**The Mon Valley Providers Council presents:**

# The Communicator

**October - December 2022**

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## Meals on Wheels Volunteers

Eastern Area Adult Services

The Turtle Creek Senior Center of Eastern Area Adult Services delivers meals through the Meals on Wheels program three days a week, 52 weeks a year to 200 older adults. This program covers seventeen local communities thru nine different routes within a fifteen-minute drive of Turtle Creek. The seniors who receive these meals could be homebound, a high nutritional risk, unable to obtain food, or unable to prepare meals.

In an effort to serve these older adults in need, the Turtle Creek Senior Center will often reach out to the community and local businesses to find volunteers. We have a few routes open each month and are currently recruiting new volunteers to fill them. All volunteer routes consist of teams of two, a driver and a runner. The commitment is once a month on a Monday, Wednesday, or Friday from 9:00am – 11:00am. (Time can be adjusted).

If you are interested in taking part in this volunteer opportunity or have questions, please contact the Turtle Creek Senior Center at 412-824-6880.

The Communicator is the official newsletter of the Mon Valley Providers Council (MVPC), an alliance of over 70 human service agencies serving more than 37 communities in the Mon Valley of Allegheny County. The MVPC is a program of the Human Services Center, a United Way Agency. To learn more about the MVPC, our member agencies, and their services, read this edition and visit our website at www.hscc-mvpc.org.

Human Services Center Corporation

United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania — IMPACT FUND AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

519 Penn Avenue, Turtle Creek, PA 15145
412-829-7112 • 412-829-4363 (fax)
www.hscc-mvpc.org
facebook.com/humanservicescenterturtlecreek

A copy of the official registration and financial information of the Human Services Center Corp. can be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

# Free COVID-19 Testing Fridays 1 - 4 PM

Parking Lot at
Human Services Center Corporation
413 Penn Ave
Turtle Creek, PA 15145

Preregistration is strongly encouraged.

Tests provided at no cost. No prescription or referral needed. Insurance is not required. However, if you have insurance that will cover the cost of the test, your insurance will be billed. Please bring your insurance card.

Preregister at
https://curative.com/sites/27564

Scan me to register!

# SIGN UP FOR FINANCIAL LITERACY EMAILS

**You'll receive invites to our FREE classes covering topics such as**

CREDIT DEBT BUDGETING PUBLIC BENEFITS

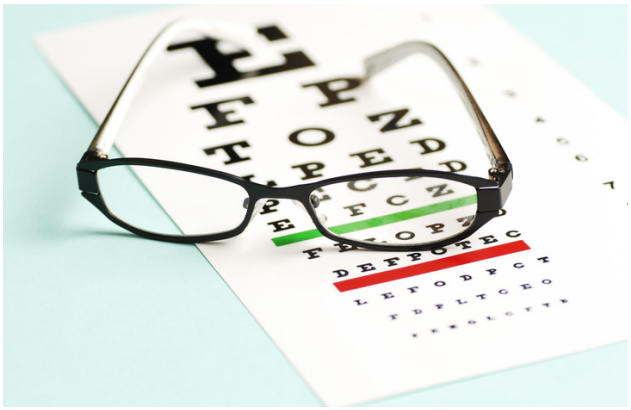
SAVING FOR THE FUTURE BUYING A HOME

**To sign up**
**Visit https://bit.ly/hscc-emails**
**Or scan this QR code:**

Human Services Center Corporation

## Free Eye Exam & Glasses

Rainbow Kitchen



Rainbow Kitchen's Vision Program helps uninsured/underinsured individuals of any age obtain a free eye exam and new glasses or replace broken glasses! This is an easy program to access and you choose from providers (that accept this insurance) in your local area. For more information or to apply call 412-464-1892 or email lori.roadway@rainbowkitchen.org.

## Jefferson Votes: Nonprofit Voter Engagement

Jefferson Regional Foundation

The Jefferson Community Collaborative, a dynamic network of 121 organizations hosted by the Jefferson Regional Foundation, has launched a civic engagement initiative called Jefferson Votes. The goal of this initiative is to empower citizens to vote by educating and energizing trusted local nonprofits to serve as community champions in the South Hills and Mon Valley.

