

Spring, 2024



Volun-PEER Newsletter

A Publication of the Schuylkill County Ombudsman Program:
Dedicated to Volunteers and PEERs

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PEER Graduation at Tremont Health & Rehab Center

After several hiccups, 6 dedicated - and very patient - residents graduated from PEER Training on January 23, 2024 at Tremont Health and Rehab Center.

The training began in October, 2023 and was scheduled to be completed in late November. Despite the challenges, this intrepid group began advocating for their fellow residents.

Following the 5 training sessions, the Activity Department sponsored a



celebration for the PEERs and their families and friends, as well as the residents and staff from the home.

Activity Director, Cari Kohr, and her staff, prepared the main dining

room with purple decorations and served cake and ice cream following the ceremony in which all PEERs received their badges and certificates.

The PEERs and residents were then treated to polka dancing!

Congratulations to our newest PEERs: Karen Woerner, Bonnie Bliestine, James Catherman, Doris Bennett, Lori Ice, and Lucille Blickley. We're happy to have you as part of our program! Congratulations!

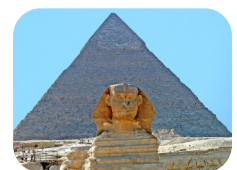


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Did you know?

- The word "spring" comes from the Old English "springan" meaning "to leap" or "burst forward"
- Daffodils, tulips, dandelions, lilies, and lilacs are typically the first flowers of spring
- The Great Sphinx was built by ancient Egyptians to point to the rising sun directly on the spring equinox



Training Calendar

Volunteers are invited and encouraged to participate in on-line training modules offered by the **PA Department of Aging, Consumer Voice, and the Learning Management System (LMS)** as well as **Network Meetings**.

All Certified Ombudsmen (Staff and Volunteers) are required to log 18 hours of continuing education for each federal fiscal year (October 1 - September 30).

The next **Network Meeting** will be held May 16 at the



Lackawanna County 911 Center beginning at 10 am.

PEER Meetings will resume as soon as we can gather safely.

Contact Eileen for additional information.

National Volunteer Week

The month of April is recognized as Global Volunteer Month, with April 21-27, 2024 as National Volunteer Week.

Volunteering offers numerous advantages to both the individuals and the community. Here are some of the key benefits:

Personal Fulfillment: Volunteering provides a sense of purpose and fulfillment. It allows you to contribute to causes you care about, fostering a positive impact on your well-being.

Skill Development: Volunteering offers opportunities to learn new skills or enhance existing ones. Whether it's

communication, teamwork, or leadership, volunteering helps you grow personally and professionally.

Social Connections: Volunteering connects you with like-minded people who share your interests. It's an excellent way to build social networks and form lasting friendships.

Health Benefits: Studies suggest that volunteering can improve mental and physical health. It reduces stress, boosts mood, and promotes overall well-being.

Community Building: Volunteers play a vital role in strengthening com-



munities. By contributing time and effort, you actively participate in community development and positive change.

Sense of Belonging: Being part of a volunteer team creates a sense of belonging and shared purpose. It reinforces the idea that we're all in this together.

The rewards go beyond the hours spent - it's about making a difference and leaving a lasting legacy.

Watergate Cake

A vintage cake from back in the day!

INGREDIENTS: 1 box white cake mix; 3/4 cup vegetable oil; 1 small box instant pistachio pudding mix; 3 eggs; 1 cup club soda, 7-Up, or Ginger Ale; 1/2 cup finely chopped pecans; 1/2 cup sweetened coconut flakes

FROSTING: 2 envelopes Dream Whip*; 1-1/4 cups cold milk; 1 small box instant pistachio pudding mix; 1/2 cup sweetened coconut flakes; 1/2 cup finely chopped pecans

INSTRUCTIONS: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray 9x13 baking dish

with cooking spray.

In a large bowl, combine cake mix, oil, pudding, eggs and soda. Beat with electric mixer on low speed for 30 seconds, then on medium speed for 3-4 minutes, scraping sides of the bowl regularly. Fold in pecans and coconut. Transfer to prepared baking dish.

Bake the cake at 350 degrees for about 35-40 minutes or until toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Place on wire rack to cool completely.

Once the cake is cool, prepare frosting.

In a large bowl, combine Dream Whip and cold milk. Beat on high speed until soft peaks form (4-5 minutes). Add pudding mix and beat until fluffy. Spread on cooled cake. Top with coconut and pecans.

*Instead of Dream Whip, you can substitute Cool Whip. Beat 1-1/2 cups of cold milk with the pudding mix on low for 2 minute. Fold in 8 oz. thawed Cool Whip. Spread on cake and garnish with coconut and pecans.



Planting by the Phases of the Moon

Have you ever wondered the best time to plant your seeds or tender plants? Consider this:

Planting by the moon phases is a gardening technique that takes advantage of unique energy of each lunar phase.

The four phases used in basic lunar phase gardening are new moon, first quarter moon, full moon, and fourth (or last) quarter moon.

