy meals that feed 4–6 people each. Each recipe is designed to accommodate allergies, religious or cultural dietary preferences, and health-related dietary restrictions. For example, a client with Type 2 Diabetes would receive high-protein, carb-conscious meals, while someone with heart health concerns would receive meals that are lower in saturated fat and higher in fiber.

These meal kits provide an immediate opportunity for clients to implement the changes discussed in the session while also learning new cooking techniques. Because the meals are designed to serve multiple individuals, they also create opportunities for family members to learn and adopt healthy habits together.

SHARE the Health Nutrition Counseling introduces programming that responds directly to the needs we see in our community. By combining one-on-one guidance from an RDN with our preexisting SHARE the Health Boxes, we empower clients to turn nutrition knowledge into sustainable, real-life habits that can improve their health status and, in some cases, even reverse chronic disease.

We’re committed to continuing nourishing our community and awakening hope by making healthy eating accessible, affordable and culturally relevant. If you are a current client and are interested in scheduling a counseling session, please visit timetosignup.com/projectsharepa.

Celebrating Volunteer Appreciation Month



BY TAI JEROR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



When I think about our volunteer community at Project SHARE, what stands out most is not just what you do—but who you are.

You show up. Again and again. Week after week. Year after year.

And because of that, you have become something far greater than a group of volunteers. You are the heart of this organization.

There is a warmth here that is hard to put into words, but easy to feel. It's in the way you greet one another. The way you welcome those we serve. The way familiar faces become something more over time. What you have created is not just a place to serve, it's a place that feels like home.

That doesn't happen by chance. It happens because of you. Because of your consistency. Your commitment. Your willingness to keep showing up.

During our busiest weeks, it

takes countless volunteers across our programs to make everything happen. And because you show up, we are able to serve more families in need. More children have meals they can count on. More neighbors walk through our doors and are met with the kind of care and support that makes difficult moments feel a little more manageable.

This work—what happens here each day is made possible in such a meaningful way because of you. You are a vital part of this team, and you mean so much to all of us here.

And while your impact can be seen in so many tangible ways, it also goes beyond what can be measured.

Volunteering is about helping others, and the difference you make in the lives of those we serve is profound. But there is also something else. Something quieter, but just as meaningful. The sense of purpose. The connection. The full

heart that comes from doing something that truly matters.

You are part of something bigger.

You are part of a community that shows up for one another. A community that leads with compassion. A community that chooses, every single day, to care. And that is something to be incredibly proud of.

During Volunteer Appreciation Month, I want to take a moment to say what cannot be said enough:

Thank you.

For your time.

For your heart.

For your unwavering commitment to this work.

Project SHARE is what it is because of you.

What you bring to this place—to the people you serve, to us, and to one another, matters more than you may ever fully realize. It is an honor to serve alongside you.



Summer Feeding 4 Kids begins Thursday, June 4. Parents can pick up seven days' worth of breakfasts and lunches at Project SHARE Headquarters in Carlisle (pictured), Amelia Givin Free Library in Mt. Holly Springs and Plainfield First Church of God in Plainfield.





What Summer Meals Mean for Local Families



BY SARAH WALTERS
COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

When school doors close for the summer months, so do reliable meals for thousands of students in our community. And, for families already stretching their tight budgets, summer can quickly become a season of stress. In Cumberland County alone, 1 in 7 children experience food insecurity. Nearly half of students from the Carlisle Area, Big Spring and South Middleton School Districts rely on free or reduced priced lunches during the school year. No child—and parent—should have to worry about where their next meal will come from.

Good health is the foundation for a child’s ability to grow, learn and thrive—and that foundation starts with access to nutritious food. Our Summer Feeding 4 Kids program is designed to pick up where school-year programs end, providing seven days of nourishing breakfasts and lunches to families who reside in the school districts

listed above. From June to August, families can pick up meals in a convenient drive-thru format at our three locations: Project SHARE’s Headquarters in Carlisle, Amelia Givin Free Library in Mt. Holly Springs and Plainfield First Church of God in Plainfield.

