

# 2020 Progress

## *Delaware County Nonprofit Organizations*

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- Andrew's House
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- MASH
- Second Ward Community Initiative
- People in Need, Inc.

A special supplement to

**The Delaware  
Gazette**



# Family Promise entering 10th year

By Dillon Davis  
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The Family Promise of Delaware County will celebrate its 10th anniversary of service to the area's homeless community this year.

Family Promise, formerly known as Interfaith Hospitality Network, began in New Jersey in 1986 under the direction of Karen Olson. Today, the organization has more than 200 affiliates throughout 43 states.

Central Ohio's first chapter began in Columbus in the 1990s under the direction of Gwyn Stetler. During that decade, Stetler was contacted by OhioHealth to request training sessions in Delaware to further educate the community on the issue of homelessness.

Stetler said the community was "very responsive" to the training then and, over the following decade, a rotation of congregations in the area opened their doors to the homeless community. However, Stetler said there is research to show stability and "alleviating as much mobility as possible" is important in homeless situations.

Because of that, Habitat for Humanity rehabbed a house at 39 N. Washington St. in Delaware where Family Promise could set up a permanent fixture, and they still operate from it today.

"You do what you have to do when there is an emergency, and the county did that," Stetler said. "But there was enough support to go ahead and open the Family

Promise house."

Stetler said the relationship with Habitat for Humanity to have a home, which was once an OWU sorority house and sat vacant for some time before the renovation, was very important.

Stetler called it "unique" for the Family Promise home to be situated in the middle of a neighborhood. She added, "It's a very precious thing in Delaware, that the community has embraced us, and we don't take that for granted. We really try to be good neighbors."

With the location of the home being in the midst of the community, Stetler said it "minimizes stigma and helps people that are having a really hard time feel included in the community just by the very nature of where we are located."

While Family Promise of Delaware County operates in Delaware, its beacon of light and hope extends well beyond the county borders.

"We are the county's emergency shelter ... In fact, we are the region's emergency shelter," Stetler said. "By the nature of how we are funded and the relationships we have, we have a priority first to make sure that Delaware County families who are currently experiencing homelessness have access."

"And we also don't want to have any empty beds, so we do partner together (with other counties) ... If one county contiguous with us has a family in need, we partner with them. It works both ways, they share resources with us, and we try to be



Photos by Joshua Keeran | The Gazette  
**The Family Promise homeless shelter, located at 39 N. Washington St. in Delaware, was renovated by Habitat for Humanity to provide the shelter with a permanent fixture for the community.**

a good partner locally and within the region."

Family Promise of Delaware County offers a total of 27 beds, including cribs for infants. Stetler said the most families the home has sheltered over the past six months at any given time was 10. She said in November of last year, there were 530 nights of stay at the home, up from 405 the month prior.

For those in need of a place to stay, Stetler said the beds aren't limited to families of multiple individuals.

"I personally believe you can be a family of one, so we take families of all types of shapes and sizes," she said. Stetler

added that Family Promise is currently partnering with A Place of Warmth, another shelter in Delaware, and are welcoming in single women who are pregnant.

Stetler said that while they try to get people into the home as quickly as possible, there can be a waiting list. She said that is a result of "the gap in affordable and accessible housing" in Delaware, just one of the challenges facing both Family Promise and the homeless community.

As a result of the waiting list, Family Promise attempts to keep stays as short as possible. Stetler said the average stay at Family Promise

is around 45 days. She added another reason Family Promise tries to keep the length of stays down is to not "normalize homelessness."

"Part of that destigmatizing is we believe people can be best served as we partner with others ... We try to get people into that best match so they can get home," Stetler said. "Because when they're in their home, they can work on all of these other issues in depth. That's the most important thing that can happen."

Aside from the obvious relief of providing shelter, Family Promise goes beyond beds to

# Habitat for Humanity aims for more in 2020

By Dillon Davis

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Last year served as a pivotal juncture for Habitat for Humanity of Delaware and Union Counties, and Executive Director Todd Miller hopes for even bigger things to come in 2020 and beyond.

"2019 was definitely the year of the ReStore location," Miller joked. "And it's going great. We're loving life in the new location."

The Habitat for Humanity website states its ReStore locations "accept donations (new and gently used furniture, appliances, home goods, building materials and more) and sell home improvement items to the public at a fraction of the retail price."

Previously located on Curtis Street in Delaware, the nonprofit's ReStore now resides in the Delaware Square Shopping Center at 1161 Columbus Pike (U.S. Route 23). The new location is double the size of the previous building at about 14,000 square feet.

In addition to the bigger building, the exposure of the ReStore in a shopping center as opposed to being tucked away at the former location has also led to an increase in foot traffic.

The move of the ReStore, while significant, was far from the only moving and shaking done by Habitat

for Humanity last year, which built two new homes in the Delaware community and another in Union County in 2019. In total, Habitat has constructed 66 homes in Delaware County, 62 of which are within the city.

Miller said the hope for this year is to start construction on five houses, one more than they have ever done previously in a given year.

In order for that goal to be accomplished, the ReStore's success will need to play an important role. While it has covered Habitat's administrative expenses for years, Miller said, the goal now is for the ReStore to continue covering those expenses while also paying for a home build each year as well.

"The ReStore move and more changes we're doing in 2020 are part of our laying of a foundation to be able to build more homes in the future than we currently build," Miller said.

Miller, who has been with the chapter for 16 years now, said all five homes hopefully built this year will be in Delaware, and he added, "We're kind of setting out eyes on a goal and future where we can build 10 homes. That's what we're working towards." He called the moving of the ReStore "the first piece of the puzzle by putting it in a position to generate more funds going forward."



Courtesy photo | Habitat for Humanity

Volunteers work to complete Habitat's current build, which is located on Noble Street.

Habitat still uses the building on Curtis Street for its offices. Miller said they will be building more offices, creating a larger community room, as well as utilizing the former ReStore space for indoor construction storage.

Miller went on to say he hopes to hire a new development director this

year, which would mark the first time such a position has existed with the chapter.

Hiring for that position is a goal Miller is very excited about, and he said of the prospective hire, "We

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# Decade of growth, transformation for United Way

By Glenn Battishill

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The United Way of Delaware County started the decade in a small office in downtown Delaware and ended it in charge of a one-stop-shop and a coordinator of more than 40 agencies.

United Way of Delaware County President Brandon Feller said the changes that occurred in the United Way of Delaware County were more than just changes in venue.

“What’s really changed for us is evolving from being a funder of programs and services in the community to being a community change agent and a problem solver,” Feller said. “We see our role as matching donor dollars with needs in the community and then organizing different organizations around those needs. We’ve really developed more into a collaborative approach. It’s about how can we lead initiatives that have a lot of community buy in and collaboration so that all the agencies that have a part to play have a seat at the table.”

Feller said the new form of the United Way of Delaware County is about bringing together agencies and clients.

“That’s different than the United Way that people are used to,” Feller said. “People think of just the old model of raising dollars and then giving grants in the community, but we are doing a lot of work in the middle in terms of being a backbone structure that can bring agencies together around a particular issue to move the need and advance for the good of the community.”

As such, Feller said the United Way is focused on address the county’s needs, or at least, connecting clients to an agency or organization that can.

“(We’re about) being more of an active force in identifying unmet needs in the community and collaborating,” Feller said. “We may not have the answer, but we are going to try and



The United Way of Delaware County's Girls on the Run Club pose together for a photo during a Heart & Sole event in Columbus. Girls on the Run club is just one of many programs offered by the United Way as a result of its extensive community partnerships.

Courtesy photo | United Way of Delaware County

find out who does and who can be that resource so we can be on top of emerging needs in the community.”

To facilitate the United Way’s new role, the organization started the Strengthening Families initiative at Willis Education Center where it rents a number of offices that house a variety of programs, including mental/behavioral health support, youth counseling, and even a toy library. Feller said this venue allows the United Way to bring together whatever agencies or organizations need to be involved to meet the

community’s needs.

“The idea was really how do we do a better job of bringing services that the community needs to where the community can access them,” Feller said. “Strengthening Families is all about being a resource and positive force in the community for Delaware County. We have about 40 different partners that we work with in this space that range from prevention and education, early childhood development, access to mental health, and access to the food pantry.”

Most of the second floor of Willis

Education Center, which ceased functioning as an intermediate school in 2015, is dedicated to Strengthening Families. Feller said the benefit of having the facility is that a family may come in for one thing but can be assisted with a variety of things.

