For Edwin and Tiffany, their recent stay at the Sixth Street Shelter gave them a fresh outlook on life and the plan they needed to reach their goals. When Edwin was growing up, he lived with his aunt in Allentown and spent his summers in Buffalo, New York, visiting family. Eventually, he moved to Buffalo, which is where he met Tiffany. They were a young couple trying to make it on their own, but there was a shortage of jobs in the area, and they found themselves having to stay with friends and relatives while looking for work. After the arrival of their son, Giovanni, and running out of places to stay, the situation was desperate enough to motivate them to move back to Allentown in search of better opportunities. “As soon as we got off the bus, we were homeless. We had no place to go,” Edwin recalls. In order to find shelter, they had to separate. Edwin stayed at a men’s shelter while Tiffany and Giovanni stayed at a shelter for women and children. “Being homeless as a family is much harder than it is for an individual,” said Edwin. “When you only have to worry about yourself, it’s stressful, but not nearly as bad as worrying about where you’ll find diapers or another meal for your child.” It was like this for about a month and a half before Edwin found a job as a caregiver and they were able to move into an apartment. It seemed like their luck was changing for the better when, last November, their apartment building caught fire and they found themselves facing homelessness again.

When they lost their apartment, they dialed 2-1-1 to reach Connection of Home. This is the Coordinated Entry System of the Eastern PA Continuum of Care, a resource for anyone facing homelessness. They were placed in the Community Queue for a space in a shelter. Fortunately, they only had to stay in a hotel room one night before an apartment at the Sixth Street Shelter became available and they moved in. “The Sixth Street Shelter opened its doors to us when we were out of options. That’s what I call ‘hope’,” Edwin shared. “During our time at the shelter, we learned how to establish routines. The shelter gave us chores, a monthly calendar and savings goals. Those are all things that we’ve continued to do.” Tiffany and Edwin agree that the time spent at the shelter gave them the stability they needed to plan for the future. Edwin now works two jobs as a caregiver and Tiffany was doing the same kind of work before her advanced pregnancy caused her to take a break. They now live in a studio apartment and, when asked what their plans are for the future, they are visibly excited to welcome their new baby girl. Tiffany hopes to someday become a nurse. And Edwin would like to return to training and working as an auto mechanic. We are so glad that their journey led them to the Sixth Street Shelter and that they picked up some helpful habits during their stay. We wish them much success!

“RESIDENT SUCCESS STORY
FORGING AHEAD AS A FAMILY

HOLIDAY GIFTS

Believe it or not, the holidays are just around the corner and we are starting sign up lists now for our Sponsor-a-Family program. Please email Heather Pritchard at hpritchard@caclv.org to express interest in purchasing gifts for our families over the holidays. Thank you!
Director’s Corner

Volunteerism is in full bloom at the Sixth Street Shelter! Earlier this year we teamed up with the Penn State Extension in Lehigh and Northampton County Master Gardeners, a volunteer corps trained in research-based and sustainable horticultural practices. Teams of volunteers were led by Cathy Dawson and Becky Short, both long-time supporters of the shelter who were interested in using their expertise to improve all of our outdoor areas. Together, they came up with a unique plan for the playground, the perimeter of our parking lot, the Believe Garden behind the 223 building and the space behind our Turner Street apartments. Master Gardener Leslie Keffer-King also assisted with planning and recruiting volunteers. Plans included kid-friendly plants (for example, string bean trellis tents in the playground for hide and seek), plenty of peppers, tomatoes and herbs, and even a rain barrel for cost-efficient watering. All of this was made possible through the fundraising efforts of our volunteers, along with their generous donations of plants, time, and hard work. The effect of the gardens has been overwhelmingly positive. But there are other, long-term benefits, too. “We are hoping that residents see the work we’ve done here and feel inspired to spend time outdoors,” said Cathy. “I’d love it if residents found some of the same peace and joy that gardening has brought to my life.”

In the spirit of continuing the success of the gardens, we have scheduled presentations from the Master Gardeners’ Speaker’s Bureau on topics that are of interest to our residents. Topics such as “Container Gardens” will make the idea of starting a garden in the city a little more approachable for first time urban gardeners. While others, like “Fairy Gardens,” are fun for kids, too! We look forward to continuing the plans for the gardens and completing phase two of this project next spring. We are still $600 away from reaching our fundraising goal for the gardens. If you would like to support this project by volunteering or donating, please contact Heather Pritchard at hpritchard@caclv.org. For more information about the Master Gardener Program, visit: https://extension.psu.edu/programs/master-gardener or contact them at lehighext@psu.edu or 610-391-9840.

It is not always easy to accept help when you need it. For many of our families, this can be the biggest hurdle to overcome on their path to self-sufficiency.

The top five stressors that an individual can experience in their lifetime are: death of a loved one, divorce, moving, major illness or injury, and loss of a job. Most of our families have experienced these events in multiples and even though these are undeniably beyond their control, many will blame themselves, carrying around feelings of guilt and embarrassment. If left unaddressed this can lead to anxiety and depression, which will ultimately hold them back from making the changes that are needed in order to move forward with their lives. Fortunately for some, resiliency comes naturally and can see them through these difficult times.