Through the mentoring support of Dave Coplan and the guidance of Leah O'Reilly serving on the Voter Engagement Task Force of the Collaborative, organizations are empowered to sign up as Voter Engagement Champions, committing to one or many activities around voter engagement.

To support their work, the Collaborative developed a series of webpages on voting in Pennsylvania, a toolkit of easily downloadable resources for organizations to utilize in their engagement efforts, workshops to increase organizational capacity, and mini-grant opportunities up to $1,000 to support the work of these organizations. To date, nearly 30 organizations have signed up as Voter Engagement Champions. For more information on the Jefferson Votes Initiative, follow the link: https://jeffersoncollaborative.org/our-resources/jefferson-votes/ or contact Community Engagement Manager, Danny Vereb at daniel.vereb@jeffersonrf.org.

Pittsburgh Financial Empowerment Center

*Free One-on-One Financial Counseling*

# FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT CENTER OFFICE HOURS

## GET HELP TO REACH YOUR MONEY GOALS!

The Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) provides **FREE**, professional one-on-one financial counseling.

Staff can help you:

- better manage your money
- improve your credit score
- pay down debt
- increase savings
- establish and build credit
- access safe and affordable banking products
- create customized plans to address student loans, buy a house, build financial goals for your business, or start an emergency fund.

**Each Wednesday**
**8:30AM - 4:30PM**
**Human Services Center**
**519 Penn Ave.**
**Turtle Creek, PA 15145**

**Appointments:**
**contact Regina Carmine**
**rcarmine@fecpgh.org**
**412-390-1300 ext.150**

Human Services Center Corporation

## Addressing Tobacco Use in Southwestern Pennsylvania

Tobacco Free Adagio Health

A person's health can be profoundly impacted by a variety of social and economic factors. These social determinants of health include housing conditions, employment status, food security, educational attainment, and environmental safety. Health outcomes for underinvested communities including African Americans, Latinos(as), people of low socioeconomic status, LGBTQ individuals, and veterans are greatly impacted by these social determinants of health; leading to a higher burden of illness, injury, disability, and mortality compared to other groups. In 2021, Allegheny County was home to over 1,200 licensed tobacco retailers, many of which are located in communities with higher percentages of African American and lower-income populations. The high concentration of places to purchase tobacco products in disinvested communities frequently targeted by Big Tobacco's marketing efforts contributes to the normalization of smoking behavior, higher rates of smoking, and fuels disparities in tobacco use that contribute to increased risk of tobacco-related illness and death.

Tobacco Free Adagio Health is working across all sectors in Allegheny County and Southwestern Pennsylvania to reduce smoking rates, educate on the harmful impacts of tobacco and nicotine, and provide technical assistance in developing policies to eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke in spaces where people live, work, and play. Tobacco- and smoke-free worksite, multiunit housing site, and parks and playground policy initiatives are key strategies to influence community norms around smoking and tobacco use.

Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialists are available to provide in-person, virtual, individual, or group cessation counseling and access to free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT), including patches, gum, and lozenges for individuals who need assistance and encouragement on their quit journey.

Tobacco Free Adagio Health engages with schools throughout the region to promote programming and interventions to educate and support youth in efforts to stop smoking or to never start. Tobacco Resistance Units are student-centered groups designed to promote tobacco-free lifestyles, teach youth about advocacy and leadership, and help them to engage with their peers to educate them on the risks of tobacco use and nicotine dependence. TRU Groups have opportunities to participate in a wide range of activities, including attending Pirates games, Kennywood, Adagio Health's annual Youth Leadership Conference, and the Pennsylvania Alliance to Control Tobacco's Day at The Capitol.

For more information on tobacco-free policy work, tobacco cessation and counseling programs, or how to start a TRU group at your school, email us at: tfah@adagiohealth.org and we'll get you connected to the right member of our team. We look forward to working with you!

For over 50 years, Adagio Health has been serving the healthcare needs of women and families throughout Western Pennsylvania; providing services including family planning and reproductive healthcare, prenatal care, breast and cervical cancer screening, community education, tobacco prevention, cessation, and control, and nutrition services. Adagio Health is focused on addressing the social and economic factors that have profound impacts on individual and community health. For more information, please visit www.adagiohealth.org or call 1-800-215-7494.