“I look at it like we have 30 or 40 front doors,” Feller said. “You may come in because you need food, but you can get connected to mental health services or after school programming for your kids. One thing that’s been



# Free store thriving, expanding

By Dillon Davis

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From clothing and linens to toiletries and kitchen equipment, the Common Ground Free Store has provided Delaware's in-need community with household needs for more than a decade.

Located at 193 E. Central Ave., Common Ground refers to itself as "an uncommon place filling common needs." Those common needs are filled entirely by donations from people and organizations all throughout the county at no cost to the store's shoppers.

The store is open five days a week —Monday through Thursday and again on Saturday — but has different open times throughout the week. On Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, Common Ground is open from 6-8:30 p.m. For Wednesdays and Saturdays, the store opens from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

In addition to the household needs, Common Ground also provides a hot meal every day they are open. Sharon Griner, executive director of the store, said some patrons come in just to eat and share time with the workers with whom they have built relationships.

On average, the free store serves around 100 people each day, Griner said.

Common Ground was started by William Street United Methodist Church in 2006 as a group of people who had prior experience with free stores in other parts of Ohio and saw the need for one in Delaware. While the church



**Common Ground Free Store, located at 193 E. Central Ave. in Delaware, offers a wide variety of free household products to those who would otherwise go without them.**

began the free store, Common Ground is its own 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that isn't solely affiliated with any one church or organization. Rather, it is an independent organization that receives support from many groups around the county.

"It takes the whole community to make sure we have all the items needed to keep it running," Griner said.

Donation hours for Common Ground are the same as its open hours, with the addition of a 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. window on Tuesdays and Thursdays as well. As for what can be donated, Griner said Common Ground will accept anything that will fit on their shelves. She said the store would like to offer furniture, but there simply isn't enough room to house items that large.

Griner emphasized items being donated need to be in great condition. "There's a perception among people that, 'I can't use this but someone else can,' and usually it is junk," she said.

"If you wouldn't wear it or use it, or let your best friend or kids wear it or use it, then

nobody else will either," Griner added. "The people that come to us are no different, they simply don't have as many material goods and need some help. Other than that, their wants and needs are the same as anyone else. They went to have nice things for their families and their homes, so to treat them with dignity and respect. We ask that people don't donate junk."

Lines to get into the building at the store's opening are common, Griner said, although she added that with new donations coming in frequently each day, those who don't make the front of the line aren't in danger of missing out on the items they may need.

Asked what she most enjoys about her work with Common Ground, Griner, who is approaching five years of service with the organization, said the calling on her life has always been to help people in need.

"I just feel like that's what I'm supposed to be doing," she said. "So, what keeps me engaged and excited about going to work is when we see a needy family come in and

we're able to make their day when they were at the end of their rope. Hopefully, it keeps them going for another day."

Common Ground's impact also extends beyond simply providing food and material items.

"We make referrals all the time to the other social agencies in town," Griner said. "That's one of the biggest (things we offer). I always tell all the other nonprofits in town, 'If you have something you need to announce, you need to let us know because this is where the people are coming.'"

Next month, Common Ground will be expanding its reach on the community with the opening of a second site at the Press Church Outreach Center, located at 425 S. Sandusky St.

"We have noticed in tracking our data that not many people come to us from the south side of Delaware," Griner said of the decision to open the second site. "A lot of the people that we see come from within a one-mile radius (of the Central Avenue store). Of course, there are exceptions

to that. But we're noticing the south side doesn't use us and that's an area that could use the services the free store provides."

Griner said it's "long been a goal" to reach the south side of Delaware and become an asset in that part of the community like the Central Avenue location has to the east side. She added that Common Ground has outgrown the Central Avenue location, and she hopes the addition of a second site will help to even out the distribution of donations that come to the organization.

"We're growing ... Usually, you are excited to be growing, but this isn't really a good type of growth because that means a lot of people are in need," Griner said. "We just want to reach as many people as we can."

The new location will only be open on Saturdays at the start, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Initially, the new location won't serve a full meal, but Griner said she hopes a meal will be offered at both locations at some point in the future.

For anyone who wishes to donate to Common Ground, whether by volunteering their time or through in-kind donations, visit the nonprofit's website at [www.commongroundfreestore.org](http://www.commongroundfreestore.org) and scroll down to find the "volunteer" and "donate now" buttons. For more information, call 740-369-3733.

Reach Dillon Davis at 740-413-0904. Follow him on Twitter @DillonDavis56.

# DCF eyes larger impact in 2020

By Dillon Davis

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Since 1995, the Delaware County Foundation (DCF) has led the way in bettering communities all throughout the area. This year, the nonprofit will celebrate its 20th anniversary.

Over the years, DCF has distributed more than \$12 million in charitable dollars to the community for a variety of purposes and causes, ranging from domestic violence and homeless shelters to various arts and educational purposes. In 2019 alone, the foundation awarded more than \$1.5 million in grants and scholarships.

"We are what is called a community foundation," said former CEO/President Marlene Casini, who retired at the first of the year. "And that is a pool of charitable money that is meant to grow over time that benefits a certain area ... People put their charitable dollars here, and we help them grant that money back to the community."

Nonprofit organizations that serve Delaware County apply to DCF for grants and, through that process, DCF matches the money available to the community's needs based on the request of those organizations. "Sometimes our donors will recommend nonprofits to make the grants to, and sometimes we ask our donors if they will make grants to certain nonprofits," Casini said.

She added that, typically, the breakdown of funds distributed is around 80% directed toward grants and 20% to scholarships.

DCF is one of 77 community foundations in Ohio, and nearly every county in the state has a foundation working to better their community.

"Every contribution is an investment in the community that enriches the lives of those who live and work here through education and the arts," the



DCF website states. However, those investments aren't always easy to see throughout the community, Casini said, although that doesn't lessen their impact in the least.

"Sometimes there are visual things you can see as a result of our grants, such as the Delaware County Historical Society," Casini said. "Some of our grants have gone to technology for them. And the Central Ohio Symphony, we made a grant to them for a big education program where Delaware City Schools and many of the Olentangy Local Schools — 900 students — benefit from. So, that's kind of a big, visual thing that you can see."

On the other hand, DCF grants to organizations such as People In Need are used for needs such as emergency care for eye, dental, and prescription benefits that might not be as easily noticeable, nor are donations to the food pantry.

The foundation has several different types of funds the community can donate to. The unrestricted fund isn't designated for any particular nonprofit, cause, or area of interest, and the board of directors oversees how those funds are put to use.

Donor-advised funds serve in the grant-making process and enable the foundation to use the donation for multiple nonprofits.

Field of Interest funds support a particular area of interest or program, cause or geographic area. Donors who wish to support one or more specific nonprofits can establish a Designated Fund or contribute to an existing one.

Scholarship funds can also be created to benefit students at any level.



Courtesy photo | Delaware County Foundation

**More than 900 fourth grade students from around Delaware County participate in a music education program through the Central Ohio Symphony. The program was made possible through a grant from the Delaware County Foundation.**

Applications for the funds available to high school seniors are now open and will be awarded this spring. But while Casini said DCF issues as many as 40-50 scholarships to graduating high school seniors, oftentimes there aren't many scholarships available to students past their freshman year of college.

Because of that, she said the foundation's largest scholarship fund is designated for students who are already in college. The Ralph and Mabel Gooding Memorial Scholarship Fund is awarded to full-time college sophomores, juniors, or seniors who attended four years of high school in one of the county's four school districts, as well as those who attended Westerville North or Westerville Central.

As DCF enters its 20th year of service, it will be doing so under the leadership of a new president and CEO as Casini has retired and passed the torch to Chris Baker after 14 years with the foundation.

"I think he will be a great leader for the foundation," Casini said of Baker,

pointing out his ties to the county's agricultural community, having spent time at the Ohio Farm Bureau Foundation.

Casini will remain with the foundation on a part-time basis as a consultant.

As for what's next and what she hopes to see for DCF moving forward under the direction of Baker, Casini said she hopes to see more people being educated on the foundation and what it provides, as well as more charitable giving. She said the two often go hand-in-hand.

"I think a lot of people don't know that we exist, and once they find out what we do and how we can help, there's a big moment where it's like, 'Now I understand what you do and how we can work together,'" Casini said.

To learn more about DCF and everything it offers to the community, visit [www.dcf.org](http://www.dcf.org).

