

ORION Communities

Summer 2016

Check Out the New Digs!

Orion has moved! Our lease was up and we have grown so much that we needed to find a new home. Things didn't go according to plan but, in many ways, it worked out better than planned.

It took several months to sort out the lease and permits but it all eventually came together. We had hoped to add carpeting in a year or two but we received an anonymous gift for carpet and a new Board member tracked down even better carpet at a lower price than we had hoped for.

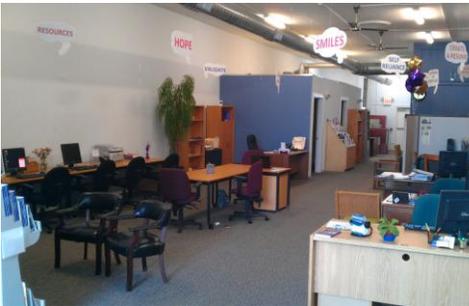
Our phones and internet

were prematurely switched to the new office a day earlier than planned. With a minimally functioning office, we decided to move to the new office and our neighbors and clients had us all moved by lunchtime!

Then came the unpacking and tracking down additional furniture. Orion staff and volunteers had been sharing overlapping space at the old address. Our resourceful friends found furnishings at Habitat For Humanity Restore, a local church and an office remodel – again at the right price – free to almost free.

On April 13th we had our Open House where we were pleased to show off our new home. If you haven't stopped by yet, please do so! Check out the new Orion at 237 Bridge Street!

Thank you for all the good wishes as we serve our neighbors in need.



Orion's new office has allowed us to grow from 5 desks/work stations to 12 and from 1 consult room to 3 with additional meeting areas. Several partner organizations from the middle of Chester County can now meet clients here in town.



A Night of Music & Stories

What's the best way to share good news? It's been such an incredible year for Orion and our clients - we really wanted to shout our gratitude from the roof tops to all of our friends, volunteers, donors and clients for the creative and hard work that has gone into making our community a better place for everyone.

Fortunately the right combination found us. On May 5th, the very talented vocalist Liz Faranda and pianist Derek Maninfor gave a benefit concert for Orion at

the always elegant Kimberton Inn.

The evening opened with a welcome from Orion's Board president, Ken George. Music and stories alternated throughout the evening as the guests dined. We shared client stories, the new Orion stories and some context for the challenges our neighbors face each day.

The evening ended with Keith Burress, Orion's Board Vice President, inviting everyone to visit Orion and an inquiry as to whether we

should ask Liz and Derek to perform for us again next year. It was a resounding 'yes!'

If you missed it this year, perhaps you will be able to join next year's celebration but please know that the invitation to stop by and get to know the new Orion is open to everyone!



A good time was had by all!
Derek and Liz mesmerized the guests with their musical talents.



Hoorah!
A Matching Gift
Challenge for Orion

This truly is an incredibly generous and caring community! Orion has been challenged to raise \$50,000 in new gifts – either from new donors or increases from last year's gifts – to receive an additional **\$25,000!**

Can you assist us in spreading the word about Orion's work in the community to help our most vulnerable neighbors? Every new friend brings new contacts and partnerships that create new possibilities.

Thank you!



We are grateful to all our donors for their silent auction contributions!

DeMutis Group
 Eve's Jewelry
 Vecchia Pizzeria
 The Thai Place
 Aman Indian Bistro
 Liki's Sushi & Hibachi
 El Burrito
 CCGC Greek Yogurt Shop
 Great American Pub
 Bridge Street Chocolates
 Phoenixville Area Time Bank
 And friends

Egads – the Rolodex is Over Flowing!

You know how it is when you have a good problem? The kids are making cookies faster than you can get them in the oven? Well, that happened to Orion last year... we had so many new friends - volunteers, clients, and donors that we knew we needed a better way to keep track of everyone than paper files.

We talked with partner agencies to learn how they managed client records and friends' contacts. There were quite a few horror stories with expensive and/or cumbersome computer programs.

However, serendipity stepped in again. A recent retiree who happens to be a business analyst consultant and computer wonk thought that helping a friend's non-profit sounded like a fun transition to whatever might happen next. He studied our processes, listened to our wish list and researched 3 dozen options to find a good match for Orion that was both cost and user friendly.

Additionally, **Phoenixville Community Health Foundation** awarded Orion a technology grant and **Chester County Community Foundation** awarded a

capacity building grant.

