



connections

Providence Connections, Inc.

SPRING 2009

www.providenceconnections.org

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contributor choice...

Providence Family Support Center

United Way
Contributor Choice **#1352582**

Amelia House

United Way
Contributor Choice **#945178**

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Providence Connections' 2009 Backyard Barbeque

Friday, June 26, 2009
6:15 p.m.

John Heinz History Center
12 Smallman Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Join us for dinner, drinks and lots of fun at the first barbeque of the summer!

Individual tickets: \$75

Picnic Table for 8: \$550

Event tickets include free admission to History Museum exhibits from 4:30-6 p.m.

For tickets or more information, call 412.766.3860.

All proceeds from the 2009 Backyard Barbeque will benefit the many diverse programs and services provided by Providence Connections' ministries.



2009 Backyard Barbeque Raffle Tickets Now Available!

First Prize: A pair of tickets for seven Steelers' home games and one preseason game

Cost: \$5/ticket or \$20/book of tickets

Call 412.766.3860
to purchase your tickets today!

Expanded Adult Education Initiative Produces Positive Results

Life Skills for Today courses increase participants' self-sufficiency and enhance their quality of life.

"I've learned how to talk to my kids in a calm voice," wrote one grateful mother. "I learned ways to help my kids with homework without fighting with them," commented another parent. Still another noted, "I learned how to keep all my receipts so I know where my money goes." All of these parents—and many more—attended Providence Family



Support Center's *Life Skills for Today* courses over the past six months where they covered topics such as "How to Help Your Child Succeed in School"; "Living Better with Less"; "Driver's Education"; and "Anger Management."

continued on page 5

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Pittsburgh, PA 15212

412.766.3860

Message from Sister Carolyn



Dear Friends,

On December 16, I was privileged to be with the parents of our children as they received their Gifts of Providence. Parents—most of whom are single mothers, some barely out of their teens—were invited to come to Providence Family Support (PFSC) center to choose three Christmas gifts for each of their children. Gifts and gift cards valued at \$15,000 were donated by Assumption Parish, Bellevue; LaRoche College; Providence Heights Alpha School; St. Mary Parish, Glenshaw; Saints John and Paul Parish, Franklin Park; St Paul Cathedral Parish, Oakland, and many local individuals.

Noticing that some parents seemed a bit uncomfortable, I spoke with each of them, trying to put them at ease. Then, along with Tish Donze, director of PFSC, I accompanied the parents as they looked for just the right gifts for each of their children.

It was a festive time, and the parents' excitement was clearly visible as they looked at all the wonderful possibilities. Many were thrilled to find the specific gifts their children wanted. Refreshments were served both evenings, and baskets of small gifts to be used as stocking stuffers were available along with gift wrap.

With their bags filled with the kindness of others, the parents thanked us for making them feel comfortable and for the gifts that they received.

I was touched and humbled by this experience. My spirit overflows with gratitude for each of our families and for the generous individuals and organizations who gave from their abundance. This was truly a Providence moment, both in the receiving and the giving, living out our mission of strengthening families and enriching lives.

I don't know if you have any idea how much your support means to us. In these difficult economic times, every dollar or in-kind gift and every volunteer hour is put to good use. Thank you for the many ways in which you have supported Providence Connections during the 2007-08 year. You are such a blessing to us!

In Providence,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "S. Carolyn Winschel, CDP".

