



Blue Light Express

Volunteer Appreciation is not Just in April

By Judy McKinney

We always thank volunteers for their dedication, for their time and for their efforts because that is the currency of appreciation. As a volunteer, though, I value the kindness that is exchanged when in the service of others. Our kindness and compassion are also the coins of currency and we donate all year long to everyone and to each other. Feel the joy of service!



Happy Anniversary!

Director Melissa Lyon and the folks from the Delaware County Health Department celebrated their first anniversary this week with an event in cooperation with Murphy's Food Exchange, an event adopting the DelcoPA Covid Quilt and displaying it in the Wellness Center at Chester, and with a Delaware County Council Proclamation held at the Yeadon Wellness Center.

Clearly a milestone for the county, the Delaware County Health Department has made great strides in organizing their departments, renovating facilities, and providing the citizens with access to health care.



hope

If you only carry one thing throughout your entire life, let it be hope. Let it be hope that better things are always ahead. Let it be hope that you can get through even the toughest of times. Let it be hope that you are stronger than any challenge that comes your way. Let it be hope that you are exactly where you are meant to be right now, and that you are on the path to where you are meant to be... Because during these times, hope will be the very thing that carries you through.

- Nikki Banas



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Improving the Sight of Others in Liberia

Volunteering Here, There, Everywhere!

Cathy Pensyl, CCDC Advisory Board member, and leader extraordinaire, volunteers with the [Great Faith Vision](#) organization to improve eyesight of those without access to eye care. This is the second trip in which Cathy has participated.

The Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church of Liberia and the National Eye Health Program requested that Great Faith Vision to send a team to Liberia to conduct vision screenings while providing hands-on training to about 20 Liberians. Great Faith Vision is a faith-based 501(c)(3) organization that provides free vision care to those who lack access or ability to pay for it and has served over 20,000 patients from 35 countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and North America.

In the week of January 7-13, Cathy was part of a 6-person team, joining 3 optometrists and their team leader. Her specific role was to train locals how to perform various portions of the eye exams, supervising and troubleshooting when needed during the 3 days of clinics. The basic screening and equipment they have received so far allows them to provide pre-made eyeglasses to those who need them. Now they will also be able to address those with more complex conditions requiring optometrist evaluation, including specific eyeglass prescriptions that will be sent to the US, where eyeglasses for them will be made and shipped back.

At the conclusion of the third clinic day, there was a graduation ceremony with the awarding of certificates and small gifts to the locals who successfully completed the training process. There was a dedication of ground that was purchased for farming, and there was a ground-breaking for a school for those communities. There are currently no schools serving the communities in that area. These events culminated with a celebration of thanksgiving that the villagers were invited to attend.

Cathy and her team of volunteers had some goals in mind to help the people of Liberia improve their eyesight. The information that follows is paraphrased from the [Great Faith Vision](#) website which summarizes their amazing work.

“For the most part the children's eyes were healthy, however many had issues of burning eyes which is unusual for children. The locations where the clinics were held were very dusty, so the irritations are attributed to dust landing on the surface of the eye. The team dispensed artificial tears which are helpful to flush the eye surface.”

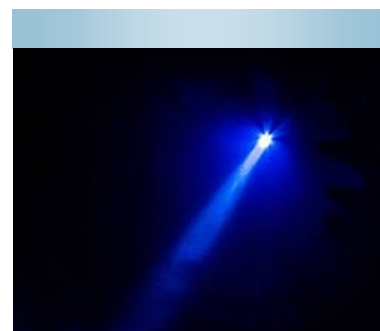
The GFV team trained 20 local residents to perform eye screenings and actually went to another town the following week and performed more screenings themselves! Expecting to screen about 150 children, the team was able to screen 265 in three days! Over 300 men and 300 women were screened as well in a three-day period, and 120 residents were referred for free cataract and other required surgeries (out of the scope of these clinics) by the Ministry of Health at their upcoming outreach in February. Requests for 223 sets of eyeglasses were prescribed and will be distributed as soon as possible.