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## Promise

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help those who come to them in getting back on their feet. Stetler said a look at their census shows that 50 to 75% of the adults staying at Family Promise are working and trying to get the funds to be able to secure their own place.

While Family Promise certainly works with those adults to get to the point of living on their own again, Stetler also pointed out that many who come to them do so after leaving a traumatic situation.

“To be honest, that may mean it can be hard for someone to even

lift up a pencil,” Stetler said of the traumatization. “We have to look at each situation individually in terms of what a person’s capacity may be. So, with that in mind, we use progressive steps that are based on trauma-informed care principles and are the best steps for that family to succeed.”

As Family Promise of Delaware County begins a new decade of service to the community, Stetler said of the organization’s direction, “This is an extremely exciting time in terms of our capacity and how we can make a difference. We have an active board that is just taking some really excellent next steps in development.”

Stetler cited the nonprofit’s newly-designed website, which was done by

a former resident who simply wanted to give back to the shelter, as a perfect example of what Family Promise has set out to achieve. Stetler said she is partnering with the former resident to do a pilot program this year called “Beyond Promise,” which Stetler said will be focused on community building and homelessness prevention for those who have stayed with them previously, which happens all too often.

For anyone who wishes to get involved as a volunteer with Family Promise, Stetler said they can call the shelter at 740-362-7817 or visit its website at [www.familypromise-delawareohio.org](http://www.familypromise-delawareohio.org).

“Our funders — United Way, Source Point, the State of Ohio, Delaware

County Foundation — we’ve made commitments to each of them in a variety of ways about how we not only serve people who are in need of housing but how we also engage volunteers and are really striving to be a volunteer hub,” Stetler said.

Donations, particularly food, are also critical to the success of Family Promise, Stetler said. Donations can be dropped directly at the home, but because Family Promise already uses every inch of space available inside the house, Stetler said anyone wishing to donate items can email her at [gwyn@familypromise-delawareohio.org](mailto:gwyn@familypromise-delawareohio.org) for the best dates to do so.

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## Habitat

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need a development director, someone who is focused on bringing in the funds and stewarding relationships with the corporate donors and grantmakers.” However, Miller pointed out that building an additional house this year will require more money than they’ve spent in the past, and he called the weighing of potentially hiring a new employee against purposing that money for builds a catch 22.”

Although that decision may be difficult to make, it won’t dampen Miller’s excitement for what the year has in store for Habitat and the Delaware community.

“I’m very excited about 2020, because I think our organization is going to look different at the end of the year than it does now,” Miller said. “In terms of staffing and the number of homes we’re



ReStore Director Rob Ford, Habitat Executive Director Todd Miller, and ReStore Manager Christopher Mickens pose for a photo in front of the ReStore’s new location.

building, and certainly with the ReStore now completing its sixth month in the new location. I’m excited to see what the spring brings there.”

Miller said the need for affordable housing in the area continues to grow, which forces Habitat to continue to grow as well to keep up with the needs of the community. As for the growth he has seen in his time with the

organization, Miller called it “tremendous,” pointing out that he was once the first of a staff that now includes 13 people between the office building and the ReStore.

For anyone who is interested in getting involved with Habitat, Miller said there are volunteer orientations held monthly. And given the goal of building more homes than they ever have previously, he



Courtesy photos | Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity’s most recently completed home, its 65th home build in Delaware County, is located on Smith Street in Delaware.

said there is certainly a need for additional volunteers. There are also opportunities to volunteer in the ReStore as well.

To learn more about

Habitat for Humanity and the opportunities available, visit [www.habitatdelawareunion.com](http://www.habitatdelawareunion.com) or call 740-363-9950.

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# Salvation Army shines in central Ohio

By Dillon Davis

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For more than 150 years, the Salvation Army has impacted countless lives all across the globe. According to its website, that impact is felt by approximately 23 million Americans annually, including right here in Delaware.

“The primary focus, as it always has been, is helping people in every aspect of their lives,” said Mark Larrick, captain of the Salvation Army Delaware Worship and Community Center. “Whether that be physical, emotional, or spiritual needs, we’ve made efforts to assist people the best we can with the resources we’ve been blessed with.”

Larrick, who has been an officer with the Salvation Army for 15 years, said the Delaware chapter has been active for more than 30 years, to the best of his knowledge. Among the many services the Salvation Army is most commonly associated with is feeding hungry stomachs. In 2019, 41,196 meals were provided in Delaware County and 4,748 individuals were served.

During the holiday season alone, 81 Thanksgiving meals were served and 124 families received a Christmas food

box as part of the Salvation Army’s “Brighten the Holidays” program.

The nonprofit’s Choice Food Pantry is open Monday through Friday and allows those in need to browse through and select based on their needs. The Salvation Army is part of the Hunger Alliance in Delaware County, which includes the other pantries across the county, and also work in partnership with the Mid-Ohio Food Bank.

The Salvation Army, which is founded on the gospel of Jesus Christ, also nourished many souls through the preaching of God’s word in 2019 with nearly 200 worship services, bible studies, and prayer meetings.

Among the many youth programs the Salvation Army provides in Delaware is its summer camp in Oregonia, Ohio. Camp SWONEKY began in 1958 “to promote awareness of God, His love, and through the love of Jesus Christ, to aid in spiritual growth and knowledge of basic human values,” the camp website states.

Last year, 28 days at the camp were provided by the Salvation Army to boys and girls between the ages of 7 and 12. Larrick said applications will be accepted for this year’s camp beginning in the first week of March.

Providing shelter to those in need is

one of the many assets the organization brings to the community. In 2019, the Central Ohio Salvation Army chapter provided housing to 66 families, veterans, and young adults. In total, more than 22,000 nights of lodging were provided to homeless veterans and their families.

Human trafficking victims are not forgotten by the Salvation Army, either. Last year, 99 victims received emergency support and professional case management as they attempted to rebuild.

Of course, with so many undertakings, volunteer work is of the utmost importance to the success of the Salvation Army. Larrick said the volunteering of “talent, time, and resources are each very important to the ongoing, day-to-day operations” of the Salvation Army.

For anyone who is interested in contributing in any way, Larrick said the easiest way to do so is by calling 740-369-5301 Ext. 239.

Volunteers are especially needed with the food pantry, whether it is answering phones or restocking shelves, but Larrick said the phone call will determine where a volunteer’s talents would best be utilized.

As for what he hopes the Salvation



Army can accomplish in central Ohio this year, Larrick said, “The wish list is long,” but added that God will ultimately decide their direction.

“Part of it is really pausing and waiting to see what God’s direction is and looking to see what avenues He might open for us that we may not see right at this moment,” Larrick said, adding that having additional volunteers would allow Salvation Army to pursue more of those avenues as well.

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## United Way

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great about this partnership is being tied so closely with Delaware City Schools and being able to work with them collaboratively. They have resources, and we have ours. It just makes the whole process that much stronger.”

Delaware City Schools Superintendent Heidi Kegley said the cooperation has already been beneficial for both parties and the community.

“It’s just been incredible. The partnership is incredible,” Kegley said. “United Way Strengthening families is providing resources and supports to the families of Delaware County in a way that I never even dreamed possible. The supports and resources that are being provided are enabling families to have the foundation that they need in order for their children to come to school and feel supported and successful each and every day.”

Feller said the United Way’s growth and success in the last decade can be attributed to its commitment to the community and the organization’s flexibility.

“I think that we have been really focused on what are the issues facing the community and how we can be a part of



### United Way of Delaware County

addressing those and being open to changing the way that we do things and not being locked into something because that’s how we’ve always done it,” Feller said. “It’s because of a genuine care for the community. Our team and our board have seen how can we invest in Delaware County in a deeper level.”

Feller credited the board and donors for understanding and supporting the organization’s direction.

“That means getting your hands dirty and not just writing a check,” he said. “You have to work with your clients and know what’s going on in all of the agencies. It’s gotten much more involved, but that means our impact has grown and is much deeper. Donors are looking for that. Donors are looking for organizations that are finding solutions

and moving the needle. The community has really responded positively when it sees organizations working together.

Feller said looking ahead, the organization is focused on continuing to develop services and expanding to help county residents who don’t live in the city.

“We continue to want to find opportunities to do what we are doing here but also in all parts of the county,” Feller said. “We are looking at how we can take this one-stop-shop model and take it to all parts of the county and serve as many people as we can. We want it to be convenient that people who are struggling don’t need to go to 10 places around town.”