Sr. Carolyn Winschel, CDP, PhD
Executive Director

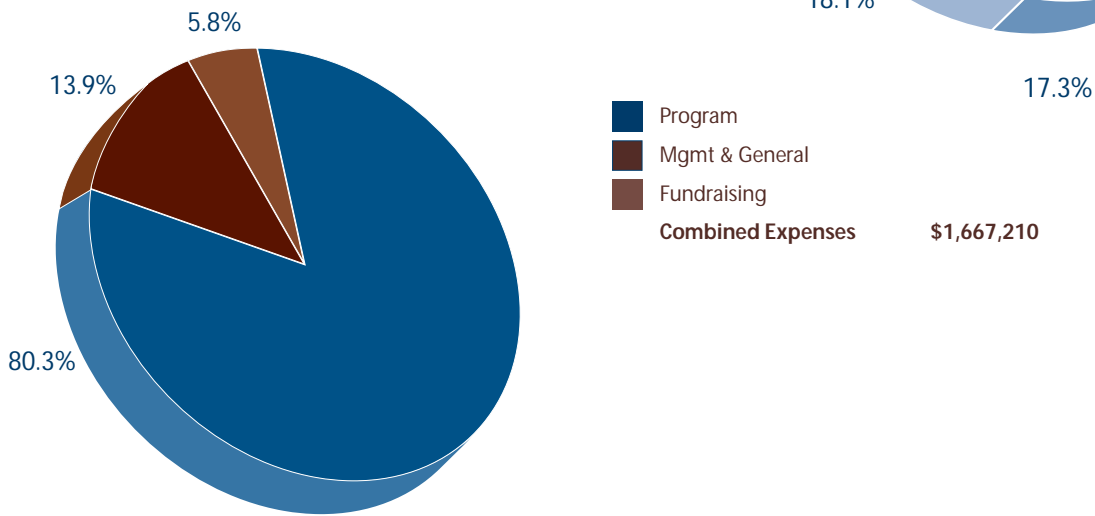
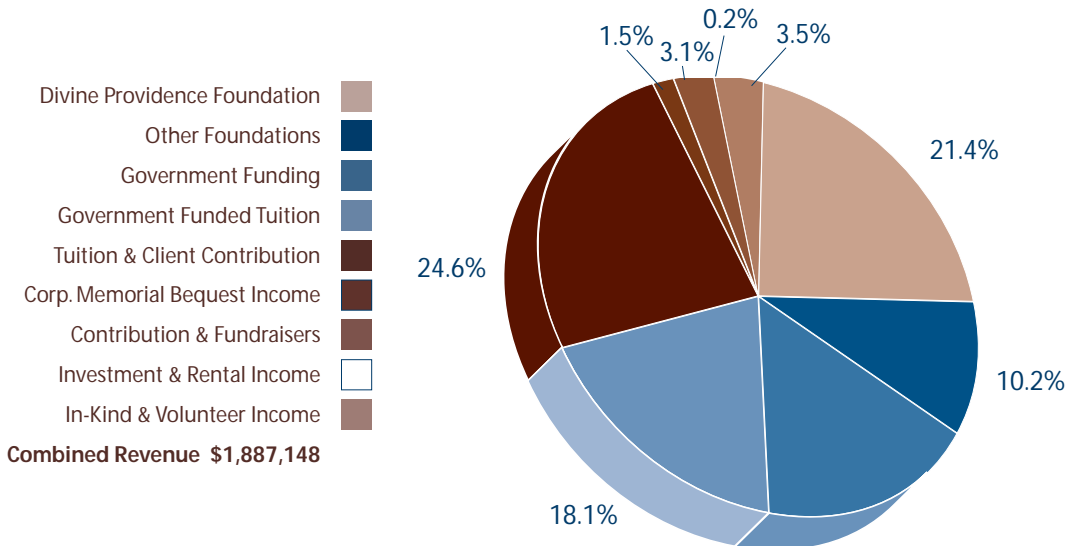
Gifts of Providence Given and Received

In all, more than \$15,000 worth of gifts and gift cards were donated to Providence Connections. These donations enabled the agency to provide up to three gifts per child to 88 families with 210 children. In addition, PFSC gave all 89 children attending the Child Care and After School Programs a gift, and each adolescent in the Teen Program received a \$25 gift card. Most families also received a gift card for needed household items. ■



Financial Highlights July 2007 — June 2008

Providence Connections Inc. was established in 1994 as the parent corporation for the ministries of the Sisters of Divine Providence. Today, the programs administered by Providence Connections include: Providence Family Support Center, an outreach ministry that serves children and families living on the North Side of the City of Pittsburgh and Amelia House, a SAFE House located in Clarion County that provides shelter and support services for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. In fiscal year 2008, Providence Connections' ministries provided services to over 252 families and 405 children.