# What difference can tax prep volunteers make?

## Last year, more than a million dollars' worth.

### Volunteer as a Tax Preparer

Human Services Center Corporation

The Human Services Center Corporation (HSCC) in Turtle Creek is now recruiting volunteers for a fun and rewarding winter program. Volunteers are needed to assist at the Free Tax Preparation site at the HSCC. Volunteers provide free federal, state, and local income tax preparation assistance to individuals who are on a limited or fixed income. Other volunteers are needed to greet preparers when they arrive at the site. Last year our volunteers helped our community access over $1 million in tax refund dollars!

Prospective volunteers will undergo FREE training to ensure they meet the IRS guidelines. NO prior experience is needed! All volunteers are taught federal and PA tax law and the preparation of simple tax returns. Our volunteer tax preparers pay special attention to Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit eligibility to make sure that individuals and families are able to get their maximum tax refund. New volunteers are assigned to work with an experienced volunteer. If you, or someone you know, might be interested in becoming a free tax preparation volunteer at the HSCC, please contact Stephanie Eson (seson@hscc-mvpc.org) or 412-437-8229.

### Mad City Money Curriculum Available

Mon Valley Providers Council

The Mon Valley Providers Council (MVPC) is pleased to offer the Mad City Money curriculum to our members. It is designed for high school students and exposes them to the world of spending vs. saving, budgeting, and paying down debt. This curriculum has been adapted to be taught in person OR virtually without the use of outside volunteers. If you would like more information about this curriculum please contact Sam (sbednar@hscc-mvpc.org).

## Resolving Disputes & Maintaining Stable Housing

Just Mediation Pittsburgh

There is a housing crisis in Allegheny County, and mediation is the best decision folks can make before going to eviction court. JMP is a nonprofit organization that began to keep tenants housed and make sure landlords were receiving rent payments. JMP looks for the best resolution for both parties and mediates landlord-tenant disputes to help landlords reduce unit turnover and keep tenants in their homes. Their mediation is free, confidential, and voluntary for Allegheny County tenants and landlords, and JMP's mediators have a 93% success rate once both parties agree to mediate. They help participants create positive solutions for themselves. This service is totally free and can help both parties by saving time and money and hopefully eliminating the need to go to court. They also provide referrals to other agencies who can help with any needs that are noticed during mediation, such as rental assistance and other support services.

JMP is a neutral third-party and helps clear up confusion and/or miscommunication by making sure that both the landlord and tenant receive the same information at the same time and to help set a clear plan to move forward. Community mediators do not serve as a judge or lawyer and if an agreement is reached, it becomes part of your lease. JMP's mediation sessions are via phone or Zoom and they offer a variety of 2-hour time slots to work with your schedule, though most conflicts are settled within 1 hour. The process can save weeks and sometimes months of your time compared to starting and finishing the court process.

Landlords have already lost money; mediation gives the opportunity for tenants to potentially access funds to help ease debt through referrals to their partners. The average cost to evict in Allegheny County is $5,000 - which includes lost rental payments, filing and attorney fees, funds lost while the property sits vacant, cost to list the property, and fixing up the unit before a new tenant moves in. Mediation allows both parties the opportunity to come up with an agreement that is legally binding without giving up any legal rights. JMP works with many landlords who have successfully resolved through disputes with their tenants and reached solutions that satisfied their responsibilities and needs as landlords.

While Just Mediation Pittsburgh helps to resolve nonpayment issues, tenants who participate can expect to benefit from mediation for reasons such as resolving habitability concerns, end of lease confusion, and breach of lease disputes in addition to other housing-related issues. Many tenants have difficulty communicating clearly with their landlord, or even getting in touch with them; mediation offers them this opportunity to resolve long standing issues. JMP partners with RentHelpPGH's Resource Navigator who can connect tenants with resources to help meet their needs.

If you are currently experiencing a housing dispute, or you know someone who could benefit from JMP's services, please contact Just Mediation Pittsburgh at 412-228-0730 or justmediationpgh.org/contact to be connected to a member of their Intake Team.

