

# SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

## Synod Assembly 2017

June 2-3 at the  
Kalahari Resort in the Poconos

The site of next year's Assembly will be the Kalahari Resort in the Poconos. For more information, visit their website at [kalahariresorts.com/pennsylvania](http://kalahariresorts.com/pennsylvania). Mark your calendar now and plan to attend the grand finale of "UNLEASHED for Reformation 2017."

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This was a wonderful experience of the church connecting with and making a difference in the daily lives of its neighbors. Hope Lutheran Church and the participants in M.A.D. H.O.P.E. appreciate the financial support they received from their partners in ministry in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod through a grant from the Witness and Service Ministry Team.



## M.A.D. H.O.P.E. Summer Youth Program



For six consecutive weeks this past summer, twelve neighborhood youth gathered each Tuesday at Hope Lutheran Church in Reading to participate in service projects, team building exercises, education in life skills, and worship. The vision of "M.A.D. H.O.P.E." (Making A Difference, Helping Other People Everyday) grew out of conversations between Pr. Mary Wolfe of Hope and the young people who frequent the church's programs.

Youth noted that over the summer there are plenty of activities for children in the neighborhood, but few opportunities for Middle and Senior High youth. Church leaders also recognized that the city young people often lack mentors who can teach them such basic skills as how to complete a resume, how to dress for work, and how to conduct themselves in a workplace.

Tuesday's at M.A.D. H.O.P.E. began with Pr. Wolfe, and Leanna Hassler, the congregation's Neighborhood Outreach Coordinator, gathering with participants for a group devotion after which the young people prepared their own lunches, learning basic cooking skills. Following lunch, a service project in the community or church kept the youth busy working as a team while at the same time improving their neighborhood. A fun fitness activity followed service. The day concluded with helping to set up for and participate in the meal and worship experience of Hope's Table, a ministry of hospitality to area poor and homeless residents.

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## Meet Your Synod's Staff



**Debbie Skinner**

Debbie is part-time at the synod office. She prepares the monthly synod mailing and duplicates Synod News and other items that are inserted. She also keeps track of rostered leaders for the monthly Daily Prayers. In addition, she records the mission support commitments from synod congregations, and she helps Diane Hemerly with the Assembly Minutes Book.

She also is the person responsible for returning benevolence checks mistakenly sent to the synod office instead of the Mission Investment Fund because some congregational treasurers still are not aware of the new procedures.

Debbie is starting her 4th year at the synod office. She also works part-time at the Lehigh Humane Society as assistant to the bookkeeper. Prior to working for the synod, she worked in marketing for 19 years at AP Wagner Appliance Parts in Allentown.

Debbie has two sons and four grandchildren. She enjoys reading and going to rock concerts. She is a member at St. Luke, Allentown where she has served a council president.

## St. Paul, Douglassville Hosts Volunteer Fair

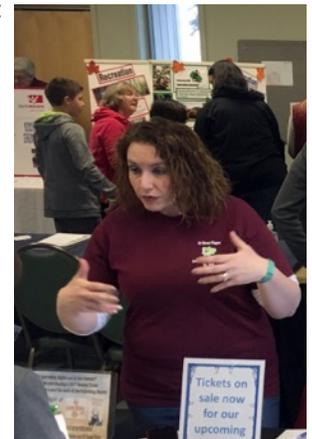


St. Paul, Douglassville hosted a Volunteer Fair on Monday, January 16. A variety of volunteer options in Berks County were on display, and prospective volunteers could discover opportunities to match their interests, time, and abilities. A complimentary luncheon was provided.

Twenty-four nonprofit agencies from around Berks County were on site with a display to raise awareness of their organization. Nonprofits had representatives on hand to meet with and discuss the goals and objectives of the organization, and how individuals could become involved in achievement of their mission. More than 100 community people attended to check out the volunteer opportunities.

The fair was an effort to bring together community members with local organizations, for a better community. It was organized by St. Paul's Stewardship Committee as part of a congregation wide goal to have each committee take something they do within the church, and carry out a project for folks outside the church. Jim Trout was the organizer and committee chairperson. Thrivent Financial provided Action Team seed money to help with the project.

Pastor Greg Frey reported, "We were really excited about the turnout because really important organizations recruited some new volunteers, and these same organization got to have some conversations with other community organizations as well. It was all good!"



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