These funds made it possible to add more computers for our clients' work station, phones for the bigger office as well as uploading information for the new web based data management system.

The combination of funding and expertise has led to a smooth transition from inefficient paper searches to streamlined and friendly data storage, retrieval and management. We'll never get ahead of the kids making cookies but we feel confident about keeping track of all of our community friends.

Is a Warm, Safe Place to Stay Too Much To Hope For?

Not this winter, not in Phoenixville. This town is known for its collaborative spirit and it was again demonstrated on Martin Luther King Jr. Day when the Code Blue Ministry of Phoenixville opened as a 8pm to 8am shelter for the homeless in our community.

It's a simple concept but it really does take a community

to affect change. Ann's Heart provided the physical space for the guests and a committee was formed from St. Ann's Parish, St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Good Samaritan Shelter and Orion Communities to organize and implement a cold weather night shelter just 5 days before the blizzard Jonas dropped 2 feet of snow in town.

With the help of 127 volunteers and 4 part time staff members, the Code Blue Ministry of Phoenixville was able to house *48 individuals* this winter. As one of the guests put it, "This is a special place, every night there are people here to be sure the shelter stays open. Thank you."

Family Evicted the Day of a Blizzard – Really?

It was hard to believe that anyone would be evicted the day a two foot snow is predicted. Yet there they were, inside Orion's door... a young couple with three adorable little children in need of emergency housing.

The immediate need was met by them staying at Code Blue Ministry of Phoenixville for the weekend. The next week, Orion partnered with several organizations to help with a variety of issues including

returning them to their home.

But here's the thing, as they got to a more stable space, the couple took turns volunteering at the Code Blue Ministry overnight. It was heartwarming to see them give back to others who found themselves homeless.

Three weeks after the shelter closed for the season, the young mom sent Orion an

email...

"I know it's 5am but I can't sleep thinking about how to give back to you guys for what you gave my family. Hope, faith and our home. If you ever need any help please don't hesitate to email me or my fiance ... Here to help whenever necessary..."

There wasn't a dry eye in the office. Thanks to everyone who helped this young family during a cold, snowy week.

Neighbors helping neighbors!

Meet Orion's Treasurer – Art Munson

I have had the privilege of being a volunteer with Orion for the past 18 months, serving on the Board as Treasurer. Volunteering with Orion is a very meaningful experience for many reasons. One is that there is a palpable sense of accomplishment in what we are able to do for and with our clients.

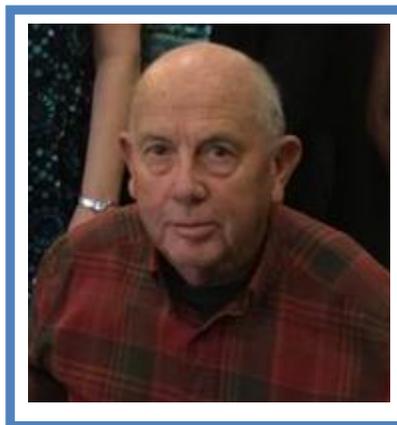
This goes beyond the amazing record of growth we have experienced recently. You can feel it in the air. Another is the unique way that Orion's volunteers and staff work together. I have volunteered with many non-profits but have never seen the level of cohesiveness between staff and volunteers that is experienced at Orion.

continues in 2016.

One of our important programs is the Community Emergency Fund. This is used to help many of our clients who have needs such as housing, utility bills, food, medical expenses, clothing, and transportation.

Working with partner organizations in the community allows us to leverage our funds by sharing the costs related to meeting some of these essential needs.

Art Munson



Pick up a coupon book at Orion for local restaurants, retail, Six Flags and more – only \$20 for *thousands* of dollars in savings and proceeds from the book sales go to helping your neighbors!

As Treasurer I would be remiss if I did not give thanks to the many individuals, foundations, and organizations that help us carry out our work. Without their funding we could not have achieved the growth we saw in 2015 and that

I would like to thank everyone in Orion that helped me with my new home. Thank you for being there when I needed you most!

~ A Client

How Would You Pay an Unexpected Bill?

A recent Federal Reserve Board survey found that 47% of respondents would struggle to come up with \$400 for an unexpected bill. **47%! (The Atlantic, 'Secret Shame of the Middle Class', May 2016.)**

At Orion, we often say that our clients are the people who are one crisis away from financial catastrophe. It could be a major car repair, an unexpected illness or a family member losing a job. But nearly half of Americans say

they would have to sell something or borrow money to pay an unexpected \$400 bill.