JustMediationPGH

## NEW Educational Opportunities for Boys

Mon Valley Boys' Academy

SUMMER 2023: Boys' Summer Academy

In the summer of 2023, a three-week experience called the Boys' Summer Academy will be held on the campus of Penn State Greater Allegheny in McKeesport. Rising 8th grade and 9th grade boys from low-income families in the Mon Valley will be invited to enjoy:

- Non-denominational morning worship
- Small classes for math, history, and English instruction
- Daily group counseling
- Field trips and college visits
- Daily athletics plus a 3v3 basketball tournament and a track/cross country meet

The Boys' Summer Academy will double as a summer job. Each student will begin each day with $30, and by following rules and completing assignments will have the opportunity to earn $450.

### OPENING SUMMER 2024: Mon Valley Boys' Academy

Boys who successfully complete the Boys' Summer Academy will receive first priority for admission to the Mon Valley Boys' Academy, a faith-based, college preparatory, independent high school slated to open with 9th and 10th grades at a location within the Mon Valley in summer 2024. Grade 11 will be added in 2025, and Grade 12 in 2026.

The Mon Valley Boys' Academy will feature:

- Affordable tuition: $50 per month
- Non-denominational morning worship
- Small classes and a college-preparatory curriculum
- College counseling and college visits
- An extended school day including three meals and snacks
- After-school programming including athletics, arts, and evening study with tutorial support
- An extended school year that begins with a five-week summer session

Both initiatives are founded by Rev. Thomas Johnson, who co-founded and served for 18 years as headmaster of The Neighborhood Academy, a faith-based, college preparatory, independent school in Pittsburgh's East Liberty community serving low-income students in grades 6-12. The Boys' Summer Academy and the Mon Valley Boys' Academy are created to bring to Mon Valley boys the same opportunities for success that have been enjoyed for years by students at The Neighborhood Academy: 100% college acceptance for the high school's graduates and a 75% rate of graduation from college in five years or less – well above the national average.

For more information, contact: The Rev. Thomas E. Johnson Jr., revtommvba@gmail.com

## 22nd Annual HIV/AIDS Awareness Walk

Human Services Center Corporation

Turtle Creek, PA – The Human Services Center Corporation (HSCC) hosted the 22nd Annual Mon Valley HIV/AIDS Awareness Walk on Saturday, October 1, 2022. It was HSCC's first time hosting this event in Turtle Creek. Despite it being a rainy morning, seventy-five participants turned out to attend the Walk which went through Turtle Creek and Wilmerding. Allies for Health + Wellbeing provided free HIV testing for the event. After the Walk, participants enjoyed a hotdog cookout and had the chance to learn about resources and services offered by Prevention Point Pittsburgh, Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation, Latterman Family Health Center, AIDS Free Pittsburgh, AHN – Center for Inclusion Health/Positive Health Clinic, and Allies for Health + Wellbeing. This year's winner of the traveling trophy, awarded to the team with the most participants, was the Human Services Center/Mon Valley Providers Council.

The Walk is hosted annually by HSCC's HIV/AIDS Working Group and aims to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS in the Mon Valley specifically. The proceeds generated from the Walk go to support other HIV/AIDS awareness and education events hosted throughout the year by the Working Group, including events for World AIDS Day and National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. The Working Group would like to thank the Walk's sponsors and participants for their continued support and commitment to making this event possible year after year. They would also like to thank the volunteers and the Turtle Creek Police Department and Turtle Creek Fire Department for all of their hard work on the day of the event. The Working Group invites you to save the date for next year's 23rd Annual Mon Valley HIV/AIDS Awareness Walk on Saturday, October 7, 2023.

## Deadline Extended for Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program & Senior Expo

Office of Senator Jim Brewster

The deadline for older and disabled Pennsylvanians to apply for rebates on rent and property taxes paid in 2021 has been extended to Dec. 31, 2022. The rebate program benefits eligible Pennsylvanians aged 65 and older; widows and widowers aged 50 and older; and people with disabilities aged 18 and older. The income limit is $35,000 a year for homeowners and $15,000 annually for renters, and half of Social Security income is excluded. This year, claimants will receive a one-time bonus rebate. These bonus rebates are equal to 70% of the original rebate amount.