He added that he hopes the community sees everything the organization has accomplished



Courtesy photo | United Way of Delaware County

**Teens in the United Way’s after school program learn to cook as part of a teaching series with Chef Michael Turner from Olivina.**

and wants to be a part of it.

“This doesn’t happen by accident,” Feller said. “It’s been a lot of hard work and planning, and it takes resources. We always need the community to continue to invest if they like what we’re doing. We are always looking

for donors to invest.”

More information about the United Way of Delaware County can be found at <https://www.liveuniteddelawarecounty.org/>.

Glenn Battishill can be reached at 740-413-0903 or on Twitter @BattishillDG.

# GIVING BACK



# Community helps brighten up Humane Society

By Gary Budzak

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Those who regularly drive along routes 36/37 often see the latest need from the Humane Society of Delaware County on its sign — it could be office supplies, cleaning supplies, or cat litter.

“The Humane Society of Delaware County strives to ensure the best possible treatment, care, and placement of animals in need,” states the mission statement on its website.

“The Humane Society of Delaware County is funded by donations from the community and grant funds,” its website, [www.hsdcoho.org](http://www.hsdcoho.org), states. “The HSDC does not receive any governmental funding at the federal, state or local level. Your contributions are sincerely appreciated.”

HSDC received volunteer help in sprucing up the facility in 2019. Among the projects was creative and colorful cat-themed paintings and silhouettes adorning the adult feline section in February by the Big Walnut High School's National Honors Society.

“As you can imagine at any shelter you're in, you're constantly dealing with aging facilities, things get dirty, things start getting a little disconnected,” HSDC Executive Director Jana Cassidy said to *The Gazette*. “Our complex is in pieces and chunks, so we have all these different rooms, and they came in and said we'd like to beautify them for you. So we just showed them the complex, and this is what they did. We did not ask them.”

All the walls were first given a white base coat, design ideas were placed, and then painted over. The students worked with the cats in the rooms, and although there may have been more foot traffic than they were used to, the cats adapted easily to the bustle.

A couple months ago, employees of PPG Industries gave the dog kennels a fresh coat of paint as part of its “Colorful Community” projects worldwide. The entire area — floors,



Photo by Gary Budzak | *The Gazette*

**Humane Society of Delaware County is located at 4920 state Route 37 E., Delaware.**

walls and halls — were painted in a light pastel grey. Not only is the epoxy a germ barrier, but according to research, the color is good for dogs, and is being adopted by many veterinary clinics.

“A lot of people think dogs are color blind,” Natalie Yeager, HSDC Canine Program coordinator told *The Gazette*. “But there's some colors (such as) bright blue that really stands out to them. You wouldn't want the whole kennel painted like that, it's like the color of a room affects your mood. So anything we can do that gives them an environment that's calming and lower their stress, that's what we're for.”

A lighter, more consistent color palette is also more soothing to people too, Yeager said.

“When people are looking for a dog, if it's a dark kennel and a dark-colored dog, people tend to pass them by if the

dog isn't moving or doing something neat,” she said. “If a dog is sitting in a lighter-colored kennel, people notice them more. Plus, people can take pictures to show and make it look more inviting and not like a jail cell. It's a balance between wanting people to feel empathy for the animal and not wanting them to feel sorry.”

Just before PPG arrived, HSDC had a successful “Clear the Shelter” event, said Events and Development Manager Jane Nolan.

“The timing helped us so much on this, because we were able to get down to a very nominal number of animals, and every dog that didn't get adopted went on sleepovers, which is a great way to socialize them,” Nolan said. “We're in a 37-year-old building, so we have to be good stewards here. We're trying to make it last, and update it. This is a huge difference. It's been so

positive, more cheerful — anything that makes it more comfortable when people come through.”

The organization puts on two main fundraisers: The Fur Ball Gala (on March 14 at the Medallion Golf Club in Westerville); and the Putts Fore Paws golf outing (on June 8 at Rattlesnake Ridge Golf Club in Sunbury). Last June, the HSDC also had a fundraiser held at the renovated McDonald's at 7352 E. state Route 37, Sunbury.

The shelter is open noon-5 p.m. Sunday; noon-6 p.m. Tuesday-Wednesday and Friday-Saturday; noon-7 p.m. Thursday; closed Monday. The clinic is open 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Tuesday.

HSDC is at 4920 state Route 37 E., Delaware. For more information, call 740-369-7387.

Gary Budzak may be reached at 740-413-0906 or on Twitter @GaryBudzak.



# BWFWS assisting eastern portion of county

By Gary Budzak

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SUNBURY — For those who live in the eastern portion of Delaware County, one of the primary community nonprofit organizations is Big Walnut Friends Who Share (BWFWS).

“The Mission of the Big Walnut Friends Who Share is to work to improve the living conditions of families and individuals in need/crisis who reside in the Big Walnut School District by securing donated items (including clothing, food, household furnishings, cash contributions, etc.) and then distributing them free of charge to these persons,” states the BWFWS website.

Local residents and non-residents alike drop off items they hope BWFWS can give to the less fortunate. For example, one Franklin County resident has donated clothing, electronics, and even a toy scooter this month.

The donations can even take the form of food. In October, a student at Big Walnut Intermediate School donated 660 pounds of beef from a steer he showed at the 2019 Delaware County Fair.

“We’ve never had a meat donation of this magnitude before,” BWFWS President Larry Tornes said at the time.

Gene Wampler, center director for BWFWS, said the nonprofit

organization spends between \$3,000 to \$5,000 a month on food to stock its pantry.

BWFWS is supported by contributions from area businesses, churches, the community, fraternal organizations and schools. The nonprofit serves more than 320 families monthly, provides school supplies for 172 students, and Christmas presents for 114 families, with a total of 223 children.

The organization holds an annual fundraising “Walk for Friends” 2k or 5k event at the shelter behind General Rosecrans Elementary School, 301 S. Miller Drive, Sunbury. Last year’s event was held Sept. 22.

Currently based at the lower southeast level of the Sunbury United Methodist Church at 100 W. Cherry St., Tornes said Friends will need to relocate once again this year and is seeking a new site. Previous locations included near the village square and the Vans Valley Church.

The organization is open 9-11:30 a.m. Wednesdays; 6:30-8 p.m. the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month; and 10 a.m.-noon the second Saturday of the month for Senior Citizens. For more information, visit [bigwalnutfriendswhoshare.org](http://bigwalnutfriendswhoshare.org) or call 740-965-9596.

Gary Budzak may be reached at 740-413-0906 or on Twitter @GaryBudzak.



Photo by Gary Budzak | The Gazette

One of the rooms for Big Walnut Friends Who Share has donated clothing.

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# Finding Hope: Family-to-Family Class Impacts a Teen

By Julia G.



You feel alone, anxious and scared. You aren't sure you can handle another outburst, another medication change and another trip to the psychiatric hospital. Maybe it hasn't been that long, and you are still trying to wrap your mind around your first experiences with suicide and mental health diagnoses.

At 17, I was blindsided by a suicide attempt and the two hospitalizations of my older brother. I also was experiencing some of my own mental health struggles while my brother abandoned his faith, family and himself.

Yet, I found myself in a NAMI Family-to-Family class and would be the youngest in my graduating class at just 18. Along the way, I found that my family's fear and pain was experienced by others. I found the same shame and embarrassment among people four times my age, while also a similar desire for the redemption and acceptance of their loved one.

In the midst of these shared experiences, I found truth in the knowledge that my loved one had an illness, and that it was treatable. I found that the hurt we had experienced because of my brother's choices found their root in the destructive illness that had become a part of his life.

I also learned the essentials of communicating with a loved one who has a mental illness. Often, we want to fight what we don't understand and argue against what are loved ones are choosing. But like every other human being, they desire an understanding and listening ear. Understanding will have a much better impact than fighting and arguing.

I think what is powerful about the Family-to-Family class is that it can give hope, understanding, and knowledge at whatever stage in life we might be. It is applicable to the 18-year-old college student, while also reaching into the experiences of a middle-aged parent.

The fear and pain no longer have to overwhelm us. In Family-to-Family, you will find an outlet for painful experiences and the guidance to work through the endless confusion of medications, hospitalizations, and even incarceration. This is a class that bonds people through shared experience, while also giving hope that no matter what happens, there can be a brighter future.

