

A Higher Calling



A survey was done of Access Services' host family providers asking what led them to serve others in such a way. A number of respondents stated it was a sense of calling from God that inspired them to open up their homes

to others. This insight into the motivation of our providers again revealed the value of our partnership with faith communities. If you are a person of faith sensing a call to use your home to serve others, we'd love to speak with you about the needs and opportunities in our Lifesharing, Foster Care and Respite programs. Together, we can heed this higher calling.

Contact **Dave Eckert, Director of Mental Health Support Services / Spiritual Care Chaplain** (215) 540-2150, x1286
DEckert@accessservices.org

Job Opportunities

Part Time Direct Support Professional in Dresher, Pennsylvania

Assist adults with developmental disabilities participate in the community.

Contact **Joyce** (610) 866-6667, x1272
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Sip, Savor & Support

You are invited to join us on Thursday evening, May 2nd, when Access Services will host its charity event "Sip, Savor & Support" at RiverCrest Golf Club in Phoenixville PA. Sommelier Michael Walsh will take you on a wine tasting "tour" across Europe with some exquisite wines paired with a delicious European meal and dessert. You will also be helping us to celebrate some of the achievements of the

people that we serve. Proceeds from this event will support Access Services in continuing to help children and adults with special needs live rich and fulfilling lives in their communities. To purchase tickets, please go to our website: <http://www.accessservices.org/sipsavorsupport/>
Thank you to our sponsors as of 2/10/2019: Genesis Asset Protection, CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen), and Arlington Heritage Group.

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Program Highlights

Thinking Outside the Box



Often times when parents are caring for a child with special needs it can be hard to figure out where to start. The Chesco LIFE Family Support Specialists are experts at helping families navigate the system and problem solve with creative, "outside-the-box" approaches. They understand and consider that each family has different needs and each child has distinct personalities and preferences.

The team can help families navigate the system through support with organizing paperwork, applying for medical assistance, getting an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) in place, and getting services lined up. Other times they are there to simply offer a listening ear and provide validation in tough moments.

They are also able to support families in individualized ways. One family struggled with getting their son to engage safely with their family cat and benefitted greatly from being connected with a pet therapy center. Another family has a teenage son who is passionate about sports. The team is connecting him to a local youth group so that he can pursue this hobby and also connect with a new group of friends. Currently, the team is working on connecting another family with Big Brothers Big Sisters to provide a positive mentor in their teenager's life.

Having lived experience of caring for a child with special needs uniquely positions each of the Family Support Specialists to provide this level of mentorship. They share, "we are able to bounce ideas off of each other to provide the best level of care!"

If you are interested in learning more about Chesco LIFE we invite you to visit www.accessservices.org/services/chesco-life-program/

Contact **Mabel Gall, Assistant Director Chesco LIFE Program**
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Getting Proximate



Our mobile crisis team averages 657 calls and 387 mobile responses each month. Our crisis workers act as a center point, helping individuals in crisis manage these roadblocks and connecting them to resources in the county. One of our crisis workers Jessie shares an experience,

During my first week as a crisis worker I remember visiting a woman, Elaine, at her home. Elaine has schizophrenia and was experiencing visual and auditory hallucinations. Her family was concerned for her and called our team for support. I remember sitting next to Elaine in her winter coat and hat in the middle of June, holding her hand and telling her, "things can and will get better if you allow your husband to take you to the hospital." I saw Elaine a few months later as she was transitioning from an outpatient center. I'll never forget how amazing she looked, smiling in her pink dress, happy and well and excited to go home and be with her children again.

Jessie shared that she can not take credit for Elaine's wellness, as that was Elaine and her husband's doing. However, Jessie reflected on the capacity that she and her coworker needed to get proximate in this situation, allowing them to provide hope and options for Elaine to get better. During National Social Work Month we are incredibly grateful for the dedication and compassion of individuals like Jessie. Thank you for all that you do!

Contact **Moira Tumelty MS NCC, Director of Crisis Services**
MTumelty@accessservices.org



ACCESS SERVICES

Creating better ways to serve people with special needs

Access Services, a 40 year-old nonprofit organization, operates in ten Pennsylvania counties, offering services for children, adults, and families. The mission of Access Services is to empower and serve people in need of specialized supports by providing innovative services that improve their ability to live fulfilling lives in the community.

March 2019

National Social Workers Month



A broad ethical principle of social work encompasses the core values of service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity and competence.

These principles set forth ideals to which all social workers aspire.

During National Social Workers Month, we are proud to recognize our staff. We are so proud of our staff, the many sacrifices, relentless dedication, and the caring and guidance that is provided every day within each of our various programs. Our employees truly work for change for the thousands of individuals we serve across the agency.

At Access Services, our employees truly embody our mission and core values. They impact the individuals they work with each day and are also a resource to their coworkers for strength, courage and support.

Access Services hopes you, our staff, know what a difference you make. There are so many people who depend upon you and appreciate you!

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A Natural Extension

When you walk into Steve and Colleen Runyan's home you immediately sense the warmth and love they share with Sharon. Sharon, a woman with special needs, has found a family with the Runyan's through a program commonly referred to as Lifesharing.



One of the dynamics that stands out in their home is the naturalness of their relationship. Steve and Colleen share, "We just do life together!" Sharon chimed in, "I love just going different places, having fun in the community, having fun in the house, going to run errands, and going to church!" One of their favorite things to do together is watch Jeopardy in the evenings. Colleen jokes, "Sharon answers more questions than we can – they need to get her on the show!"

When Steve and Colleen first considered becoming host family providers they knew they would need the right fit for their family. They are very involved in Upper Perkiomen Community Church and seek out ways to support the various ministries within the congregation. Not only does Sharon enjoy attending the church with them but Colleen shares, "Sharon has a real desire to help others as well. She will nudge us along and give us different ways we can help and serve others." Another key part of Steve and Colleen's life is having their kids and grandkids over for family dinners! Steve shared that Sharon has truly embraced and been embraced by their family. She also enjoys helping Steve cook the family dinners.

For Steve and Colleen, making the decision to become Lifesharing providers was a natural extension of their desire to help, "We've always had a heart for people." They were also transparent in sharing their initial reaction to the program, "Steve and I were a little nervous about it at first, but then we met some other families and learned it's really just sharing your life together. You grow to love the other person and that person grows to attach to your family. It's really a rewarding thing."

The Runyan's encourage others who have a "passion for people" to consider becoming a foster parent, respite provider or lifesharing provider. "It's very fulfilling!" they share. We invite you to learn more about the opportunity by visiting <http://www.accessservices.org/host-families/>

Contact Donna Donnelly, Host Family Recruiter
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