

ORION Communities

Could This Be You?



More than 40 percent of Americans between ages 25 and 60 will be poor for at least a year, said Mark Rank, a professor of social work at Washington University in St. Louis.

"It's not that people aren't working hard or trying," Rank said. "But the reach of poverty is really wide."

More surprising, Rank said, is that nearly 80 percent of the U.S. population ages 25 to 60

will have, at some point in their lives, used a public-assistance program, lived in a home where the head of household has been unemployed at some time during the year, or lived in poverty or near-poverty, often defined as 150 percent of the federal poverty level.

So states an article in the [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) on October 28 of this year. It is hard to believe that people in the United

States are this close to struggling to provide food and shelter for their families but it's true.

As the weather turns colder, the bills for heating, the need for warm clothes and the end to seasonal work often finds our neighbors struggling. Orion is honored to assist those in most dire need in the community.

Mission Statement

Orion is a non-profit community based organization that provides interim case management, outreach, and supportive services to residents of the Greater Phoenixville Area. We connect residents to services that engender hope, dignity, and self-reliance for those experiencing poverty, disability, or illness.

Unique Goals

Part of Orion's mantra is to not let anyone 'fall through the cracks.' But what does that really mean? Sometimes a non-profit organization has limits on who they can help due to their charter or receipt of government money. As a result, people can slip through the intricate web of support services through no fault of their own.

Orion Communities does

not accept any government funding which means we are not limited to who we can serve. Orion has been called 'the safety net for safety nets'. Our volunteers are there to help find creative and collaborative ways to support our neighbors in need.

Orion connects individuals with resources in the community and emergency funds when

available. It is with great satisfaction that Orion volunteers can say, 'Yes, let's see what we can do to help.'



Phoenixville is a Happening Town!



People outside of the Phoenixville area may think of our town as a sleepy little town, struggling to find it's place from the big iron factory days. But if you come into town you can find so many exciting restaurants, shops, both live and movie theaters plus regular festivals and street events. There is something going on to fit everyone's budget.

Orion participates in as many local events as possible. We want to be sure the community knows about our work both so people can get involved but also so neighbors in need know they have an advocate right in town.

This Fall, Orion volunteers had tables set up at the BluesFest and PumpkinFest as well as

local church flea markets and the Kiwanis cookout. We also participated in First Friday's on Bridge Street with treats and literature to draw people in and talk about Orion's mission.

Check out our website for upcoming events in the new year.

Orion will be open for the Phoenixville Christmas Parade on December 5th 7-9pm!

"There still is a lot of suffering that continues to come through Orion's door looking for help."

Orion Volunteer

Volunteer Story

A single mom came into the Orion office and explained that even though she was working full time, she was \$600 short for security and first month's rent for a new apartment. She had an unsafe living situation and had the opportunity to improve her situation. She was anxious to move to a

safe space.

We contacted two churches and one other non-profit to get enough funds to supplement the amount she was able to provide in order for her to successfully move to her new apartment. This woman was delighted – so appreciative and

thankful! She had no idea it was possible to raise so much money so quickly to keep her and her children safe.



Strength in Community Collaboration

Orion Communities values our partnerships with the community to assist our neighbors in need. We recently received a request from a local agency on behalf of her consumer.

The case worker stated that a modest amount of rental assistance was needed to avoid potential

eviction for this individual. Through advocacy with the housing manager, and a (modest) donation from Orion's Emergency Community Fund, we were able to provide the necessary resources to secure this residence. This man and his caseworker were very grateful.

These stories are possible through the generous support of private donations. Orion's Emergency Community Fund is a fundamental part of our mission which supports the ability to provide important funds to those neighbors with urgent needs.



Holiday Greetings!

On behalf of the Orion Board and Volunteers, we want to extend our warmest wishes during this holiday season for health and peace to you and to your families.

It is at this time of year when we are most humbled by the kindness of others and the willingness to help our neighbors in need.