PCI Supports the Pittsburgh Steelers

On Friday, February 6, Providence Connections' staff held a pep rally to help cheer the Pittsburgh Steelers on to their sixth Super Bowl victory! All of the children who attend Providence Family Support Center were encouraged to wear black and gold and join in the chants, cheers and spirit of this momentous occasion. The children also received Terrible Towels courtesy of Quest Fore.

Thank You to Our Donors

Providence Connections is the grateful recipient of thousands of generous contributions. Each contribution helps to ensure that the vital work of the agency and its ministries is sustained. With gratitude, we acknowledge the following contributions made and services provided between July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2008.

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Director, Amelia House

Expanded Adult Education Initiative Produces Positive Results continued from page 1

In all, 67 adults and 84 children participated in the life skills program between July and December 2008 thanks to a generous \$65,000 grant, which enabled PFSC staff to expand its course selection, make transportation available for families who needed it, offer dinner for the whole family, and provide child care services for children while their parents attend class. Children ages 5 and up are engaged in fun learning activities while the infants and toddlers are showered with lots of love and attention. All the children have time to enjoy playing with age appropriate toys in the PFSC gymnasium.

The enhanced *Life Skills for Today* program consists of a total of 10 courses, each six weeks in length, which are designed to enrich and expand participants' knowledge and basic life skills with the goal of increasing their self-sufficiency and improving their quality of life. Participants also earn valuable gift cards for participation and perfect attendance.

All of the *Life Skills for Today* courses are aimed at providing parents with practical tools and skills. At the beginning of each class, facilitators surveyed the needs of participants and adapted their classes

accordingly. For example, the "Living Better with Less" course focused on budgeting and reducing costs in the home. Participants were able to choose the areas that were most important to them and the facilitator provided practical ideas to help participants make positive changes at home. Grocery shopping was such a topic. Parents were provided with valuable information such as: stores expect six out of every 10 items shoppers buy to be unplanned purchases, and most customers go to the store three to four times a week. This helped participants value creating a specific grocery list that they stick to when in the store and reducing the number of times they shop.

The next set of *Life Skills for Today* courses began in February with "Loving Each Other," which focuses on building healthy relationships, and a second "Driver's Education" course, which was added due to popular demand. "The first Driver's Education class had 25 participants and a long waiting list made up of individuals, both young and old alike, who need a permit and help understanding what the test entails," says Tish Donze, director of Providence Family

Support Center. "A few even struggled with reading so this course was a blessing as it helped us to identify an additional need."

Programs that are meaningful and effective take time to plan, recruit and implement. When provided with the right supports like transportation, dinner and child care, parents do respond and grow. "The funding Providence Family Support Center received to enhance its parenting classes was truly invaluable," reports Sr. Carolyn Winschel, executive director of Providence Connections. "Without it, we wouldn't have had the resources necessary to hire the skilled facilitators, caregivers, van driver or cook that we needed to pull everything together and provide a well-rounded, popular and valuable program. We have been truly blessed to be able to offer practical information which has resulted in more positive parenting and happier family life." ■

Our Ministries at a Glance

Providence Family Support Center

After School Programs Enrich Body, Mind and Spirit

January 2009 was truly a month of new beginnings for Providence Family Support Center's After School Program, which benefited from both cultural and academic enhancements that take advantage of the wealth of arts and cultural programs available in and around the City of Pittsburgh.

Research shows that children who participate in the arts are inspired creatively and have greater self-confidence and self-esteem. Studies also have proven that the arts stimulate the learning experience by reinforcing learning in other disciplines including math, reading and writing, which ultimately helps children succeed in other areas of life. With the goal of enhancing school-age children's exposure to the arts, Providence Family Support Center enhanced its After School Program with new programs designed to enrich the body, mind and spirit.

The new programs include Ballet, Gospel Mime/Dance, Comic Book Development and Mathlete Competitions. Highlights of the programs include:

Ballet: In an interactive presentation offered by the Pittsburgh Ballet, children learned ballet FUNDamentals. The program offered children the opportunity to experience a story told through dance and to use ballet and pointe shoes to learn the five basic ballet positions of the feet and arms. In addition, Kimberly Adams, a Duquesne University mentor with Strong Women/Strong Girls offered to teach the girls ballet on an ongoing basis. The girls are excited and having a lot of fun as Kimberly shares her dance knowledge through this new program.

