

SHENANGO VALLEY URBAN LEAGUE, INC.

2020-2021 Annual Report

www.svurbanleague.org



SHENANGO VALLEY URBAN LEAGUE, INC.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Committee

Autumn Johnson, Esq, Board Chair

Jeremy Coxe., Vice Chair

Cinnamon Cannon-Price, Treasurer

Douglas Decker, Secretary

Members

Christine Burger

Richard Oliver

Mark Malcolmson

Justin Jose

Amy Carson

MISSION AND VISION

The mission of the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. is to ensure equal access and opportunity for African-Americans and others in need to empower individuals to cultivate and exercise their full human potential. The Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. implements its mission through advocacy, bridge building and program services.

Our vision is a community where all citizens have equal opportunity to achieve their fullest potential, where everyone contributes to improving the quality of life and shares in prosperity.

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR & PRESIDENT/CEO

- The Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. prides itself on being an outlet for individuals in need through our health, housing, and education services. As it is our mission to encourage and empower individuals in Mercer County to reach their full potential, we will continue to advocate for social justice and equality for all individuals. Through our programming, we will continue to make great impacts on youth and adults and provide them with the education and resources that are necessary during their time of need. With many obstacles such as unemployment, and lack of food, the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. strives to provide supportive outreach initiatives and programs in the areas most needed by the community. Furthermore, the partnership with the United Way of Mercer County is invaluable and through co-branding efforts we will collectively work toward lifting families out of poverty. Through these efforts, the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. Board of Directors and staff will continue to focus on serving diverse populations throughout Mercer County.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Dr. Erin R. Houston, President/CEO

Raymond Bianco, Fiscal Director

April Brown, Housing Director

Corwin Somerset, Education Director

Kelly Rodriques, WIC Director

Nichole Craig, WIC Fiscal Administrator

Teresa Hall, HLRP Coordinator

Brieauna Morrison, HLRP Advocate

Melinda Boatner, Administrative Assistant

Maintenance

Bruce Barfield

WIC STAFF WOMEN, INFANTS, & CHILDREN

Joyce Harrison, Administrative Assistant

Orenda Underwood-Johnson, CPA

Patrice Lee, NT

Emily Campbell, CPA/BFC/PCM-OM

Erica Peiffer, CPA

Pamela Shepard, NT

Lauriethel Ward, RS/OC-CIT

Stephen Gaetano, CPA

Lori Kocholek, PC

Sarah Irwin, PC



WOMEN, INFANTS, & CHILDREN (WIC)

WOMEN, INFANTS, & CHILDREN (WIC)



- The Pennsylvania WIC Program is committed to improving the health of eligible pregnant women, new mothers and children providing nutrition education, breastfeeding support, healthy foods and referrals to health and social programs during the critical stages of fetal and early childhood development.
- WIC funding comes from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and was authorized by Congress in 1972. WIC was implemented in Pennsylvania in May 1974.
- WIC is made possible in PA through contracts with county and private nonprofit agencies and is administered by the Department of Health. WIC services locally in all 67 counties at about 250 sites. SVUL has been providing WIC services since April 1, 1978.

HOW DOES WIC HELP FAMILIES?

- 1. Offers referrals to health and social service programs.
- 2. Gives advice for healthy eating with nutrition materials and one-on-one nutrition education.
- 3. Provides monthly food packages, which includes nutritious foods from all food groups.
- 4. Improves duration of pregnancy and growth of nutritionally at-risk infants and children.
- 5. Reduces iron deficiency anemia in children.
- 6. Reduces low birth weight and fetal deaths.

WIC PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Received continued funding from Pennsylvania Department of Health in the amount of \$728,537.00 for the WIC and Peer Counselor Project for fiscal year October 2020-September 2021.
- Provided service in Mercer, Venango & Forest counties with an average participation of 3,000 clients per year.



NUTRITION EDUCATION, BREASTFEEDING & OUTREACH GOALS

Nutrition Goal

- FY 2020 Goal: To evaluate how staff are doing with conducting WIC assessments in PENN and determine needs to help improve their confidence, competency, and/or efficiency.