**Next Family to Family class starts March 4th.**

**Next Peer to Peer class starts March 3rd.**

**Registration is required. Go to [www.notaloneohio.org](http://www.notaloneohio.org) or call 740-815-1767.**

NAMI Delaware and Morrow Counties provides support groups and classes to help those with a mental condition and for family members or loved ones. More information about these life changing opportunities can be found at [www.notaloneohio.org](http://www.notaloneohio.org).

**NAMI is funded by the Delaware-Morrow Mental Health and Recovery Services Board.**





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# Andrews House committed to filling needs in community

By Glenn Battishill

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Andrews House has spent the last decade committed to its mission of hospitality, while also expanding its programming to accommodate needs in the community.

Executive Director Melinda Corroto said the nonprofit — located at 39 W. Winter St. in Delaware — has spent the last 10 years seeing needs and fulfilling them.

“We have expanded our programming, services, and partnerships in the community,” Corroto said. “Programs such as the Mobile Market Fresh Food Distribution, an additional community meal featuring fresh and healthier menus; the SNAP/Produce Perks Program at the Main St Delaware Farmer’s Market; and (acting as a) fiscal agent for various community projects and programs such as the Place of Warmth Homeless Warming Station and a crisis prevention program for families with school-age children.”

Corroto said the organization’s mission is to “provide a place for hospitality and healing, and to find solutions, overcome differences, and achieve wholeness for individuals and families in the community.” She added Andrews House also has the goal of advocating for individuals and families in the community.

“In this way, Andrews House has participated in many conversations and assessments in the community with partners such as the Delaware General Health District, Ohio Wesleyan, City



Volunteers from St. Peter’s Church cook and prepare meals for one of Andrews House’s free dinners, which are held from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. the second Friday, third Thursday and third Monday of each month.

Courtesy photo | Andrews House

of Delaware, churches, other help-giving agencies and organizations, and the United Way, discussing issues such as food insecurity, affordable housing and homelessness,” Corroto said.

As an example, Corroto said when the Delaware County Hunger Alliance was formed, Andrews House was part of the conversation to best determine how it could be use. She added when Mid-Ohio Food Bank reached out to start a Mobile Market to provide fresh foods to families,

Andrews House jumped at the chance.

“We said, ‘Okay, we’ll do it,’ so we found other partners to help us, and we’ve been doing that for the last eight years,” Corroto said. The market is on the first and third Mondays of each month from 10 to 11:30 a.m. at Newstart Church located at 795 Pollock Road, Delaware.

Corroto said the program was an immediate success.

“The first time had about 120 households,” she said. “By the end of that year we were

serving 300. It’s ebbed and flowed because other pantries have opened and there are more and broader food services, but the need hasn’t gone down. There’s just more options.”

Corroto said the market now serves between 100 and 150 families on average each month. She said the program has been able to succeed because the perception of the problem has changed thanks to the Hunger Alliance.

“Biggest thing that has changed is it seemed like the

broad community perception was that we were an affluent community and county, and there weren’t that many people in need. But, of course, the providers are all seeing the need,” Corroto said. “One thing the Hunger Alliance has been able to do is raise awareness of the need. People in the county know there is a need and know there are people struggling to feed their families.”

Corroto said Andrews House



# Alpha Group celebrates 50 years

By Glenn Battishill

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This year, The Alpha Group is celebrating 50 years of operations. The local nonprofit remains committed to providing employment and resources to individuals with disabilities in Delaware County.

Alpha Group CEO Liz Owens said the last 10 years have been a decade of expansion and growth for the organization, which offers a variety of services to disabled members of the community, including work training, volunteer programs, in home services, and other activities.

"We have implemented changes meant to offer an enhanced and well-rounded experience for the 700-plus individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities participating in our programs annually," Owens said. "We moved from a traditional facility-based type of program to one that is more person-centered, community-integrated at our Delaware location. We also created satellite site programs in Westerville and Dublin. To accomplish this, we have an emphasis on getting our members involved in everyday activities in their communities."

The main location of Alpha Group is located at 1000 Alpha Drive in Delaware, and the two new offices are

located at 200 Hoff Road Suite E & F in Westerville, and at 4333 Tuller Road Suite B in Dublin.

Owens said Alpha Group staff has strived for the last few years to create more connections to other groups in the community.

"The program staff has worked hard to foster partnerships with other organizations such as, WARM, Goodwill, THE GRAND (Dublin), SourcePoint, United Methodist Church in Sunbury, and Stockhands Horses for Healing," Owens said. "These provide approximately 85 hours a week of volunteerism opportunities to our groups."

Owens said the Alpha Group continues to offer traditional vocational training but added it has also partnered with CVS and Nationwide Hotel and Conference Center to provide Job Readiness Training. Owens said Alpha Group has been the vocational support for Project Search at OhioHealth Grady Memorial Hospital for the last eight years, which is a transition program that gives training and education leading to employment to high school students with disabilities. Owens said starting in the 2020-2021 school year, Alpha will be partnering with Nationwide Children's Hospital for a similar program.

Owens said the summer youth



Photo by Glenn Battishill | The Gazette

The Alpha Group office in Delaware is located at 1000 Alpha Drive. In the last decade, Alpha Group has also opened offices in Dublin and Westerville.

program has also grown in the last decade.

"We also offer a large summer youth program funded by Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities during the month of July by partnering with numerous companies in Delaware and the surrounding counties to provide internships to participants," Owens said. "In 2019, we placed 178 individuals in community jobs and

had over 200 youth in our summer program."

Transportation was also highlighted by Owens, who said the Alpha Group added transportation services to community jobs or appointments in 2014.

"Over the last couple of years, we have expanded this service to include

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# Second Ward Community Initiative seeks to reduce poverty

By D. Anthony Botkin

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Recognizing the lack of consistent access to resources in parts of Delaware, a group of people decided to form the Second Ward Community Initiative (SWCI) to address the growing gaps and concerns.

"The organization started 14-years ago," said Kerriejoi Coit, SWCI director. "It started off as a festival with some local people and SWCI that decided they wanted to get rid of the criminal element, the drugs and other things in their neighborhood."

According to Coit, the group's course of action was to hold a street festival in front of the place where criminal activity — like selling drugs — was taking place.

"It ran the drug dealers out and that's how they originally started," she said. "The festival happens every year since."

According to the SWCI website, the group is focused on bringing educational training, health and wellness initiatives, and essential resources and services to the Delaware community.

"Our mission is to improve the quality of life and positively impact the Delaware community. We work on behalf of the residents, sharing resources and providing the intergenerational services across the span of life," states the SWCI website.

Hired in September of 2018, Coit said, "I love my job, and I think I have a passion for some of the things that need to happen here."

Coit said her list includes



The Second Ward Community Initiative sponsors a Scout Troop consisting of 40 members that meet regularly in the facility.

Photo by D. Anthony Botkin | The Gazette

diversity, inclusion, and cultural sensitivity.

"Those are at least the things that I've noticed since being here," she said. "There are also some areas where some buffering could happen also."

Yet, overall, Coit said that the community has been "extremely welcoming." She said she has met with the mayor, the police chief, representatives of the city fire department, people from SourcePoint and other civic organizations.

"I think this community desires a safe positive space for their children and families to go," she said. "That's the goal and that's what we're providing. If you don't have a place where everybody can come together, how much of a community do you have?"

According to Coit, it was through a grant and the fostering of a partnership with United Way's Srtrenghting Families program that helped SWCI obtain the building located at 50 Ross St. in Delaware. She said the many

different programs and services currently offered continue to be funded through grants, donations, partnerships, and the pleading and begging for volunteers.

"A lot of things can be achieved through positive partnerships," she said. "We have the Boy Scouts of America Troop which has it all, including a female troop. We have 40 some kids in the troop. We offer all of our services for free, and we're also the only ones offering intergenerational services."

Coit said SWCI offers STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) programs to anyone from toddler age to senior citizens.

"It's not just a place where you drop off the kids and leave," she said. "You can come in and play with your kids."

The classes offered include art, yoga, Adventure Club, STEAM, Prim & Proper (an etiquette course), Team Swag for girls and Team Swag for boys, and free prep courses for

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## Andrews

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will continue to listen to feedback and input from Delaware to determine what programs are needed.

“One of the things that’s driven a lot of program changes has been meetings with the community,” she said. “Those conversations are driving what Andrews House does and how we can respond to those needs.”