Gospel Mime/Dance: Syreeta Davis, the After School Program coordinator has begun teaching Gospel Mime/Dance to the school-age girls. Gospel Mime and Dance provides the girls with another way to



express their creativity through music and song. The girls' goal is to share a performance with the entire PFSC community at a future Family Fun Night and, ultimately, to perform at a local nursing home as a community service project.

Comic Book Development: In this new program, children are encouraged to create their own comic book character and complete a special story.

Mathlete Competitions: This component of the After School Program focuses on the development of basic math skills with a focus on making math fun.

Throughout the winter months, the PFSC school-age children also enjoyed special field trips courtesy of Tickets for Kids to Carnegie Science Center, the Solomon Steel Pan Drum Facility and the National Aviary.

Amelia House

Located in Clarion County, Amelia House is a ministry sponsored by the Sisters of Divine Providence that provides long-term, safe shelter and hospitality for women and their children who are homeless and/or fleeing domestic violence.

Climate Change

By Sister Susan Dale, CDP, Resident Director

In today's world it is impossible to ignore the climate changes around us. News reports continue to indicate a rise in earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, forest fires, melting glaciers and, of course, who could forget Hurricane Katrina?

Comparable to climate change is something called "Societal Change", which is affected by its own "storms". I have dubbed the most recent societal storm "Hurricane Recession". "Hurricane Recession" has been marked by closing businesses, high prices, job loss, repossessed cars, foreclosed homes and generally very trying times. As a result, the "face of homelessness" has been altered. In recent months, this "storm" has had a significant effect on the population of Amelia House, increasing the demand for shelter and services due to homelessness.

The reasons for the increase in the numbers of women and children facing homelessness are many, yet they are all striving for the same goal: to achieve freedom and independence. To help them achieve these goals, Amelia House offers a peaceful, just and safe place for homeless women and children to stay, along with individual counseling and tutoring, plus classes that teach parenting skills, budget management and goal setting. Hopefully, these services enable Amelia House residents to grow in trust, self-esteem and self-knowledge as they seek to find a job, locate affordable housing and discover ways to meet their transportation needs.

As the women and children of Amelia House practice their new-found life skills, they appear positive, hopeful and grateful for the warm, safe and comfortable place to stay while they "weather the storm". They even have found ways to turn this latest storm into an opportunity for some fun and relaxing family moments, creating a snowman, snow fort and snow angels in Amelia House's yard.

It is my hope that we all can learn many things from these women and children. Humility, courage and rising to the challenge are at the top of my list. It is through my guests that I experience the wonder of Providence enveloping me as I deal with the little storms that erupt in my life. May all of your storms result in a similar climate change that produces a rainbow of hope and promise in these uncertain times.

Welcome New Employees & Board Members

In recent months, Providence Connections welcomed three new employees and one new Board Member:

Christian Buggey was hired as Providence Family Support Center's new teen coordinator in November. He comes to PFSC with a B.A. in Urban Parks Administration and Recreation Management. Chris has worked with youth for 12 years in various capacities at Pressley Ridge School, as a community recreation director for the City of Pittsburgh, and as the athletic director of a private health club in Carnegie. The staff and teens are pleased that Chris has joined the PFSC team

Syreeta Davis also joined Providence Family Support Center in November as the new coordinator for the After School Program. Syreeta, who was born and raised on the North Side, is a graduate of Edinboro University. She previously worked with school-age children at both Clayton Academy and Urban Impact. Her academic and cultural background, combined with her previous work with at-risk youth, make Syreeta a true asset to the After School Program.

Tina Fedko joined Providence Connections in a part-time capacity as administrative

assistant to the executive director. Tina comes to Providence Connections with a wealth of non-profit experience having acted as a freelance marketing consultant to North Catholic High School since 2007 and serving as director of media relations and marketing at La Roche College from 1994-2001. Providence Connections is very glad to welcome Tina to the corporate staff.