State Senator Jim Brewster encourages any individual who thinks they may be eligible for property tax and rent rebates to visit with his staff at any of his district offices or during satellite office hours. “My staff is very experienced at completing the applications and will be able to answer any question about the program,” Brewster said.

Senator Brewster has district offices in Monroeville and McKeesport:

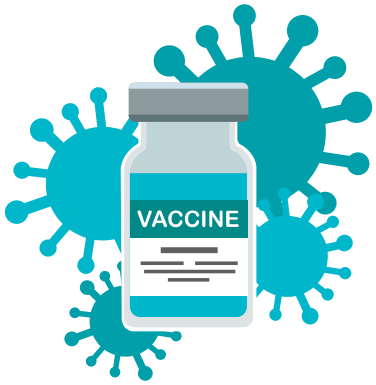
MONROEVILLE OFFICE
3824 Northern Pike, Suite 1015, Monroeville, PA 15146
Phone: 412-380-2242

MCKEESPORT OFFICE
201 Lysle Blvd., Suite 100, McKeesport, PA 15132
Phone: 412-664-5200

Satellite office hours are available in Turtle Creek, North Versailles, Baldwin, Brentwood, Plum, Elizabeth Township, and Forward Township. Call a district office for satellite office location dates and times.

Seniors can find out more about the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program and other valuable resources that may benefit them by attending Senator Brewster’s Senior Wellness and Safety Expo. Flu shots and other health screenings will also be offered at the Expo.

Senator Jim Brewster invites you to his
**Senior Wellness & Safety Expo**
October 27, 2022
10:30am to 1:00pm
McKeesport Palisades
501 Water Street, McKeesport, PA 15132



## Tenant Agencies at the Human Services Center

**Adagio Health Nutrition Services**
412-925-0650

**Allegheny County Health Dept. - W.I.C. Program**
412-350-5801

**Allegheny Intermediate Unit - Community School East**
412-464-4043

**Braddock Carnegie Library - Turtle Creek Extension**
412-829-7112

**Early Learning Resource Center**
412-350-3577

**Eastern Area Adult Services**
412-824-6880

**Healthy Start**
412-247-4009

**Human Services Center Corporation**
412-829-7112

**Learn "N" Play Development Center**
412-829-0240

**Mon Valley Providers Council**
412-829-7112

**Pantry Network of Eastern Suburbs**
412-824-0006

**Squirrel Hill Health Center: Turtle Creek**

**TCV Community Services**
412-824-8510

**YouthPlaces**

### Services at the Human Services Center

The Westinghouse Valley Human Services Center, located at 519 Penn Avenue in Turtle Creek, provides a variety of services to residents in eastern Allegheny County communities and the Westinghouse/Turtle Creek Valley. Schedules may vary due to COVID-19.

- **Youth LIFE After-School Program** begins in September. Youth LIFE After-School Program serves 100 youth going into first through fifth grade. For more information, contact 412-829-7112.
- **KOOL Summer Program** serves 150 youth going into first through fifth grade in the Fall. For more information, contact 412-829-7112.
- **The Emerging Leaders Program (ELP)** is a workforce development and college readiness program for seniors in the East Allegheny, McKeesport Area, West Mifflin Area, Woodland Hills, and Penn Hills High Schools. For more information, contact 412-829-7112.
- **Supports for Success** helps individuals seeking to achieve self-sufficiency through employment and/or education by providing referrals and guidance. For more information, call 412-829-7112.
- **Free Tax Preparation** is available for individuals with low income. For more information, call 412-437-8229.

## Communities Served by the MVPC

Braddock
Braddock Hills
Chalfant
Clairton
Dravosburg
Duquesne
East McKeesport
East Pittsburgh
Elizabeth Borough
Elizabeth Township
Forest Hills
Forward Township
Glassport
Homestead
Jefferson Hills
Liberty
Lincoln
McKeesport
Monroeville
Munhall
North Braddock
North Versailles
Penn Hills
Pitcairn
Port Vue
Rankin
South Versailles
Swissvale
Turtle Creek
Versailles
Wall
West Elizabeth
West Homestead
West Mifflin
Whitaker
White Oak
Wilkins
Wilmerding

## About the Mon Valley Providers Council

Our Mission: The Mon Valley Providers Council (MVPC), in collaboration with individuals, families, and groups in the Mon Valley communities, will define and address mutual issues and needs. Building upon the providers and communities, the MVPC will promote agendas and develop resources for collective action.