Corroto said Andrews House becoming a homeless warming station during very cold nights is just another example of filling a need in the community.

“Homeless warming station was community coming together to respond to this need,” she said. “There was desire and effort, but they needed a fiscal agent and we became



Courtesy photo | Andrews House

**A group of Andrews House volunteers prepare to hand out free fresh food at the twice-monthly Mobile Market at Newstart Church on Pollock Road.**

part of that partnership to respond to that need. We’ve had two to four men each night we’ve been open.”

Corroto said she enjoys working at Andrews House, and her favorite part is the interactions with people.

“(I like) getting to know the community.

The people we work with, both the clients and the partners,” she said. “It’s just coming together as a community, seeing how you can respond to something that’s needed, and making it happen.”

Corroto said the goals of the Andrews House Board of Directors going forward are maintaining



Photo by Joshua Keeran | The Gazette

**Andrews House, located at 39 W. Winter St. in Delaware, is a local nonprofit committed to hospitality and is home to a number of programs, including free meal programs, legal clinics, and a warming station.**

financial sustainability, staying relevant in the community, and doing more outreach to spread the word about Andrews House.

“When people see our list of programs they say, ‘I had no idea

you did that,’” Corroto said. “We’re trying to get the word out that we’re here for this reason and this is what we do. We’ve had a range of different organizations in here, and we are always looking for that

partnership.”

More information about Andrews House and its programs can be found at <https://www.andrewshouse.org/>.

Glenn Battishill can be reached at 740-413-0903 or on Twitter @BattishillDG.

## SWCI

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the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) and the SSAT (Secondary School Admission Test) offered the second and fourth Saturday of every month.

“It’s free,” Coit said. “There’s not a lot of places that you’re going to get to do SAT and SSAT prep for free.”

Coit said she is excited about the Adventure Club.

“These kids are getting ready to have some fun. They take the kids to different places that they wouldn’t normally be able to go in their social-economical class,” she said. “These are things that they would not typically get to do because they are 200% below the poverty level,” she said. “We also have children, not below the poverty level, who

participate in our programs.”

She said that one of the adventures is to Hocking Hills but that transportation always presents a problem.

“Transportation is always an issue for us, even to go bowling is a big undertaking for us,” she said.

Coit said SWCI thrives off of senior volunteers who are looking for an opportunity to give back to the community.

“This is really a great place to do it,” she said. “We really respect their energy, and I really respect their knowledge. They are the most committed volunteers.”

Coit said future endeavors of SWCI include things like expanding into the unused rooms of the building. In the back of the building, the former garage area will be transformed into a room for the performing arts. The goal for the kitchen area is to remove a wall to open up space so the community can come

together for meals. There is also room for a library, a game room, and a computer room available for community use.

Outside the SWCI building is the Ross Street Park. Working with Delaware Parks and Natural Resources Director Ted Miller, Coit said that future plans for the park include a splash pad and a quarter-mile looped walking path.

“The plans that Ted Miller came up with are truly wonderful,” she said. “That park will definitely change the climate of the neighborhood.”

Coit said the current condition of the park lends itself to the less desirable activities of the residents of the neighborhood.

“I’ve found hypodermic needles in the park. The renovation will decrease crime and increase activity,” she said. “Reducing poverty is the goal.”

Contact D. Anthony Botkin at 740-413-0902. Follow him on Twitter @dabotkin.



# PIN serving needs of Delaware County

By D. Anthony Botkin

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People In Need, Inc. of Delaware County (PIN), a nonprofit social services agency dedicated to providing emergency assistance to Delaware County residents, continues to find ways to grow to alleviate the burdens of the increasing numbers of families and individuals it serves.

"There are so many different things going on right now," said Executive Director Randy Bournique. "Yes, the economy is improving, but not for everyone. There is still the wage gap that impacts us here in Delaware County directly."

Bournique said most of the people using the services of PIN are employed with some sort of steady income but not enough to make ends meet. He said Delaware County's economy isn't cheap, and renting a place to live isn't cheap.

"There is not a lot of low-cost housing in Delaware County," he said. "In terms of real numbers in people, we're not really seeing a decline, and in some cases, we're seeing an increase."

PIN staff estimates an average of 300 households are served by the pantry every week.

"It's the math," Bournique said. "Delaware County has the lowest percentage of what the state calls the 'poor or near-poor' than any other county. When you multiple that low percentage by 200,000, you're talking between 2,500 to 30,000 individuals coming in that need to be fed, prescriptions paid for, or they need some sort of rental assistance."

"That's more people than in the traditionally poor Appalachian counties," Bournique added.

Bournique said PIN is designed to address the family or individuals that aren't able to create financial cushions for when things go wrong or emergencies happen.

"When something goes wrong — like the car or furnace break down — they are suddenly in the position of which one am I not going to pay to fix?" he said. "If we don't intervene early, a downward spiral begins for them."

Bournique said that PIN opened its doors in 1981 as a small pantry in the basement of a church, but the nonprofit later moved its operations to a house on Sandusky Street in Delaware. Since 2009, PIN has been located at 138 Johnson Drive, Delaware.

"We've evolved over the years to try and address the many different issues of people," he said. "We've always tried to focus on not jumping into things



Photo by D. Anthony Botkin | The Gazette

**Volunteers from Vertiv, 975 Pittsburgh Drive, Delaware, spent the afternoon helping with food sorting and stocking the shelves of the People In Need Food Pantry on Dec. 17, 2019. From left to right: Chuck Stechschulte, Nelson Norris, and Kevin Eshhofen check the labels of each can and try to match it to a place on a self.**

quickly, but to take on projects that are sustainable and that we can have control over it, because people come to depend on the services we offer."

According to the pantry's website, in fiscal year 2019 (July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019), PIN supplied 276,223 meals to Delaware County individuals, and the volunteers donated 14,747 hours to sort food, pantry preparation and distribution, administration, and special events.

The annual Holiday Clearing House, held at the Delaware County Fairgrounds, in 2018 provided food, new coats, new toys and gifts for 425 families (1,084 children and 598 adults) and 262 homebound senior/disabled residents.

Bournique said it was all made possible by the overwhelming support of the community, which he calls "the lifeblood of PIN."

Bournique said as of late, the pantry has increased access to products that have a short shelf life.

"We've gotten so many more donations coming in

from Kroger, Meijer, and the Mid Ohio Food Bank that we've been able to increase the accessibility to fresh produce, baked goods, and frozen meat," he said. "People can now come in once a week to get perishable items."

According to the pantry's website, PIN is partnering with other organizations to distribute Commodity Supplemental Food Program boxes and weekend backpacks for hungry school children. The pantry's Emergency Services Programs are working with the sheriff's office to help inmates adjust to life after release, and a variety of other programs designed to help individuals overcome addiction.

"In the last two years, we've been restructuring things," Bournique said. "If we want to do more, we have to think about growing. What are the issues facing the county right now? Are there ways we can tweak or modify our programs to provide an extra



## Alpha

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contracts with SourcePoint and Delaware Morrow Mental Health & Recovery Services Board,” Owens said. “We provide 1,700 trips monthly with over 600,000 miles traveled in 2019.”

In 2015, Alpha added Supportive Living, which helps members live independently in their homes. Owens said there’s a great need for the service in Delaware, but it’s been difficult to have enough professionals to fill all the roles.

Looking back on the last decade, Owens said the desire to help members is what moved Alpha Group forward.

“(It was) the desire to provide members with an enhanced program experience and an opportunity to provide services in communities in which members live, while expanding the organizational footprint for business,” Owens said.

The Alpha Group was started in 1970 and celebrates its 50 anniversary this year. Owens said serving as CEO has been an honor.

“It is an honor for me to be the leader of such a well-respected organization which is celebrating 50 years this year,” Owens said. “It would not be possible without the (Alpha Group) Board of Directors, leadership



**Rachel Kinhead, a member at Alpha Group, folds towels at her job at the Hilton Hotel in Polaris. Hilton Hotel in Polaris has cooperated with Alpha Group on several projects, including job placement programs and the annual Casino Night fundraiser, which will be held on Feb. 21.**

team, staff and community support. We are fortunate to have several staff celebrating 20-plus years with the organization.”

Looking ahead, Owens said the objective of the organization is unchanged.