The technique involves planting seeds that yield fruit above the ground during the waxing moon, and planting below-ground crops when the moon is getting darker.

The different lunar phases are ideal for different planting activities:

New Moon Planting: Ideal for sowing seeds and above-ground crops.

Waxing Moon Planting: Great for foliar growth and development, especially leafy plants and vegetables.

Full Moon Planting: Perfect for planting root crops and bulbs.

Waning Moon Planting: A good time for pruning, weeding, and harvesting.



Volunteer Opportunities

The following Homes and Centers have openings for a caring volunteer:

NURSING HOMES:

Broad Mountain (Frackville), Green Valley Nursing (Pottsville), Greenwood Center (Hometown), Orwigsburg Center, Ridgeview (Shenandoah Heights), Rosewood (Schuylkill Haven), Schuylkill Center (Pottsville), Seton Manor (Orwigsburg), Shenandoah Manor, and St. Luke's University Health Network Long-Term Care Unit (Coaldale).

PERSONAL CARE:

Heritage Mills (Tower City), Providence Place (Pottsville and Pine Grove campuses), The Birches at Shenandoah Manor.

ASSISTED LIVING CENTER:

Luther Ridge at Seider's Hill (Pottsville)

ADULT DATE LIVING CENTER:

Eldergarden (Pottsville)

LIFE CENTER:

LIFE Geisinger at Miner's Loft (Minersville)

Free training is provided.

Contact Eileen for further details.



Cherry Blossom Festival

In 1909, the Mayor of Tokyo, Yukio Ozaki, supported a generous gift of 2,000 cherry trees to Washington, DC. These trees were donated as a symbol of friendship between Japan and the United States.

The First Lady at the time, Helen Herron Taft, graciously accepted this donation and began the tradition of celebrating the blooming of cherry trees in solidarity.

As of now, there are approximately 3,700 cherry trees gracing the National



Mall, along the Potomac River.

There is currently a multi-million dollar rehabilitation project underway to address flooding issues. During the three-year period, approximately 140 cherry trees near the Tidal Basin and Potomac River will be cut down.

However, the National Park Service

says at the conclusion of the project 455 new trees, including 274 cherry trees, will be planted in the area.

Cherry blossoms are beautiful, but short-lived, flowers that typically bloom for 1 to 2 weeks.

The best time to watch for cherry blossoms is normally between 4 and 7 days after peak bloom starts. The blooms can go for up to 2 weeks, weather-permitting.

This year's Cherry Blossom Festival is slated for March 20 through April 14.

Spring Fever

Spring Fever is the name given to a specific set of mental and sometimes physical changes that arise as a response to warmer weather. It is not recognized as a medical condition proper, nor is it a disease.

The phenomenon debuts in early spring and "symptoms" typically appear during the first warm days.

Despite the intensity of the symptoms reported by some, spring fever is not dangerous. It is, for some, considered a natural, and thus normal, response to seasonal changes such as warmer weather, longer days, and, consequently, prolonged sunlight exposure, changes in eating or sleeping habits, etc.

Spring fever is usually categorized by unusual vitality and energy, compli-

mented by a matching good disposition.

However, it can also cause springtime fatigue or spring lethargy, characterized by fatigue, apathy, or even sadness.

Here's hoping your Spring is filled with vitality, positivity, and happiness!





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Ombudsman services are provided by
MidPenn Legal Services under a
contract with the Schuylkill County
Office of Senior Services.

The program is monitored by the
Pennsylvania Department of Aging.



Always Stay Humble and Kind

The walls in my office are covered with inspirational phrases that help keep me grounded, including one from President Harry S. Truman that says “*It’s amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit*”. Full disclosure: “credit” for this phrase is also attributed to President Ronald Reagan. Isn’t irony ironic?!?

Amidst the aforementioned Wall of Inspiration is “The Litany of Humility”, which includes such tropes as:

Deliver me from...

The desire of being esteemed,
The desire of being extolled,
The desire of being honored,
The desire of being praised.

The Oxford Dictionary defines a volunteer as “*a person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task*”. No one goes into a volunteer program thinking “Hey, let’s do this so someone tells me how great I am”.

Over the course of years, the local Ombudsman Program has been blessed with *dozens* of individuals who volunteered their time for the wellbeing of our residents, as well as - literally - *hundreds* of PEERs, who also volunteer in their homes, making their voices heard and acting on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves.

It is a humbling experience to be associated with such dedicated peo-

ple who do what they do simply for the love of helping others, not for the pat on the back, not for the reward, not for the “at-a-boy”.

Country star Tim McGraw summed it up best in his 2016 hit, singing: “When the work you put in is realized

Let yourself feel the pride
But always stay humble and kind”.

Let us remember the contributions of all Volunteers, past and present, and offer a big **THANK YOU** to Linda DaRosa, Kris Karnish, Judy Bucher, and all PEERs currently serving our Program. We could not do it without you!

Eileen