



# Newsletter

Spring 2024

The Communities of Don Guanella  
and Divine Providence



*Charity*



*Justice*



*Excellence*



*Compassion*



*Dignity*



*Courage*



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

At The Communities, we experienced a meaningful Lenten season and a joyous Easter, which added special meaning to our mission to serve those with intellectual disabilities.

Increasingly, we see ourselves as Missionary Disciples doing Christ's work, and we invite you to join us in our charitable endeavors.

In this Spring newsletter, I am pleased to introduce Heather Huot, newly appointed Secretary for Catholic Human Services at the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. She recently visited the Divine Providence Village campus and a new Don Guanella group home in Delaware County. Also in this edition are snapshots of our invaluable volunteer program, including an MLK Day of Service graciously offered by Villanova University's Football team. This year marks the 40th Anniversary of

Divine Providence Village's Springfield campus. We are excited to share many celebrations throughout this year with our residents, staff and families.

Amidst all this, we work diligently to address the needs of our aging population, who struggle with mobility, dementia, and stamina. We also consistently seek to provide programs that enrich our individual's life experiences and enhance their dignity.

To expand and deepen our legacy of charitable works within the spirit of Missionary Discipleship, we need your help. Your philanthropy is essential to The Communities to spread the joy of Easter throughout the year.

With Gratitude,

Fran Swiacki  
Executive Director



## Welcome Heather Huot, MSW, LSW Secretary for Catholic Human Services



On January 1, 2024, Heather Hout became the first woman to hold the position of Secretary for Catholic Human Services in the history of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Heather has worked with Catholic Social Services for the last 18 years. We were excited for Heather to attend our Family Christmas Party, visit our campuses, and join our families and residents at the Archdiocesan Mass for persons with disabilities.

*"I walked into a large ballroom, and it was packed with close to 500 of our residents and their families. There was pure joy radiating from every corner of that room. As I looked around the room, I was struck not only by the smiling faces of our residents, but by the incredible care of the staff attending to them. What has struck me at every program that I have visited is that every single person that we serve is seen as the beautiful person that God created them to be."*

# Easter Sunday

“He is risen, as He said” *Matthew 28.6*



On Easter Sunday, The Communities of Don Guanella & Divine Providence, celebrated Easter Sunday Mass. Nick Iadonisi, Community Journalist at *6abc Action News* shared in the celebration and captured the mission of The Communities in this story that aired on 6abc Action News on Easter Sunday. Check out the story at <https://6abc.com/easter-sunday-inclusivity-disabilities/14599574/>



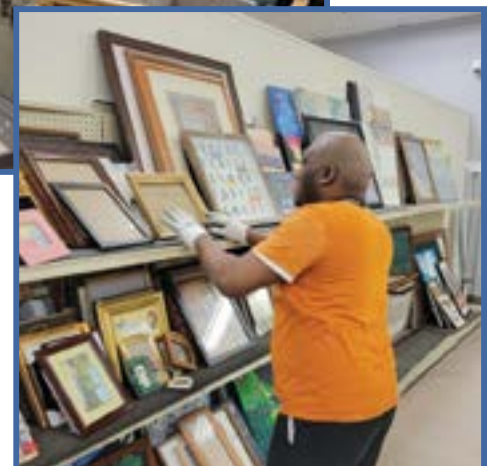
## Supported Employment Program

*Everyone Wins*

### Meet Kenny.....

Kenny receives employment support services from The Communities. He has been working as a Cart Attendant at Goodwill since 2022. He works three days a week from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm with support from a job coach.

Kenny loves to come to work and is a wonderful employee. He plays an important role in managing all the new merchandise placement throughout the store. Kenny takes pride in the appearance and tidiness of the store and is learning to clock himself in and out on the time clock. Kenny was recently awarded the *Spiritual Inspirational Award of Excellence* for the 32 Annual Brighter Futures “*My City, My Place*” Award ceremony. He lives at home with his family, who are so grateful for his employment opportunity and are very proud of all his accomplishments.



# New Homes

## New Adventures



Setting aside some practical reasons for moving closer to the Delaware County heart of The Communities, the men at the recently renovated homes in Media and Rose Valley are all thumbs up when showing off their new place. The homes recently acquired by The Communities all feature newly renovated, single-story living with increased square footage, bathrooms, and scenic vistas! Don Guanella and CLA Administrator, Patti Menszak, shared that “... *strategic planning for the best outcomes for our individuals takes place continually. We are grateful for the opportunity to secure these conveniently located beautiful ranch properties for our men as they age.*” The staff and men are excited to settle in and enjoy the blooms of their first spring in their wonderful homes. They are enjoying getting to know the community and attending mass at their new parishes.



Richard & Mark pose with staff, Eissa



The guys give the new house a big “Thumbs Up!”

The transition of moving from two-story homes to spacious single-floor living is the beginning of a wonderful new chapter in their lives. House manager Joanne Brown shared that “... *the men and staff of the new Brookhaven home are enjoying the immense square footage and beautiful neighborhood. Our entire team will aid the men in making memories and building a lifetime of happiness in their forever home. My heart is full knowing how happy the men are and how well they have transitioned.*”

The men settled into a routine effortlessly, with everyone doing their part to keep their new home beautiful. Rocco enjoys waking up early, opening the curtains, sitting in the living room, singing along to music, and looking out the window to the beautiful yard. All the men enjoy watching the birds at the bird feeder and showing visitors around their new home, especially their bedrooms. They look forward to weekly visits from Music Works. Everyone is especially excited when Father Dennis and Father Amal arrive. With plenty of space for entertaining, the men and staff are already planning summer events at their new home!