“(The goal is to) continue to strive every day to be the premier provider and to continue to stay true to our



Courtesy photos | The Alpha Group

**Members of the Alpha Group and the staff at Immortal Martial Arts pose for a photo together after a outing to the Lewis Center business.**

core values to ensure that success begins at Alpha,” Owens said. “Our mission is to support, empower, and champion members on their path to independence and success. To do this, we will continue to be innovative and evolve to offer services to meet

their needs.”

More information about Alpha Group can be found at <https://www.alphagroup.net/>.

Glenn Battishill can be reached at 740-413-0903 or on Twitter @BattishillDG.

## PIN

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benefit to somebody? We’re doing more. We want to do more, and we want to continue to do more. We need to determine how we can fit in to be a part of the solution.”

Bournique said he has been with PIN for 26 years in one capacity or another, first as a volunteer until 2012 when he was hired to be a grant writer and then he appointed to be the associate director. The PIN Board of Directors appointed him to be the executive director on March 28, 2018, after the unexpected passing of Kevin Crowley, the former

executive director.

However, Bournique said last month that he is stepping down. “Life is always happening,” he said.

The PIN Board of Directors have chosen Martin Terry as PIN’s new president.

Terry is a Delaware County resident experienced in managing community-based, social service programs for low- and moderate-income families. He spent eight years in progressive roles with the Ohio Association of Food Banks, most recently as associate director of Work Support Initiatives. In his various roles, which also included network development coordinator, program manager, and central Ohio regional manager, he trained and managed a pool of 3,500 paid and volunteer counselors, and administered a successful grants program.

Terry started Nov. 4.

“I started right during the busy part of the year,” he said. “It was an extremely busy November from the pantry perspective. Part of it, I think, is because the demand has increased due to a really great staff that has made the pantry second to none in the area.”

Terry said he is impressed by the large volume of food that is handed out through the pantry.

“It’s more than I expected,” he said. “It’s probably safe to say that there is less of a saturation of services available in Delaware County, which contributes to the numbers that are coming here. Another thing that is great is all the emergency services offered on top of the food pantry.”

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# M.A.S.H. focused on helping veterans

By D. Anthony Botkin

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When it first opened in February 2019 on East William Street in Delaware, the M.A.S.H. (Military and Service Heroes) Pantry and Resource Center had only one mission in mind — “No Veteran, military family, or survivor will go without ... at least not on our watch.”

Amber Hudson, founder of M.A.S.H., said the road work in front of the pantry has slowed things down from opening the pantry three days a week to only opening the first and third Saturday of each month, but it hasn’t stopped them from serving veterans in the area.

“There are so many coming in these days that it has become standing room only on the days we’re open,” she said. “We’re also running out of space because of all the donations that are coming in.”

Hudson said a lot of credit goes to Ric Ray, assistant pantry coordinator and Delaware County Veterans Service Commission vice president, for leading the way to establish a M.A.S.H. Pantry and Resource Center in Delaware. She said volunteers have the opportunity to engage with veterans by sitting and listening to their many stories.

“It is living history,” she said. “And they all get hugs.”

Hudson added, “We get close to these veterans. We’re making a difference in their lives, but most of all, they are making a difference in ours. They become like family to us. Our volunteers give their hearts to everyone but receive so much more in return.”

Hudson talked about one of the pantry’s regulars who passed away Dec. 27, 2019.

“Our hearts are heavy with sadness,” she said. “Since we opened last year, Army veteran Thomas “Tom” Blackburn, who served in Korea, never missed a Saturday at the pantry. He would stay from open to close to talk



with everyone that came in.”

Hudson said when a veteran walks through the door for the first time, there is no red tape, there are no questions asked, and it doesn’t matter where they are from or what branch of the military they served in.

“We are honored just to have them walk through the door,” she said.

“We do not look at their income. We serve all veterans, because it’s about honoring them for their service.”

Hudson said the only requirement for a veteran, when they arrive for the first time, is they need to bring in their DD214, a notice of discharge from active duty, or an NGB22, notice of discharge from the National Guard, as proof of military service.

M.A.S.H. Pantry is a nonprofit offering military families and survivors clothing, personal hygiene items, and diapers for children; resources for post-traumatic shock disorder (PTSD) with peer support meetings; and if veterans can’t get to a M.A.S.H. location, a mobile outreach program goes out to them and the community.

Hudson said the organization works closely with other charitable agencies, helping veterans pay bills to keep the power and water on.

Hudson started her first M.A.S.H. in Columbus in 2015, later moving it to Grove City, by selling her beloved Jeep, pawning every piece of jewelry she owned, and she was even willing to sell her hair to pull together the \$750 she needed to apply for a 501(c)(3) nonprofit status.

Since that first pantry, she has opened one at Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base, at the Defense Supply Center Columbus – Defense Logistics Agency, and on Feb. 9, 2019, the one in Delaware.

Always thinking outside the box, Hudson recently started a program that



Courtesy photo | Amber Hudson

Pictured back on opening day (Feb. 2, 2019) at the M.A.S.H. Pantry and Resource Center in Delaware are, left to right, Tonya Freeman, Delaware City Mayor Carolyn Riggie, Army WWII veteran Russell Knotts, Navy Seabee veteran Dewey Long, Navy veteran and M.A.S.H. founder Amber Hudson, and Naval Commander James Prouty, Rickenbacker.

sends care packages to deployed units. She said the first one involved sending 800 donated ChapSticks so that every member of the unit got one.

Not stopping there, Hudson said her vision is to send donated electronics, PlayStation or Nintendo systems, to deployed units. She said she envisions being able to send movie projectors so the troops can either watch movies or training videos.

Hudson, thinking about deployed K-9s, accepts donations of doggie treats and dog toys. She said schools have volunteered to make cards and decorate the care package boxes that are sent.

“There is always a way to give back to veterans for protecting our

freedoms,” she said. “We already have five more units to send care packages to.”

Hudson mentioned there will be a charity golf outing May 16 at Foxfire Golf Club south of Columbus, and she is putting together a charity motorcycle ride.

“We love our Harleys,” she said.

M.A.S.H. Pantry and Resource Center of Delaware County is located at 222 E. William St., Delaware. It’s open the first and third Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon. To donate or volunteer, go to the pantry’s website <https://www.mashpantry.org/> to find out how.

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# Civic service clubs give back

By Gary Budzak

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Three major civic service nonprofit organizations — Kiwanis, Lions and Rotary — each have two chapters in Delaware County.

## Kiwanis

Many Delaware residents know the Kiwanis Club of Delaware County, Inc. meets Thursdays for lunch in back of the Old Bag of Nails.

“The club supports numerous philanthropic endeavors in the greater Delaware community,” said Secretary Jack Hilborn, in an email. “Our club was chartered in 1975. We currently have 41 members, and our principal service projects include coordinating the packing day for the Holiday Clearing House each year, reading to first graders at Conger Elementary, ‘ringing the bell’ for the Salvation Army during the holidays, sponsorship of a Key Club for high school-aged young people at Buckeye Valley High School, sponsorship of a Builder’s Club at the Buckeye Valley Middle School, and co-sponsorship of the Aktion Club at Alpha Industries. All are service-oriented clubs affiliated with Kiwanis. Our fundraising primarily consists of working concessions with AVI at home Ohio Wesleyan football, soccer, and basketball games.”

The Sunbury Big Walnut Kiwanis Club got its start a year ago with a silent auction and raffle that raised several thousand dollars to launch the

chapter, said Secretary Jim Janosik.

“Volunteer members worked together to support the Big Walnut Middle School Service Day and provide all staff there with Thanksgiving gift bags; rang bells for the Salvation Army red kettle campaign, and made holiday ornaments to give to kids at Christmas on the Square; provided scholarships for two high school students to attend the Key Leader service leadership weekend in nearby Ashley; donated items to and helped sort donations at Big Walnut Friends Who Share; assisted the Delaware General Health District with car seat safety checks; sponsored table decorations at the Chamber’s annual dinner and charity fundraiser; sponsored and staffed the bounce house area and gave away books to kids at the Labor Day Flea Market; and provided meals and shirts for volunteers at the Souders Elementary all abilities playground build, as well as assisted in the construction multiple days,” Janosik said. “In 2020, Kiwanis will take on running the Labor Day Flea Market as its signature fundraiser and looks to expand its sponsored service leadership programs within the schools.”

## Lions

You may know the Lions Club from its collecting of used eyeglasses to help people see better. However, in addition to vision, other global causes include childhood cancer, diabetes, environment

and hunger.