In 2025, with the generous support of our donors, volunteers and greater community, Project SHARE provided food to an average of 500 children weekly for ten weeks—that’s 70,854 meals!

“[Summer Feeding 4 Kids] was a great experience,” stated one participating parent, “[it] allowed our budget to cover necessary bills without sacrificing the kids’ nutrition.”

Last year, program leader and Nutrition Coordinator Rebekah Becker, MS, RDN, focused on strengthening the program in ways that went beyond just distributing food. Her goal was to create more opportunities for nutritional education while also fulfilling families’

meal requests. Directed by Becker, dietetic interns Callie Rohrer (Penn State University '25), Larissa Snyder (Penn State University '26) and Deanna Gilbert (Messiah University '26) developed interactive menus that included nutrition facts, games and physical activity ideas and a variety of meal combinations for the food provided. Other prioritizations included distributing fresh fruits and vegetables each week—some gleaned from local farms—and expanded options to include vegetarian substitutions for children who do not eat meat or keep kosher.

As with most of our programs, we asked families to share their thoughts and experiences. In our 2025 survey, 95% of parents said Summer Feeding 4 Kids helped stretch their grocery budget, and more than half said it gave them room to focus on other priorities. One parent shared, “Two of our children were diagnosed with an illness over the last two months. Meal pick-ups were so helpful for me to have stuff on hand and in a pinch as we battled going back and forth to hospital and home.”

Families also reported on foods their children enjoyed the most, like fresh produce, and other kid-friendly staples such as PB&J and string cheese. We found that 92% of parents were satisfied with the health of the meals provided, and 39% said the program directly improved their child(ren)’s nutrition. What was most valuable about the program overall? One parent wrote it was “very helpful for families who fall between the lines of not qualifying for any assistance otherwise.”

This year, we’re continuing to adjust based on what we’re hearing. In addition to vegetarian and peanut-free meals, we’re introducing more gluten-free options. When SNAP benefits paused this past fall, families from our pantry told us they

had initially used that assistance on allergen-free foods for their children, like gluten-free pasta or nut-free granola. We realized these items are often more expensive, and when resources become restricted, they’re some of the first things parents have to sacrifice when shopping. To offset this, we encouraged individuals to prioritize donating allergen-free items in their Food & Fund Drives. At a time where prices remain high, we want to make sure kids who rely on those types of foods for their wellbeing and health aren’t left out.

As we head into another summer, families must suddenly provide 10 extra weeks of meals without the support of school programs. That means grocery bills grow more daunting, and each everyday expense becomes a difficult trade-off. For many, that means choosing between food and covering essentials like rent, utilities, transportation and so much more.

Like our other programs, Summer Feeding 4 Kids is free to all participating families—with no income eligibility required. You’ll find a remit envelope stapled into the center of this newsletter that directly funds Summer Feeding 4 Kids. If you’re able, we hope you’ll consider supporting this year’s program. Every contribution helps make sure kids have consistent, reliable and nutritious meals all summer long.

Raised in Newville, PA, Sarah holds a BA in Advertising from Temple University, where she focused on Art Directing and Graphic Design. Before joining Project SHARE, Sarah gained experience in book publishing and commercial printing. Her work with nonprofits in historical, educational and community sectors has deepened her passion for local communications. Research continues to drive her career, even influencing her hobby of restoring nineteenth century homes with her loved ones.

Match Madness Aids Our Food Security Efforts

A brief update on Match Madness and the continued community support it generates for local food security programs and more.

Another March has passed, which means we’ve once again participated in the community-driven campaign, Match Madness. Founded by the Partnership for Better Health, Match Madness gives nonprofits across Cumberland and Perry counties the opportunity to amplify the generosity of their donors, all with a common goal of supporting the wellness and health of our community.