Who We Are: The MVPC, a program of the Human Services Center, is an alliance of human service and related organizations, which are based in or have a substantial service presence in the Mon Valley. The MVPC serves as a formal network for information and resource exchange among human service providers in the Mon Valley. The MVPC involves its member organizations in Working Groups which address crucial issues in the Mon Valley in the areas of Employment and Training, Health, Housing, and Youth. These four Working Groups involve the participation of over 70 dues-paying members and over 250 staff members of those organizations. Through these standing Working Groups, the MVPC promotes cooperation, coordination, and collaboration among its member and participating organizations in an effort to fill gaps in human services in the Mon Valley Communities.

Staff: The MVPC is staffed through the Human Services Center.
Current MVPC staff are:
Dave Coplan, Director
Katie Gascoine, Outreach Coordinator
Sam Bednar, Program Assistant

## MVPC Steering Committee

**Darla Poole**, Chairperson, Auberle • **Eric Ewell**, Vice Chairperson, Penn State Greater Allegheny • **Kelleigh Boland**, Jefferson Regional Foundation • **Devon Goetze**, Auberle • **Christine Zellefrow**, UPMC Western Behavioral Health at Mon Yough • **Brenda Harris**, Just Mediation Pittsburgh • **Tiffanee Heywood**, Goodwill of Southwestern PA • **Shari Holland**, UPMC McKeesport/Latterman Health Clinic • **Dean Jolin**, CCAC • **Paula McWilliams**, Heritage Community Initiatives • **Mary Jo Guercio**, CCAC • **James Phillips**, TCV Community Services • **Lisa Scales**, Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank • **Bob Sukolsky**, AHN-Forbes Family Medicine • **Lynn Tatala**, AIU Project ELECT • **Laura Zinski**, Immediate Past Chair, Mon Valley Initiative • **Nancy Osterhus**, Ex-Officio Member

## 2022 Membership Listing for the MVPC

Adagio Health
Age-Friendly Greater Pittsburgh
AHN-Forbes Family Medicine
Allegheny County Health Department
Allegheny Family Network
AIU Community School East
AIU Head Start
AIU Project ELECT
Allies for Health and Wellbeing
Auberle
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh
Black Women's Policy Center
Century Heritage FCU
Clairton Family Center
Communities in Schools Pittsburgh Allegheny County (CISPAC)
Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC)
Computer Reach
Discovery House
Duquesne Family Center
East Allegheny Family Center
Eastern Area Adult Services
Every Child, Inc.
Family and Immigrant Connections Program
Family Resources
Forbes Hospital
Fund My Future (FMF PGH)
Goodwill of Southwest Pennsylvania
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank
Healthy Start
Heritage Community Initiatives
Highlands Family Center
Human Services Center Corporation
Jefferson Hospital
Jefferson Regional Foundation
Just Harvest
Just Mediation Pittsburgh
Lincoln Park Family Center
Literacy Pittsburgh
Macedonia FACE
McKeesport Family Center
McKeesport Hospital Foundation
Mental Health American of Southwestern PA
Mon Valley Boys' Academy
Mon Valley Initiative (MVI)
Mon Yough Chamber of Commerce
Omicelo
PA CareerLink Allegheny East
Pantry Network of Eastern Suburbs
Penn State Greater Allegheny
Pittsburgh Financial Empowerment Center
Pittsburgh Regional Transit
Rainbow Kitchen Community Services
Rankin Christian Center
Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh
Squirrel Hill Health Center: Turtle Creek
State Senator Jay Costa
State Senator Jim Brewster
Steel Valley Family Center
Sto-Rox Family Center
TCV Community Services
The Blessing Board
The Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh (Duquesne Family Center)
Touching Families, Inc.
University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work
UPMC Children's Hospital Family Care Connection
UPMC McKeesport
UPMC Western Behavioral Health at Mon Yough
Veterans Leadership Program
Wesley Family Services
Wilkinsburg Family Center
Women for a Healthy Environment
YWCA Greater Pittsburgh