If members of the middle class would struggle with a surprise bill no wonder Orion's clients who have been described as the 'poorest of the poor' need support to provide basic essentials.

Nationally, 14.8% of Americans live at or below the poverty line. In Phoenixville the number is 9.2%... nearly

one in ten of our neighbors are seriously struggling on a daily basis and another sizeable portion would have difficulty paying an unexpected bill.

This is why Orion is needed and always looking for partners to find creative ways to help our neighbor



Looking Forward

Orion Communities' Board took a major risk 2 years ago when they decided to reorganize to re-evaluate the mission and needs in the greater Phoenixville area.

With a new management system, office, increasing case load and renewed funding, it is time for

Orion to focus on the future.

With the help of The Philadelphia Foundation and Sylvia Carter Consulting, Orion has begun the process of creating a strategic plan.

This is a fabulous opportunity to get input

from the community including partners, funders and clients. And then for Orion's team to think about the best direction for Orion and our community.

Stay tuned for updates as the process begins to unfold.





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Orion Communities is a
501(c)3 non-profit
organization



Volunteers Are Our Heroes!

This past year we have had the good fortune of meeting a variety of new friends who wanted to help Orion and help our neighbors.

And they did this in so many ways... office receptionists, event helpers, holiday gift and meal providers, office decorators and movers, furniture finders, donors of warm clothing and blankets, computer specialists and more.

Because of this abundant giving of time and basic essentials, Orion is able to stretch the generous monetary donations we receive to have an even greater impact.

Besides the obvious physical and financial support, there are incredible new friendships that help strengthen the bonds of our neighborhoods.



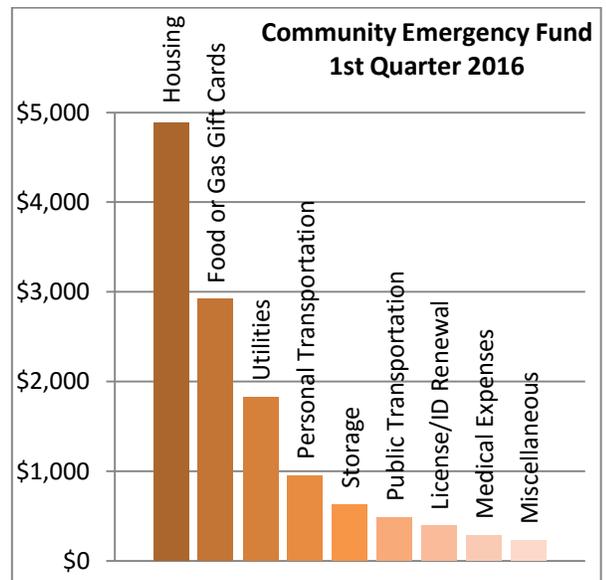
Stop by and see the new Orion and see how you can get involved. Volunteering makes a difference in you and your community!

The Impact GROWS

Case management is Orion's greatest service – our professional staff listens to our neighbors' struggles and helps them create a plan and connection to resources.

However, funds for critical needs are essential to help our neighbors rebalance their lives. The chart at right shows Orion's 2016 first quarter giving.

Our partner organizations and friends contributed an additional \$6000 in emergency assistance.... thank you for all of your support!



All day Wednesday June 8th, the Phoenixville Iron Hill Brewery & Restaurant will donate 20% of your food bill to Orion if you present this coupon – share coupons with family, friends and co-workers and support a local business giving back to the community!

Orion Communities

Coupons may not be distributed on Iron Hill premises.
On-site solicitation will result in termination of your event.
Redeem only at Iron Hill Brewery in Phoenixville, PA
Offer Valid 06/08/16 ONLY

GIVE 20%...means dine with us on Wednesday, June 08, 2016, and we'll donate 20% of your food bill (excluding alcoholic beverages, gratuity and taxes) to Orion Communities. Thank you for your support.

IRON HILL BREWERY & RESTAURANT

{ reservations strongly suggested } 130 EAST BRIDGE STREET PHOENIXVILLE, PA 19460 610 983.9333 WWW.IRONHILLBREWERY.COM

Join Orion Communities... neighbors helping neighbors!