Breastfeeding Goal

- FY 2020 Goal: To complete a needs assessment to evaluate how staff are conducting breastfeeding assessments using the PENN system over the past year.

Outreach Goal

- FY 2020 Required Statewide Goal: Increase local agency caseload after the eWIC rollout.

WIC BREASTFEEDING PEER COUNSELING PROGRAM

“A Breastfeeding Support Program for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women”

- The WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program is a support program for pregnant breastfeeding women to help women initiate and continue breastfeeding with the help of Peer Counselors who are trained to assist by offering breastfeeding education, support, and role modeling.
- The breastfeeding peer counselors are mothers who have breastfed and have personal experience with breastfeeding and are trained to provide valuable support to increase breastfeeding initiation and duration rates.
- The program is funded by USDA using the “Loving Support Model” for a successful Peer Counseling Program for WIC.
- To learn more about the WIC and Peer Counseling Program, check online at www.health.pa.gov or www.pawic.com, or call 1-800-WIC-WINS (1-800-942-9467)





EDUCATION

REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

- The Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. observed 2021 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day with a virtual program via Facebook Live.
- Community members participated in the virtual program by reading personal tributes to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and spoke about how his advocacy has impacted their lives.
- William Wiley, CEO of Destiny Dezines was recognized as the Minority Entrepreneur Spotlight, which was the second time the Shenango Valley Urban League has presented this award.

BLACK HISTORY ESSAY CONTEST

Celebrating 47 years!

- The 47th Annual Black History & Heroes Essay Contest was held throughout several local school districts in Mercer County. This contest provides an opportunity for students, parents, and the community an opportunity to learn about many civil rights leaders and African American inventors. Fifth and Sixth grade students submitted essays on their favorite African American heroes and detailed how they have impacted the culture and society overall.
- The 2021 luncheon to recognize first place and honorable mention winners was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however a virtual program via Facebook Live took place to allow winners to read their essays.

FRANK J. NAGY SCHOLARSHIP FUND ESSAY CONTEST

- The Education Department conducted its seventh essay contest for a \$1,000 scholarship award. Mercer County high school seniors could submit an essay responding in 500 words or less about how they have demonstrated leadership ability both academically and socially and what role they have played in making a positive impact in the urban community. Gianna Labbiento, a Sharon High School Senior was the 2021 recipient and winner of the Frank J. Nagy Scholarship. The scholarship fund provides financial support to a deserving Mercer County student and highlights our commitment to education.
- An award presentation would have taken place at the Shenango Valley Urban League's 53rd Anniversary Banquet, however, the banquet was cancelled due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.



Frank J. Nagy 
Scholarship Winner
GIANNA LABBIENTO



CONGRATULATIONS GIANNA LABBIENTO OUR 2021 FRANK J. NAGY SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY CONTEST WINNER!
GIANNA IS A 2021 GRADUATE FROM SHARON HIGH SCHOOL. SHE IS VALEDICTORIAN OF HER GRADUATING CLASS, MEMBER OF CROSS COUNTRY AND TRACK, AND HAS PARTICIPATED IN VARIOUS CLUBS THROUGHOUT HIGH SCHOOL. GIANNA RECENTLY RAISED OVER \$6,700 FOR BUHL PARK WITH A FUNDRAISER THAT SHE CREATED AND EXECUTED. SHE WILL BE FURTHERING HER EDUCATION AT MIAMI UNIVERSITY AND WILL BE DUAL MAJORING IN BIOLOGY AND PREMEDICAL STUDIES.

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SUMMER YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

- The Summer Youth Apprenticeship Program provides Mercer County students (age 12-15) an opportunity to job shadow different career fields and earn a stipend. Components of the program include, one-on-one interviewing, weekly enrichment group sessions, lunch with leaders series, career camp, and job shadowing. Students who successfully complete the program receive a stipend, achievement awards, commemorative t-shirt, and certificate of completion at the conclusion of the program.
- The Summer Youth Apprenticeship Program was virtual for the second time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, no face-to-face job shadowing could take place. Students were still engaged via Zoom for all other components of the program.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

- ▶ Summer Youth Apprenticeship Program: 6
- ▶ African American History and Heroes Essay Contest: 234
- ▶ Frank J. Nagy Scholarship Essay Contest: 12
- ▶ NULITES: 2

HUMAN RELATIONS

- The purpose of this program is to provide service to clients in Mercer County seeking human relations assistance in the areas of employment, education, public accommodation, and housing.