Last year, you helped us raise a staggering \$142,510 to continue reducing food insecurity for neighbors in the greater Carlisle area. In 2024, that number was just over \$127,000—a 12% increase! Each March, we are in awe of the compassion and generosity of our supporters, from those who have been with us for over 40 years to those who have joined us more recently.

Thank you to the Partnership for Better Health, M&T Charitable Foundation and WellSpan Health. A special thank you to LAMAR Advertising who generously gifts advertising space.

Stay tuned on our socials and email blasts to see the final amount for this year’s Match Madness! Thank you so much for “Nourishing Our Community...Awakening Hope!”

Bridging the Benefits Gap, Together



BY ALICIA CAMERON
SHARE SUPPORT PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The process of applying for public benefits like SNAP or LIHEAP isn't just an alphabet soup—it's frequently also a confusing and overwhelming process. The general application for benefits in Pennsylvania is 30 pages! Completing it online can ensure the documents aren't lost at the County Assistance Office, but it still takes a substantial amount of time and requires access to internet and a computer. Additionally, several documents must be provided alongside the application to verify information—bank statements, paystubs, a lease or one's car registration, to name a few.

In the face of these obstacles, our team saw an opportunity to further broaden our vision of building a stronger support network for our community, and we're thrilled to announce our newest service addition: submitting COMPASS applications at either our warehouse or Farmstand with a Project SHARE team member. The federal and state benefits for which residents can apply on the state portal help our clients keep their homes heated in winter, purchase food for their fam-

ilies, pay for childcare so they can attend work and generally make ends meet during times when resources are stretched thin. By walking alongside our clients in this task, we bolster the wellbeing of both our clients and our community.

What does this process look like? In Pennsylvania, certain community organizations are given the ability to submit applications directly to the Department of Human Services (DHS). We've now submitted about half of a dozen, and while it's still a daunting hour or so of work, the process is more relaxed—we've even laughed sometimes! During a session, we guide clients through the online application, answering questions and helping them understand what information they need to give. We determine together which documents will meet the state requirements and then upload them directly into the portal for a DHS caseworker to use in their review. After the appointment, we follow up, checking that the client has received a call for an interview, strategizing any outstanding application requirements and ensuring they have the

track the process themselves as well. Giving this support strengthens a client's confidence and the likelihood of the application's success.

As we've brought this project to fruition, I've been reminded frequently of one of the most useful things I've learned in my career: the impact of trauma, including poverty and food insecurity, on a person's brain. In the face of trauma, the brain locks down its functioning to center it around survival, our fight-or-flight (or freeze or fawn) response keeping us alive and protected in the best ways it knows. The downside of this survival mode, especially in the modern world, is that we lose access to the parts of our brain that help us think ahead or accomplish detailed tasks. The continual stress some of our neighbors face keeps them from being able to effectively do the work of things like analyzing and completing SNAP applications.

In assisting our clients with this paperwork, then, we're working further to counteract the impact of the stress of food insecurity. We're able to provide knowledgeable, compassionate support that helps ensure our neighbors have greater access to benefits that can help them maintain stability. This lifts all of us: families can afford groceries, the community receives increased revenue and fewer households wonder how they'll afford rent next month.

Interested in supporting this project, or would like to inquire about SHARE support services? Contact Alicia at support@projectsharepa.org

Alicia is a western PA native with degrees from Messiah and Boston Universities. Her vocational passion is anti-poverty work, helping fostering a more equitable world for all. Outside of work, she's an unabashed nerd, dotting auntie and often off chasing interesting birds.

Client Services Coordinator Natasha Thumma packs a ReEntry Bag in the distribution room with most-needed items, including chicken and tuna pouches, instant oatmeal and fruit cups. February 13, 2026.

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St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church
Trinity Global Methodist Church
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Dignity on Day One: Our ReEntry Bags

Our ReEntry Bag program has grown, serving 375 individuals in 2025 alone. Discover what makes this critical program possible.

Every day, individuals leave institutions and step into the unknown.

