



Winter 2025



Sharing Gratitude

Excerpts from a recent email received at Orion...

"Hello, I was **recently helped** with my past balance of rent. I would like to share some background. It may be long so I do apologize and give a trigger warning as well!

I moved in with my ex-significant-other on April 18th which at first was great until it became a nightmare. Domestic violence comes in so many layers and forms. It started out financially and escalated to emotional then verbal then physical.

On November 5th, he **physically assaulted me** nearly taking my life. November was filled with trauma as I had to face him in court to testify with a sprained ankle (on crutches), a contusion on my head, with a few markings but I was granted my restraining order for 2 years. He's currently in jail for a prior incident. I had to fight with my Property Manager over this situation. They're **holding me responsible for the damages he created**.

While making calls, it felt like door after door was closed because it was a Domestic Violence situation and all they heard was "she needs money, not our problem. She put herself in it, she got to figure it out," and **I was so close to giving up** until I spoke with Orion, Paoli Good Samaritan's Help Ministries, and Act in Faith.

You gave me so many encouraging words & positivity, **you advocated for me like no other**. Going through this has been painful and hearing someone say "I hear you, I see you, and I want to help despite your situation," makes someone who left a DV relationship beyond grateful.

Needless to say, it's very **important to have these organizations** because not only could I have lost my life, but I could've lost the roof I worked so hard to get. It gives us the hope we need to move forward and confirmation that this is temporary. It also may **create a safe space** for someone as myself to be vulnerable about their situation.

With that being said, thank you for all you've done for me. **Continue to assist others** because you truly do not know what/who you may be saving a person from. Taking the time to listen and provide resources - **support and advice goes a long way too**. This was one of the greatest Christmas gifts that you along with God could've blessed me with. May God bless you and your families!"

Orion Staff is so grateful for our wonderful partners and donors who are ready and willing to help in times of need.

Wishing everyone a healthy and brighter tomorrow!



Ten years of Warmth for All and again hundreds of coats, blankets and socks -were gifted. Thank you for keeping our neighbors warm this winter!



Bridges Out of Poverty Workshop

Empowering Communities
Through Education and Support

Jan 17th 9-12:30

St. John's Lutheran Church
355 St. John's Circle
Phoenixville



237 Bridge Street Phoenixville 610.415.1140 info@OrionHope.org
www.OrionCommunities.org





GLAD-uation!

In December, Gutsy Ladies Achieving their Destiny (GLAD) wrapped up their 2024 workshops with a special evening. A past GLAD graduate, Latasha Jones, was the guest speaker and told the inspirational journey of how she authored the children’s book “Beyond the Scars: A Story of Friendship.”

Everyone was moved by her story of resilience as a child who survived a home fire, being a single mom and, most recently, earning her nursing degree. The GLAD grads received Latasha’s book as well as “Raising the Imperfect Child” written by GLAD facilitator, Dr. Richard Lang.

The evening ended with another courageous story. During a prior GLAD session, one of the moms shared that she has a STEM-related degree but was reluctant to enter her profession after having a child. This kept her in a low-wage job and not using her talents. Through the coaching and encouragement she received from the GLAD cohort and leaders, this mom is now interviewing for a new job in STEM!

We Love Gifting Books to Kids!

It’s been 7 years since Orion started the STARS program to increase access for children from under-resourced households to explore technology and literacy through enrichment programming such as STEM workshops, gifting books, and book clubs. In 2024, **68 students** were able to participate in STARS programming and hundreds more received books at local festivals and events.

STARS funding comes from a variety of sources including private donations, PA-Education Improvement Tax Credit (PA-EITC), and grants. Last year, Orion was able to gift **10,000 books** that included bi-lingual books for our English learning families as well as multi-cultural books that reflect all the children and adults in our community.

Access to books helps develop language skills and creative thinking and it provides increased bonding opportunities and a love for reading when children read with their parents or caregivers. But books in the home can be in limited supply for many families and that’s where STARS comes in.

In December, an Orion friend committed to provide funding to expand our book distribution with new partners for the next five years! We are so honored to be able to grow the outreach that allows all children to have the tools needed to learn and thrive!

Help with a Hotel Stay

“My boys and I had just relocated from Louisiana to Pottstown, PA and had resided here for three months before our whole house caught on fire through a faulty electrical outlet. We didn’t know what we were going to do and Orion Communities jumped in and saved the day and helped with our hotel fees.

Without organizations like this, it would be impossible for individuals to succeed. We are truly grateful for all the individuals at Orion community with a big heart. Since then, I have been able to obtain a job and an apartment, and we should be moving in soon to start our new life. **Thanks again for all of the supporters out there that have helped us on our road of self-sufficiency.”**



Four decades of research with children of all ages, in varied socioeconomic and cultural groups, reveal that access to books in the home is one of the strongest predictors of educational achievement.