Program highlights:

- Continue to assist the community, providing human relations services
- Act as mediator to work out an amicable solution between parties involved in a complaint
- Continue to provide up to date information regarding human relations issues to the general public and cooperate with the PA Human Relations Commission and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

EMPLOYMENT

- The employment department addresses the job needs of the community. Resume and cover letter development, job search, and skills assessments are provided to individuals seeking full or part time employment.

Program highlights:

- Performed ongoing job search and placement for 12 individuals
- Resumes and cover letters were prepared or updated for 12 individuals
- Total number of cities and municipalities where clients resided: 4



HOUSING

Housing and Life Readiness Program (HLRP)

Homeless Assistance Program (HAP)

HOUSING AND LIFE READINESS PROGRAM (HLRP)

- The purpose of the Housing and Life Readiness Program (HLRP) is to address the issues of Mercer County Children and Youth Services families to keep children and families housed through crisis by assisting families with finding employment, finding and securing adequate housing, securing critical documents (birth certificates), and providing financial literacy with life skills education. All participants are referred by a case manager through Mercer County CYS.

LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION

Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior, which enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Individuals referred to the HLRP program participate in life skills education workshops that cover the following topics:

- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Creative/lateral thinking
- Critical thinking
- Effective communication
- Interpersonal relationships
- Self awareness
- Assertiveness
- Goal setting

FINANCIAL LITERACY EDUCATION

- Families are assisted with finding and securing adequate and affordable housing. In addition, participants undergo financial literacy education to better understand and manage their personal finances. The goal of teaching financial literacy is to help them develop a stronger understanding of basic financial concepts and also learn how to balance a household budget as well as receive help finding and keeping gainful employment.