According to the Facebook page of the Lions Clubs International, the organization’s mission is “to empower volunteers to serve their communities, meet humanitarian needs, encourage peace and promote international understanding through Lions clubs.”

“Across the globe, Lions are rolling up their sleeves and taking action,” states the organization’s website. “With over 1.4 million members, we’re the largest service organization in the world. And we’re as dedicated to helping those in need today as we were over 100 years ago when we first began.”

The Delaware Lions Club has general meetings the first Thursday of month and board meetings the third Thursday of the month, both at 7 p.m. in the Willis Education Center, 74 W. William St.

The Sunbury Lions Club meets at 6:30 p.m. the second and fourth Monday of the month at the Eagles building, 235 N. Columbus St. The organization’s Facebook page states it has been serving the Sunbury area since 1938.

## Rotary

Rotary may be best known for its slogan, “Service Above Self,” along with offering scholarships and teaching awards.

“Rotary is a global network of 1.2 million neighbors, friends, leaders, and problem-solvers who see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change – across



Courtesy Photo | Sunbury Big Walnut Kiwanis Club

**Books were given away to kids on the village square at the Labor Day Flea Market by the Sunbury Big Walnut Kiwanis Club.**

the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves,” states its website. “Rotary members believe that we have a shared responsibility to take action on our world’s most persistent issues. Our 35,000-plus clubs work together to: Promote peace; fight disease; provide clean water, sanitation, and hygiene; save mothers and children; support education; grow local economies.”

The Sunbury-Galena Rotary Club’s activities have included participating in anchoredforjustice.com, which its Facebook page states “are made up of volunteers who assemble and hand out

personal hygiene bags to girls who are victims of human trafficking.” The organization meets at 7:30 a.m. Tuesdays in the Sunbury Town Hall on the village square.

The Rotary Club of Delaware Ohio meets Mondays at noon at SourcePoint, 800 Cheshire Road. In recent years, it has presented the “Taste of Delaware,” of which The Gazette was a sponsor. In addition, The Gazette recently wrote about one of its members, retiring Delaware Municipal Court Judge David Sunderman.

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# Turning Point celebrates shelter, anniversary

By Glenn Battishill

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Domestic violence shelter Turning Point recently celebrated 40 years of serving the women and families of six counties, including Delaware, which now has its own shelter.

Turning Point Program Director Paula Burnside said Turning Point, which serves Crawford, Delaware, Marion, Morrow, Union and Wyandot counties, started at the grassroots level.

"We started out at an old house, and the only funding at that time was marriage, divorce, dissolution fees," said Burnside. "At the time, Marion was the geographic center, and it had the highest population. Well that blew up with Delaware. In fact, the first family we had when we opened was from Delaware."

Burnside said the organization knew it needed to expand to accommodate the influx of clients from Delaware's population boom and said that in September 2016, the \$3.2 million campaign to renovate a building into a shelter on the north side of Delaware began.

The 43-bed shelter was completed at the start of 2019 and will soon celebrate its one-year anniversary.

"I felt like I was pregnant for four years," Burnside joked. "I was waiting for it, and I guess in the back of my head I guess I was suspicious that we wouldn't raise \$3.2 million, but we did and we have no mortgage on this building. People really supported us."

Burnside said Turning Point did a lot of community outreach while it was fundraising and learned that people weren't aware of the need in the county.

"When we were out there and talking to people there are people who don't realize that domestic violence happens in every neighborhood, rich or poor," Burnside said. "The thing that's different is the more income you have the more options you have. If you live in poverty you don't know that you even have options. We help everybody. Our whole goal is to offer help to everyone. You can't make changes in your life if you don't know what your options are, and our goal is to help people change their lives."

She said the shelter can offer women and families a variety of services to help with separations, divorces, custody and other things, but she added it's entirely up to the clients.

"We never tell people what they have to do," Burnside said. "They have to make a decision, and we're here to support them."



Photos by Glenn Battishill | The Gazette

**The exterior of the Turning Point shelter in Delaware, which opened in 2019. Fundraising for the \$3.2 million campaign began in 2016 and was supported by many Delaware nonprofits and Delaware County law enforcement agencies.**

Burnside said running the second shelter has presented Turning Point with new challenges it has had to overcome.

"We've been used to running one shelter, not two shelters," she said. "We didn't hire any new administrators, but all of the staff here is new. We think we run a good shelter in Marion, and we wanted that same philosophy here in Delaware. I thought we'd have a soft opening where we'd open and people would come in slowly. That didn't happen. We were at capacity almost immediately, which tells you the need was there."

Burnside said the other big issue facing Turning Point is funding.

"Funding sources are becoming fewer, and there are more hands in the pot," she said. "One of our biggest funders was VOCA (Victims of Crime Act), and we just took a big cut from them so we've had to (make changes.) That comes from the federal government, so whatever changes are happening there effect us down here. We'd like to figure out how to become

self-sustaining."

Burnside said one advantage it has is how cooperative all the local agencies and nonprofit organizations are.

"We couldn't do it without all the other social service agencies," she said. "We don't have all the finances to help people, but I can refer them to (an agency who can.) Delaware has been very supportive to us being here. We wouldn't be as successful as we are if the community wasn't as supportive."

Now that the Delaware shelter is complete, Burnside said the next goal is growing Turning Point's outreach programs.

"We need to get to young people, talking to kids about safe dates and healthy and unhealthy relationships," Burnside said. "That's where our expansion needs to go. (Executive Director) Paula Roller has a saying, 'We are the fire extinguisher, what we need to be is a smoke detector.' We need to



# Turning Point

From page 22

get to the kids so they never get into these bad relationships.”

Burnside said she’s proud of the work Turning Point is doing, adding the organization helps an average of 300 women and families in shelter and more than 400 out of shelter. Burnside said she believes the Delaware shelter has been a positive force in the community.

“People worry this is a scary place,” she said. “People thought abusers would be showing up here all the time. That’s never happened. People didn’t want this in their backyard, but this is a safe place. It’s a safe place to come as a client, but it’s also a safe place as a community. The community needs to know we’re here, and they need to know it takes a facility this large to service the community. We’re doing good work. We’re making our community a safer place.”

More information about Turning Point can be found at <https://www.turningpoint6.org/>.

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On the bottom floor of the shelter, there is a space for children and families to play and spend time together. The space includes a playground, books, television and video games.



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# Bridges Community Action Partnership helping to better lives

By Gary Budzak  
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When people need assistance in achieving self-sufficiency, one of the places they can turn to is a community action agency.

“In 1964 the Economic Opportunity Act incorporated Community Action Agencies, locally controlled private nonprofit organizations whose purpose is to reduce poverty and to help low-income people become self-sufficient,” states the State of Ohio’s Development Services Agency website.

There are more than 1,000 such agencies in the United States, and one in all 88 counties of Ohio. Locally, Bridges Community Action Partnership serves Champaign, Delaware, Logan, Madison, Shelby and Union counties. Although the main office is in Marysville, there is a Delaware County branch at 555 Sunbury Road, Delaware, that accepts walk-ins from 8-10 a.m. weekdays.

“Bridges Community Action Partnership’s mission is to empower people in need by partnering with them to better their lives and realize personal prosperity,” said Bridges Executive Director Andrew Binegar. “What makes us unique is our ability to address local issues in each community we are located. For Delaware County, we provide the following services: Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), Family Development Services, Percentage of Income Payment Plan

(PIPP), Summer and Winter Utility Crisis programs, Elderly Home Repair – including handicap modifications and accessibility, Project Safe Heat, the Getting Ahead program, Electric Utility Assistance Programs, Medical Assistance program, Cribs for Kids program, Water Utility assistance, Work Related Assistance Program, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, and Financial Literacy.”

For example, the “Cribs for Kids” program helps provide cribs, baby monitors, breathing machines, heart rate monitors and medical assistance for children.

“Funded by William Street United Methodist Church, the Cribs for Kids program provides eligible low-income families with assistance for cribs and other related supplies,” states Bridges’ website. The eligibility requirement is total household income must be at or below 200% of federal poverty guidelines.

Binegar said all of Bridges’ programs have income guidelines, and he suggested visiting the organization’s website, [www.bridgescap.org](http://www.bridgescap.org) for more details.

“Oftentimes, I hear people tell me they didn’t know how much we offer to the community,” Binegar said. “To that I would say it is true – we are a well-kept secret. We have been around since 1964 helping people and changing lives.”

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