# Annual Mass

## *Honoring Persons with Disabilities*



In celebration of National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, Archbishop Nelson J. Perez celebrated Mass honoring Persons with Disabilities, the Deaf Community, family, friends, and caretakers on Sunday, March 10, 2024.

The annual Archdiocesan celebration at The Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul is special to the men and women of The Communities of Don Guanella and Divine Providence.

Monsignor Richard T. Bolger, Father Dennis M. Weber, and Father John Bosco Sammanasanathan joined Archbishop Nelson Perez in celebrating the Mass.

Our residents always look forward to this annual celebration and enjoyed meeting with Archbishop Perez after Mass.



# Life Sharing

## Family Care

Everyone, and *everything*, needs and deserves a break. Consider your daily routine, it is filled with breaks of all kinds. Think of a lightbulb turned on all day, every day. It gets hot. It burns out. It flickers and dims. It does not perform at its optimal functioning. Many people, regardless of disability or functioning, feel like a light bulb: constantly on, constantly having an expectation to perform or comply with expectations. Respite provides that needed “*down time*” to recharge and reset your energy and outlook on life.

**Respite.** Something that caregivers, at some time or another, long for. The idea of respite may spark a variety of emotions. Some people experience frustration, some feel embarrassment, and yet others feel hopeless. Respite can be applied to any situation



Yang and Virgil

but it is one that those in the Human Services field may not consider as often as they should. Most times it is applied for emergent situations. Our Respite Program is an extension of our Life Sharing through Family Living program. Here in the Life Sharing program, respite is used

holistically, as part of the overall continuous care plan for both our individuals and their providers. We look at respite as being needed **before** the emergency arises, so that an emergency doesn't arise.

Properly planned respite breaks reduce challenging behaviors and burnout. Some respite breaks look like spending a few days with a family friend. Others look like a weekend vacation with a familiar staff. Respite works extremely well when the individual is familiar with the host family. The host family becomes an “adoptive” family, of sorts. Ideally the individual is at ease and the host family is familiar with the individual's personality and needs.

We are a **Family Care** centered program matching individuals with the right host family so they will feel at home.

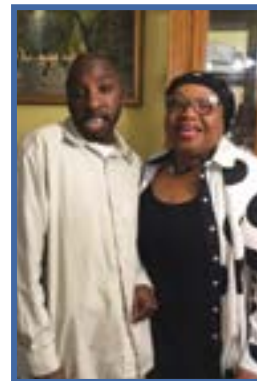
Our families are caring, compassionate people who have the heart to serve those in need. All families receive our training program and everyone



Abby and Nitza with Ron & Tanya Barrett

is screened for all federal and state mandated clearances. Our social workers provide oversight.

It is no secret that intellectual disability diagnoses has increased significantly. We are one of a handful of programs that serves those with special needs and their families. Our respite program is not new. For years we have been available as



Chris and Charlotte

a support option to various programs. Over the last four months our renewed focus has yielded an increase of four more in the placement process. With new resources identified, we are poised to assist families. It is clear that the need is present, and we are here to fill that need.

We are here to help. We are here to serve. We are here to give you a break. If you, or someone you know, is ready to grow your family and embrace the love of a person with special needs, please contact the **Life Sharing Respite Team at 484-472-5069.**

*Christina Abrams, Respite Coordinator*

# MLK Day

## Sharing Love & Grace

*"Everyone can be great because everybody can serve. You only need a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love."* Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Divine Providence Village was blessed with members of the Villanova Football Team sharing their love and grace for this year's MLK Jr. Day of Service. We were so thankful for all their help on campus and the time they spent with our ladies.



## Welcome Dawn O'Neill

### Philanthropy Officer

The Communities of Don Guanella and Divine Providence is excited to welcome Dawn O'Neill to the role of Philanthropy Officer.

Dawn is a highly experienced and competent advancement professional, having worked in a variety of non-profit settings for many years. In the last two years, Dawn has worked for us as a consultant representing The Catholic Foundation. During this time, she has excelled by significantly increasing our fundraising capacity through our annual campaign; formed strong steward relationships with donors, families, and vendors;



and augmented our marketing techniques and focus. She has a bachelor's degree in marketing from Cabrini University. What's more, she closely identifies with our mission to help those with intellectual disabilities and is an apt model of our core values.

We look forward to seeing Dawn continue her philanthropic successes, as she enhances the proud legacy of The Communities.

**To make a long-lasting impact on the lives we serve through a planned gift, contact Dawn O'Neill directly at [doneill@chs-adphila.org](mailto:doneill@chs-adphila.org).**

HAVE YOU MADE YOUR DONATION TO OUR ANNUAL FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN?  
Please use the enclosed envelope, or go to [dgdpcommunities.org](http://dgdpcommunities.org)



The Communities of Don Guanella  
and Divine Providence

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**Programs Serving Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities**  
A Division of Catholic Social Services of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia

In 1881, Saint Luigi Guanella founded The Daughters of St. Mary Providence, whose mission is to minister to persons with intellectual disabilities. In September 1984, the girls and young women with intellectual disabilities moved from their home at St. Mary of Providence in Elverson, PA, to Divine Providence Village (DPV) in Springfield. In 2005, The Daughters of St. Mary of Providence withdrew from DPV due to a lack of vocations. Sr. Mary Veasy and Sr. Sue Lindinger, Sisters of Saint Joseph, have been lovingly providing pastoral ministry at DPV since 2007. In 2019, as part of the Developmental Programs Division of Catholic Social Services, DPV merged with Don Guanella to become The Communities of Don Guanella and Divine Providence. Over the past 40 years, the campus has evolved to meet the changing needs of the individuals we serve. We are excited about the many celebrations that are planned throughout this year with our residents, staff, and families.

**Divine Providence Village is turning 40!**



Turning the 1st shovel in 1983.



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