Sister Judith Rotunda, CDP, was elected to Providence Connections' Board of Directors in January 2009. Sr. Judith has an MA degree in Education and is certified as an elementary school principal. Sr. Judith has served on many boards and committees, particularly in the areas of finance and budgeting. She was both a teacher and a principal at a number of Catholic schools in the Pittsburgh area from 1962-1998, and has been serving as co-manager at St. Ambrose Manor in Spring Hill since 1998. Sr. Judith is a welcome addition to the Board. Welcome New Employees & Board Members ■

Our Wish List

As a non-profit agency, Providence Connections, Inc. exists only because of the generosity of others. In addition to the income the agency receives from private foundations, government programs and individual donors, the staff relies heavily on contributions of supplies, equipment, toys and other materials to provide education and support services for women, children and families in need. The following are just a few of the items that Providence Connections staff and participating families would appreciate receiving this fall:

- Office and/or board room chairs
- Blender
- Gift cards for Giant Eagle, Walmart, K-Mart, Target
- Paper products (toilet paper, tissues, paper towels, wet wipes, plates and cups)
- Kitchen utensils
- Storage containers with lids
- Pot holders
- Dish & laundry detergent

Despite Trying Times, Donors Answer 2008 Annual Appeal

An ongoing problem, and one that has been exacerbated by the country's recent economic downturn, is that many of Pittsburgh's North Side families who would like to enroll their children in Providence Family Support Center's child care programs cannot afford the tuition fees we must charge in order to maintain our array of offerings for children and youth. Likewise, it is becoming more and more difficult for PFSC to continue conducting free family programming as a means of strengthening relationships between these same parents and their children.



Providence Connections
hasn't missed a
beat thanks to the
positive response

However, despite these very tough economic times, Providence Connections hasn't missed a beat thanks to the positive response from faithful local individuals, corporations and organizations who have responded to the 2008 Annual Appeal. To date, Providence Connections has received close to \$14,000 in response to its latest appeal for tuition and programming assistance. With these generous donations, Providence Family Support Center can continue to provide the programs and services aimed at strengthening families, enriching their lives, and giving them hope for their futures. ■

March

4, 11 & 25 – *Life Skills for Today Courses*, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

17 – *Family Activity Night*, 6 - 7:30 p.m.

April

1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 – *Life Skills for Today Courses*, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

4 – *Easter Celebration*, 6 p.m.

6, 7, 8, & 9 – *All Day Care, After School Program*, 7 a.m. – 6 p.m.

10 – **Good Friday, PFSC Closed**

13 – **In-Service Day, PFSC Child Care & After School Programs Closed**

21 – *Family Activity Night*, 6 - 7:30 p.m.

May

6, 13, 20 & 27 – *Life skills for Today Courses*, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

12 – *Family Activity Night*, 6 - 7:30 p.m.

16-17 – *Parent Council Retreat*, Providence Villa

19 – *Annual Family Support Conference* (Open to All Parents), Westin Convention Center Hotel, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

19 – *Providence Connections Board of Directors Meeting*, 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.

25 – **Memorial Day, PFSC Closed**

June

3 & 10 – *Life Skills for Today*, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

12 – *Last Day of After School Program*

22 – **August 17** – *Summer Day Camp*

26 – *Backyard Barbeque Fundraiser*, Heinz History Center, 6:15 p.m.

30 – *Family Activity Night*, 6 - 7:30 p.m.

Unless otherwise noted, all of the events listed are free and will take place at:

Providence Family Support Center
3113 Brighton Road,
Pittsburgh, PA 15212.

For more information or to register for any of the above, please contact
Family Program Specialist
Cindi Hopson-Smith
at 412.766.6730.



**providence
connections, inc**

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www.providenceconnections.org

OUR MISSION

Providence Connections, Inc., sponsored by the Sisters of Divine Providence, is rooted in the congregation's heritage of service and justice. As a lead agency, we provide vision, support and governance to our two ministries that serve families in need.

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