Children in homes with more extensive home libraries read more, have higher-level reading skills, and attain more years of education overall than those with access to fewer books, even after controlling for parental education level.

Scholastic



“I just wanted to thank you for the quick assistance that you helped me get! I really appreciated it! You are such a kind genuine soul and the world needs more people like you! Thank you so much!”

~Email to Orion Staff



From Ellen Scott, Orion Board President & Interim Executive Director

This has been quite a year of transition, but no matter the circumstances, Orion continues to address the unmet needs of those most vulnerable in our community. I am so **proud of this remarkable organization and talented team** that supports its most important and unwavering mission.

Sadly, this Fall, Orion and our new Executive Director had a mutual parting of the ways. Orion’s leadership team and staff stepped up to keep the organization on track. I have been serving as interim director with the solid help of Keith Burress. The Board has held a steady hand and Orion has **finished the year in good stead**: with your support we have served our community well and finished the year in good fiscal shape.

We are looking forward to a bright 2025: The Executive Director Search is on. Our **programs are in full swing**. Orion’s team is working wonders, **finding help and hope** where it was thought to be out of reach. Our educational programs are gearing up for what promises to be a great Spring. And we have been blessed with a large donation that will support our book gifting program for the next five years! Thank you for your support and your belief in Orion and its mission. It’s important.

PS: **Casino Royale looks to be wonderfully fun!** Join us February 28th. More information is on the back page or go to OrionCommunities.org/Casino-Royale... hope to see you there!

Dramatic Increase in Homelessness in 2024

Each January, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) conducts a Point-In-Time count of homeless individuals. The Philadelphia Inquirer reported on December 28, 2024 that nationally there was an 18.1% increase compared to 2023. “Among the most concerning national trends was a nearly 40% rise in family homelessness.”

On December 27, 2024, USA Today reported on the same Point-In-Time count data and wrote, “Many cities have struggled to build more affordable housing in recent years, while some communities have pushed for harsher laws banning tents and sleeping in public spaces. More local leaders across the U.S. need to invest in strategies to keep people in their homes when money is tight.”

Again this year, **hundreds of families reached out to Orion** to share their pressing challenges and request resources. In their time of need, it is good that people know there are local resources available.

Orion is grateful for the 47 years of community support that has made it possible to provide assistance to our most vulnerable neighbors. Extra gratitude to our friends who helped to exceed the \$47,000 Match Challenge at the end of 2024, and to all of you who help to assist our neighbors in the New Year. We are so grateful!

A woman called because recently she had to stop working due to a massive heart attack. This happened to overlap with her partner having become disabled and waiting for benefits to be processed and approved. They could not afford to pay for home heating oil and were concerned about how they were going to keep warm during this season of recovery. Fortunately, with the support of a private donor, Orion could offer funds from its HEAT program which can provide up to \$750 in oil or propane during the winter months. HEAT helped bridge the couple when funds were tight and assured that they would be warm over the winter. She shed tears of gratitude and asked that the donors be thanked for the HEAT program.

Building Connections with our Elder Neighbors - Case Manager’s Story of Mutual Impact

“I assisted an elderly couple this fall. The husband has multiple forms of cancer as well as other health conditions. He called me back several weeks later and was so grateful for the resources that I gave him. He is now connected with the social worker where he is receiving treatment plus another organization was able to help the couple with one month’s rent.

He said, “I don’t even know how to put into words how much you helped us. I just wanted to call to reiterate how grateful I am for Orion’s help.” I let him know that he is welcome to call and keep giving me updates as this connection has meant just as much to me as it did to him.”



Match Challenge

Neighbors helping Neighbors!



Together We Can Do This!

A single dad, with two daughters, had a full-time job but fell behind on his rent due to unexpected bills. He owed \$1957. He hit the ground running and started reaching out to see who could assist them to avoid eviction.

He called Orion and he was given additional ideas and resources on who might partner to cover the past due rent. With the resources he secured, Orion was able to assist with \$457 – the amount needed to get full resolution of his past due rent.

This father called back several days later grateful for Orion's support and said he truly feels like his family has a new lease on life because of the assistance they received from Orion.



237 Bridge Street
Phoenixville, PA 19460

Casino Royale

Immerse yourself in an evening of refined indulgence with cocktails, gourmet dining, and the exhilaration of casino games –all in support of a remarkably worthy cause.

Friday, February 28, 2025

VIP Lounge 6:00 pm
7:00 pm till 11:00 pm

RiverCrest Golf Club & Preserve

100 RiverCrest Drive
Phoenixville, PA 19460

Music – Casino Games – Dinner – Cocktail