One family’s story in particular comes to mind. Lewis is a single father of 10-year-old twin boys who recently found himself homeless due to a series of circumstances that could not have been foreseen. Our culture can be more critical of a man asking for assistance than of a woman. Lewis was forced to overcome certain feelings of discomfort and seek help for the sake of his children and their future. People like Lewis, who can see beyond themselves and their current situation to hope and plan for the future, are the ones who find the most success at the shelter. While staying with us, Lewis has been able to save enough money for a deposit on an apartment and they are currently looking for a place to live.

Lewis’ story is hopeful, but others are not. We are very grateful for resources within the Lehigh Valley which assist those who may be struggling with depression and anxiety due to homelessness. Partnering with other nonprofits to find the best resources for our families is part of what we do. And I’m very proud of our residents who have the courage to come forward and seek out the help they need.
COMMITTED TO THE FUTURE OF THE SIXTH STREET SHELTER

You may not be aware of the fact that, last year, we almost closed the doors on our transitional housing programs at Ferry Street in Easton and Turner Street in Allentown. We were able to find the funding to keep those programs going, but we are not out of the woods yet. This near-crisis led us to the realization that a more focused fundraising effort was needed in order to ensure that our doors remain open for years to come. As it stands, the majority of our funding is made up of private donations. The more we can grow our funding sources in this sector, the more resilient we will be as an organization in the face of the constant barrage of proposals to cut government funding. We are very proud of the folks who have already agreed to join this effort as part of our Fundraising Committee. Members include: Lauryn Graves, Jessica Reynolds, Julie Huber, Kristine Ortiz and Carol Kalmar. They each bring their own unique perspective and skills to the table and, with their feedback and suggestions, we have already begun to implement a more formal fundraising plan for the shelter.

As part of these changes, we are happy to announce the launch of our Red Brick Giving Society in recognition of donors giving $1,000 or more during our fiscal year. This group is named for the red brick of our iconic building and is represented by the half-circle transom above the building’s front door.

The shape of the transom echoes a sunrise, a symbol of new beginnings. We think this is a fitting image to capture the mission of the Sixth Street Shelter, where we provide residents with the tools they need to create their own new beginnings. Those who have given $1,000 or more annually to the shelter will receive a pin as our way of saying thanks for their committed support. Pins will also be available for purchase for those who wish to identify themselves as friends of the shelter in a visible way.

Your donation does not have to exceed $1,000 (or even $10) to make a difference! If you are curious about ways to support the shelter, please consider these options:

Matching Gifts- Go to https://doublethedonation.com to find out if your employer will match your donation

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We’d love to hear from you!

GRATITUDE FOR OUR AWESOME INTERNS

This summer we were joined by two talented and dedicated students through the Bridging the Gaps Community Health Internship Program. Anne (pictured right) is pursuing her Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing from DeSales University and Arysa (left) will be receiving her Master’s Degree in Social Work from Marywood University next spring. Together, they enjoyed organizing health education classes for the residents and spending time in the Family Resource Center, helping residents look for jobs or working with them on their resumes. They also had the opportunity to get firsthand experience shadowing shelter counselors as they worked one-on-one with our families.

They offered some parting thoughts on what this experience has meant for them. “I am incredibly fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn from the counselors and staff this summer,” said Arysa. “Meeting all of the residents and hearing their stories drove home the importance of the work that organizations such as the Sixth Street Shelter do in continuing the fight for fairness and human rights in our society.” Anne also shared her reflections. “This internship has been eye-opening for me. Every day provided a unique experience, and I plan on carrying the stories of the people I’ve met with me as inspiration for empowering others I might come across in my personal and professional life. The experience has made me aware of serious issues in the community and undeniably changed my perspective.”
OUR KIDS ARE OFF TO A GREAT START

this school year thanks to generous donations of school supplies and backpacks from our friends at Mack Trucks and The Women’s Success Network at Versum Materials. We also received donations of school uniforms from Owens and Minor (our apologies to others who might have donated after this newsletter went to print). Although they were sad to see the summer come to an end, the kids shared with us some of their favorite things about going back to school.

Jonathan is starting first grade this year and is looking forward to running into his big brother, a third grader, in the hallway.

Jah-kil’s favorite thing about sixth grade is... “football!”

SIXTH STREET SHELTER STAFF

Kristine Blasco, Director
Maria Ares, Office Administrator
Megan Brehm, Turner Street Apartments Counselor
Giselle Garcia, Shelter Counselor
Roslyn Kuba, Ferry Street Apartments Counselor
Heather Pritchard, Development and Volunteer Coordinator
Dave Queen, Shelter Counselor
Caretakers: Casey Fuarl, Carlos Martinez, Faye Quarterman, Arelis Robles

WE ACCEPT

New ONLY: Towels | Pillows
Twin sheet sets | Blankets or comforters | Non-perishable food
Baby supplies (wipes & diapers - especially size 5) | Mops
Brooms & dust pans
Tall kitchen trash cans
Tall kitchen trash bags - 13 gallon size | Toiletries | Cleaning supplies

New and Gently Used:
Household items | Microwaveable dishware | Plates, bowls, cups, glasses | Plastic utensils and
dishes for children | Small kitchen appliances | Utensils | Pots and pans

Sixth Street Shelter
219 North Sixth Street
Allentown, PA 18102
610.435.1490
SixthStreetShelter.caclv.org

The Sixth Street Shelter is a program of Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley (CACLV). CACLV is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, contributions to which are tax deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law. The official registration and financial information of CACLV may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.