Whether returning from incarceration, completing drug and alcohol rehabilitation, transitioning out of homelessness as a veteran or

escaping the trauma of sex trafficking, reentry is often overwhelming. It's a moment filled with hope, but also uncertainty.

In 2021, Ashley Ferguson, the Reentry Coordinator for Cumberland County, saw that gap and co-created what would become the ReEntry Bag program. She worked with our previous Client Services Coordinator and myself when I was an intern. This lit a fire in me that I didn't realize was there.

It started as a small but meaningful effort, packing just 15 to 20 boxes at a time for individuals within the judicial system. At its core there was one simple but powerful idea: everyone deserves dignity as they begin again.

Each bag is thoughtfully assembled with essential food items that include 4-5 days of breakfasts, lunches, dinners and snacks. Everything is easy to open, simple to prepare and intentionally planned. Each recipient also receives Project SHARE's information, creating a direct connection to continued support. But more than that, each bag carries a message: you are seen, you are supported and you are not alone.

Today, the ReEntry Bag program has grown into something much larger. Through grant funding and strong community partnerships, we've expanded beyond the judicial system to support multiple organizations and populations. What were once heavy boxes are now easy-to-carry backpacks designed with dignity and accessibility in mind.

Individuals leaving jail, rehabilitation programs, homeless veterans and survivors of trafficking each have their own story, but all are in need of the same thing: a fair chance at starting over.

"The ReEntry food bags have become a critical part of how we support individuals returning to the community," stated Ferguson. "For many, these bags provide immediate stability during a very vulnerable time. We've seen consistent growth in the need for these resources, and they have proven to be an effective way to ensure no one leaves incarceration without access to basic food and essentials. This partnership continues to make a meaningful difference in successful reentry."

"We at CCBA [Cumberland County Bar Association] were truly grateful to take part in a recent bag-packing event," said Shannon Lenig, Pro Bono Coordinator & Law Journal Admin, who joined the Project SHARE Board of Directors in 2025 as part of Leadership Cumberland and the Carlisle Area Chamber

of Commerce.

"It's an inspiring program that reflects Project SHARE's commitment to supporting our local reentrants with compassion, respect and tangible resources when they need it most."

The growth of this program didn't happen overnight. It took advocacy, collaboration and a shared belief that reentry support matters. It also took people willing to see humanity in others, especially in moments when it's often overlooked.

For me, this work is deeply personal.

As someone who has 13 years of sobriety from addiction, I understand firsthand how heavy that transition can feel. I know what it's like to walk out of a place and not just face the world, but also the weight of your past. I know how small something like a bag of essential food might seem to others, but how, in that moment, it can mean everything to the person receiving it.

Being part of this program isn't just something I do, it's something I believe in at my core. It's a reminder of where I've been, and more importantly, what's possible when someone is given even a small amount of support and dignity.

That personal connection has driven me to help develop this initiative. Through securing grants alongside our Development Director, Lisa Maddux, and building relationships with partner organizations, I've been able to play a role in expanding the program's impact, ensuring more individuals receive not just a bag, but a sense of stability when they need it most.

I'm also honored to have been nominated and voted onto the Executive Committee for the Reentry Coalition as a model reentrant where I can continue advocating for stronger support systems and more opportunities

for individuals to rebuild their lives.

What makes the ReEntry Bag program so powerful isn't just what's inside the bags, it's what they represent. They represent second chances. They represent dignity. They represent a community that refuses to give up on people. And sometimes, that's where change begins. Not with something big or overwhelming, but with something simple, intentional, and full of care. A bag. A beginning. A reminder that no one has to start over alone.

A graduate of Boiling Springs, Natasha Thumma first interned with Project SHARE during her final year of college, where she earned her bachelor's degree in human services, with a concentration in addiction. Natasha has a sweet daughter and a wonderful son. She watches football and hosts football soup Sundays for her family. She loves hosting all holidays at her home for the entire family. Natasha is driven by helping others and giving back what she's been given.





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