Clearly this adventure to Liberia was a huge success! Congratulations to Cathy and the Great Faith Vision volunteers for efforts and expertise in providing eye care to Liberia!



CCDC Leadership Grows by Six

The CCDC Leadership Team has increased by six members this month. It is important to regularly introduce new ideas and energy into this team of volunteers who advise on the development of programs, training, and the future of the organization. These new leaders come with proven skills to lead during emergencies, and have demonstrated the ability to deliver successful results confidently. We are thrilled to have them join our team and bring their individual knowledge, skills, and abilities to enhance our already skilled Leadership Team! We are pleased to welcome onto the Leadership Council: Tricia Callinan, Barbara Federici, John Ferri, Roxolana Horbowjy, MD, Bill Wood, and Rose Young, RN.



Always have eyes
that see the best,
a heart that forgives
the worst,
a mind that forgets
the bad
and a soul that never
loses hope.*



APRIL IS POETRY APPRECIATION MONTH

Hymn For The Hurting

by Amanda Gorman

Everything hurts,
Our hearts shadowed and strange,
Minds made muddled and mute.
We carry tragedy, terrifying and true.
And yet none of it is new;
We knew it as home,
As horror,
As heritage.
Even our children
Cannot be children,
Cannot be.
Everything hurts.
It's a hard time to be alive,
And even harder to stay that way.
We're burdened to live out these days,
While at the same time, blessed to out-
live them.

This alarm is how we know
We must be altered —
That we must differ or die,
That we must triumph or try.
Thus while hate cannot be terminated,
It can be transformed
Into a love that lets us live.
May we not just grieve, but give:
May we not just ache, but act;
May our signed right to bear arms
Never blind our sight from shared harm;
May we choose our children over chaos.
May another innocent never be lost.
Maybe everything hurts,
Our hearts shadowed & strange.
But only when everything hurts
May everything change.



Let Me Introduce You to SEPA VOAD...

By Judy McKinney

SEPA VOAD (Southeastern PA Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership based organization that serves as the forum where organizations share knowledge and resources throughout the disaster cycle —preparation, response and recovery — to help disaster survivors and their communities throughout Pennsylvania.

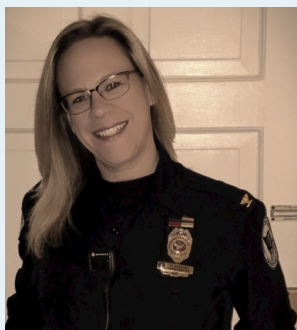
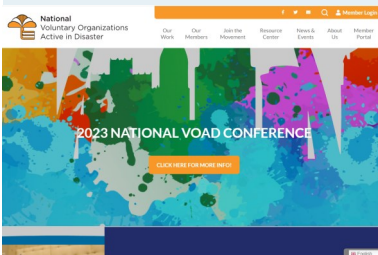
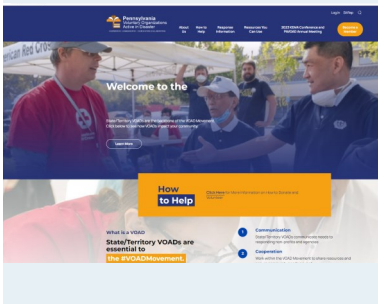
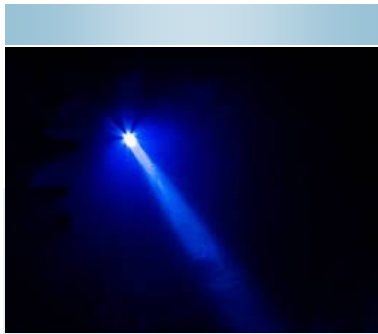
Assistant Emergency Manager, Ed Kline is serving as President of SEPA VOAD this year. You will recognize some members of this group: American Red Cross, Salvation Army, United Methodist Church (UMCOR), Team Rubicon, The Elevated Studio, Liberty Lutheran, United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries, and Operation BBQ just to name a few. Also represented are the five counties that make up southeastern Pennsylvania: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia Emergency Management Departments. Heads of projects report on the progress of their operation using the important tools of VOADs known as the 4 C's: Communication, Cooperation, Coordination, and Collaboration.