Through the generosity of heart, so many individuals and organizations make it possible for Orion Communities to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the Greater Phoenixville area for over 35 years.

We value our relationships with our community partners, generous donors, volunteers and

the amazing individuals and families that we have had the honor to meet and serve.

Wishing each of you peace in the New Year.

Ken George
Chair
Orion Board of Directors



Safe & Affordable Housing

An Orion volunteer recently shared this story...

She walked in saying she wasn't sure how or if we could help her but she didn't know where else to stop. She was tearful as she talked about trying to

find an affordable apartment for herself, husband and 2 young kids. She said he works full time and they are really trying their best; but she felt guilty for not working but childcare was so expensive. I told her she did have a job, being

a mom!! I offered her encouragement and various resources to help stabilize their family finances. I also invited her to stop in just to talk or give us updates. We hugged and she said she felt better!

Would your family like to add smiles to another family's holiday by providing a special dinner and/or gifts? Give us a call and we'll help make the connection!

Board Development

Orion's responsibilities extend beyond serving our clients. We also need to remain an organization that can continue to implement our mission and serve the community.

This year has been one of transitions where the Board has taken on managing the day-to-day operations of Orion. This has been an incredible opportunity to get hands on experience with the needs of the most vulnerable in the

community.

Often individuals join a Board due to their commitment to the program and must learn about basic responsibilities of a non-profit Board.

Fortunately resources are available. In October, an Orion Board member and a volunteer attended the Institute for Board Trustees: What Every Non-Profit Board Member Needs to Know, hosted by

Chester County Community Foundation.

"Not only was great information provided", said Board member Keith Burress, "But it was a great opportunity to meet other non-profit Board members and talk about common concerns."

Many thanks to the CC Community Foundation for providing this educational and networking opportunity!





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We're on the Web!

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Answering the Call

The cold days in October and November brought more people to Orion looking for services. There were the familiar requests – bus tokens, temporary housing, info about area resources. And now the cold weather related requests were increasing– help with utility bills and winter

coats plus the beginning of holiday requests – where to get a free turkey for Thanksgiving and inquiries for free children’s toys for December holidays.

All donations to Orion add smiles in the community! We can help cover co-pays for a medical

appointment or assist a family to find warm, safe housing and get out of their chilly car. Plus your gift helps keep the lights on at Orion so neighbors in need can talk about their concerns or use our resource center.

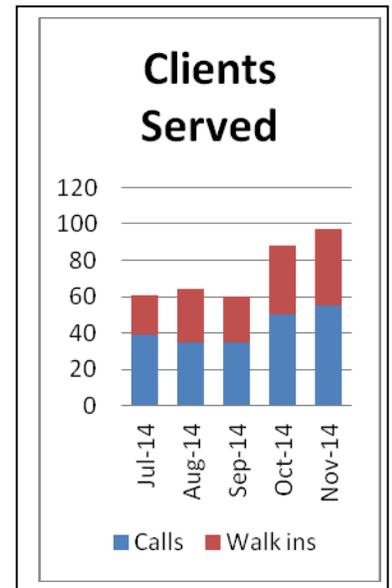
About Orion...

Orion Communities is 100% supported through non-government funding. Our clients are individuals and families in the greater Phoenixville area who benefit from Orion’s interim case management, emergency funding, or access to our resource center. We strive to connect everyone who comes to us with the

necessary resources to move forward in their lives.

Volunteering and your charitable donation makes a difference in you and your community! *You* can help our neighbors in need.

Thank you!



NAME _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

ENCLOSED \$20 _____ \$40 _____ \$75 _____ \$150 _____ OTHER _____

I want to join Orion Communities, neighbors helping neighbors

Provide transportation Answering phones Grant writing Website/social media input

Emergency daycare Fund raising events Other _____

Or go to our website to make a donation by credit card or paypal!
www.orioncommunities.org