HOUSING & LIFE READINESS PROGRAM BY THE NUMBERS

42 families served

157 children
impacted

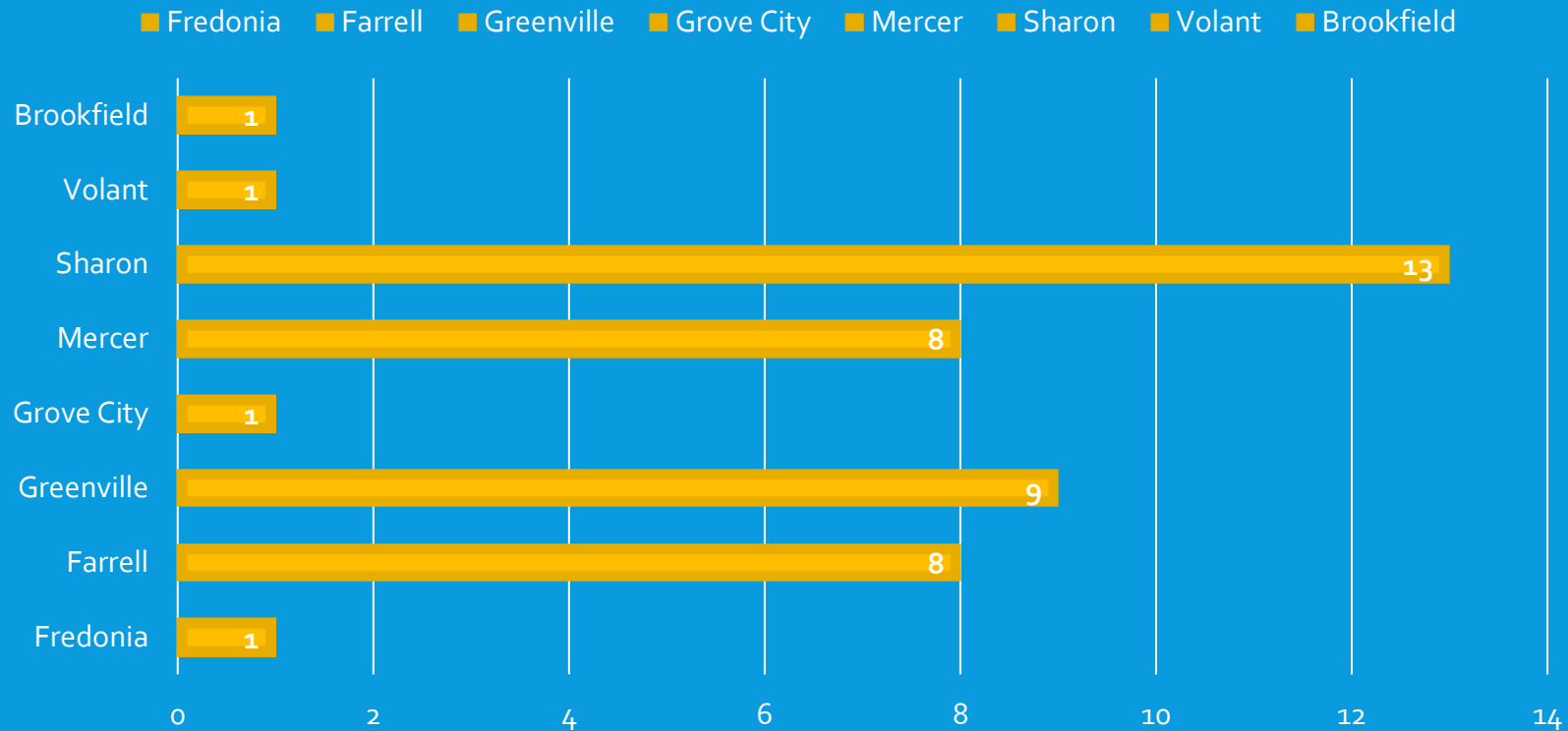
53 families
received utility
assistance

20 families
received rent
assistance

9 families received
birth certificate
documents

HLRP DEMOGRAPHICS

AREAS PARTICIPANTS RESIDED



HOMELESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HAP) RENT ASSISTANCE

The Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. has been designated by the Mercer County Commissioners to administer the HAP Program. The purpose of the HAP program is two-fold;

- 1.) the program assists Mercer County residents in need of acquiring or maintaining rental housing.
- 2.) the program provides funding to the Emergency Shelter Program administered by the Salvation Army.

The types of assistance consist of rental counseling, budget counseling, and a financial grant toward the first month's rent or the delinquent rent. All applicants must have a face-to-face interview with the Housing Counselor or via phone during pandemic.

HOMEOWNERS EMERGENCY MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HEMAP)

- The Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. is certified by HUD (Housing and Urban Development) to provide mortgage default counseling to homeowners facing foreclosure. During the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. processed 3 applications to the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) for emergency mortgage loan assistance through the states Homeowners Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program. During 2020 the moratorium stopped many foreclosures, which impacted the amount of HEMAP applications SVUL processed.

EMERGENCY SHELTER

In the Emergency Shelter Program administered by the Salvation Army, emergency shelter is defined as housing individuals facing imminent crisis with temporary overnight housing up to a period of one week. For the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the Salvation Army provided housing for 54 Mercer County households. The amount of money sub-granted from the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. to the Salvation Army was \$7,741.00.

HOMELESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BY THE NUMBERS

- Received continued funding in the amount of \$112,794.00 for the 2020-2021 fiscal year.
- Emergency shelter assistance provided by the Salvation Army, sub-recipient of the Urban League, to 54 Individual households that supported a cumulative total of 136 adults and children.
- Provided financial support of \$40,300 in rental assistance and \$7,741.00 for emergency shelter.
- Received \$60,000 in CARES Act funds to support rent assistance needs
- From July 2020-June 2021, 1,621 housing inquiries came in to the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc.

HOMELESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BY THE NUMBERS

120
Households
served for
rent
assistance

Provided
Mortgage
Foreclosure
Assistance to
3 families

226 adults
and children
served in total