The VOADs provide wraparound services that supplement the initial assistance by the County governments. State and Federal assistance is dependent upon damage thresholds within a community which may not qualify for funding

Some examples of projects include Hurricane Ida Call Center reaching out to residents left homeless due to flooding and trying to get them connected with a caseworker who will assess their home damages and connect them with home repairs; helping to find refugees homes after their country was devastated from hurricanes.

SEPA VOAD is a member of the Pennsylvania VOAD and members of this State group also serve on our VOAD in a dual role keeping us apprised of the activities and engagement from the Commonwealth. The PA VOAD is a member of the National VOAD organization which is holding its annual VOAD Conference in May of this year in St. Louis, Missouri.

CCDC Volunteer Lois McLaughlin and Mass Care Lead Julia Borek are speakers at the National Conference discussing the successful Hurricane Ida Call Center Mission! Working with Julia Menzo, Administrator for Liberty's Lutheran Disaster Response-Eastern PA and a representative on the PA VOAD, our involvement with this mission developed into a Commonwealth success story which is being shared on the National level.



DES Team Working to Support CCDC

The Delaware County Department of Emergency Services has added to their team over the past few months and we have a new staffer working to support CCDC. Meet Kelly Sides (A.S., Paramedic, EMSI) a long-time member of Delco's Response Teams who has been assigned to the Special Operations Community Engagement Team. Some have met Kelly at the Pot Luck, but if you have not yet, please welcome her as she works beside Julia Borek and Teresa Reinmiller in our efforts to improve Citizen Corps to be prepared for the next emergency opportunity to serve our county.



Tricia Callinan



Volunteers are invited to send in an article or graphic to be included in the newsletter to:
mrc@co.delaware.pa.us

The Volunteer Heart

By Judy McKinney



I had the pleasure of chatting with Tricia a couple of weeks ago for this article and found, like with many volunteers, a shy and self-effacing façade that masked a strong, self-aware and knowledgeable new member of the Leadership Team. Tricia is one of the six new volunteers that have been asked to join the leadership to infuse new energy, new perspectives, and a fresh set of experiences into our mix.

Tricia signed on with CCDC at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, volunteering at many testing sites and VPOD locations, learning the PA-SIIS system, and logging in 140 missions and over 500 hours!

A Springfield resident, Tricia retired from a prominent international insurance corporation after 39 years in operations and finance. She enjoys reading, sports, as well as her two dogs, Pete and Cal. Tricia volunteers with Project Home in Philadelphia at their Stephen Klein Wellness Center doing clerical work, an organization she really admires. She also volunteers with the Community Action Agency of Delaware County where she serves as a volunteer income tax assistant (VITA) which helps residents who make less than \$60,000 per year complete their income tax return. (That's me!)

When asked what does she like about volunteering, her response was one heard many times: "feeling useful to others in need." As we talked about CCDC, Tricia remarked that she was amazed about how everything was setup and organized, from a logistics standpoint, to allow the flow of residents to navigate the various stations within the VPODS. Although it appeared to be relatively effortless, CCDC, as most now know, practiced for many years to accomplish this in our preparedness training.

Tricia shared some observations about onboarding with CCDC, specifically, the NIMS training courses. For some volunteers, the NIMS courses are a huge hurdle in acquiring qualifications to be deployed on a mission. The content is unfamiliar, the acronyms are numerous, and the technical skills needed to navigate the TrainPA website is daunting. As part of the Leadership Team, Tricia hopes to influence training to include proctored NIMS courses for the volunteers to quickly and successfully solve this onboarding challenge for them, thus enabling more to donate their time.

And just like that...a new leader has suggested an important improvement!!

Oh, One More Thing....

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<https://delcocitizencorps.org>

<https://ccdcresi.delcocitizencorps.org>



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 of Delaware County