

A Special Supplement to | 2019
TIMES LEADER



We're a
Valley Heart
with a
Heart
LEARN • SUPPORT • ENGAGE
with local nonprofit organizations

Highlighting:

Dress for Success Luzerne County

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Conference

Sleep in Heavenly Peace Luzerne County

Irem Temple Restoration Project

President and CEO of The Luzerne Foundation talks 'We're a Valley with a Heart'

Charles M. Barber
President and CEO of The Luzerne Foundation

You may have heard by now that The Luzerne Foundation's motto is here for good. The proverbial good which we endeavor to do comes in the form of offering support to incredible nonprofits throughout our richly diverse community. These outstanding organizations strive to make northeastern Pennsylvania the absolute best that it can be. We see limitless potential in their ambitious goals, and our aim is to unlock that capability by offering nonprofits the valuable support they require in order to create positive change. With that in mind, our primary mission is to be a community resource for trustworthy financial stewardship of local philanthropy.

We see responsible stewardship as a powerful tool for discovering the untapped potential of both our community and its members. We also have taken notice of the impressive leadership which many local nonprofits have shown in order to be good stewards of our region. This month, we're focused on groups which show determination and resolve in tackling meaningful challenges with dependable stewardship and unmatched enthusiasm.

One large-scale representation of awe-inspiring local stewardship is the undertaking to restore the magnificent Irem Temple which is located in downtown Wilkes-Barre. Constructed over one hundred years ago, the storied structure was recently on the verge of being demolished. Luckily, the building got a second chance due to the Irem Temple Restoration Project. Headed by Christian Wielage and a team of dedicated volunteers, the stewardship of this regional gem will bring a new era of culture to our region by preserving the building's social and historic value.

You'll also read about Dress for Success and Sleep in Heavenly Peace, two organizations who strive to be good stewards for the populations who benefit from their support. Dress for Success, located in the heart of Wilkes-Barre, prepares women for the workplace by providing professional attire and development resources. While Dress for Success is getting women ready for their day jobs, Sleep in Heavenly Peace helps children in our area get a good night's sleep. The nonprofit provides free twin bunk beds for families who do not have adequate sleeping arrangements for their children. Each of these nonprofits shows tremendous leadership when it comes to helping our valued community members access the important resources they need to achieve better outcomes.

Finally, we're focusing on the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Conference, taking place at The Woodlands Resort on October 25. The event raises awareness about the 80,000 grandparents across the state of Pennsylvania who are raising their grandchildren, often due to challenging or unforeseen circumstances. These grandparents have become trusted stewards of their grandchildren, stepping up to provide needed care and services. The conference serves to give grandparents beneficial resources which they might not otherwise have access to.

For each of the exceptional groups featured this month, stewardship is about facilitating positive outcomes and effectively directing change. The Luzerne Foundation is committed to promoting a bright future for northeastern Pennsylvania too, and that's why in 2000 we created the Millennium Circle, a charitable fund which is aimed toward wor-



thy causes chosen directly by donors. Since then, members of the fund have exercised community stewardship by selecting one nonprofit each year to receive a significant grant. Members of the fund help us to determine unmet needs in our area and identify an organization whose continued work benefits the greater community. We invite you to be a part of the Millennium Circle and join us for a luncheon to hear from nonprofits who have been nominated this year. Please consider attending our Millennium Circle Luncheon on Tuesday, October 29, 2019 at The Woodlands Resort. For more information and to register, please call (570) 822-2065 or Email Diane Dutko at diane@luzfdn.org. With your help, we're able to continue our efforts to be a partner in effective community stewardship and progress. *Here for good.*

A Note from our Publisher

Mike Murray
Publisher, Times Leader
Media Group



We are in full swing in non profit event season. Recently our media group sponsored two large events that bring so much positivity and growth for our area. First was the sold out Osterhout Free Library Annual Gala September 14 at the Westmoreland Club. Second was another sold out event that benefited Casa of Luzerne County. That event was hosted at the Forty Fort airport-transformed into a Moroccan "night club" for the evening. Another great evening and glad we could support both causes. October is also a full month of events that you should be aware of. For one Northeast Sight Services is hosting their annual awards dinner on October 12. Dress for Success is hosting their Diamonds in the Woods event on October 17 and of course, the Rotary Club of Wilkes-Barre and Kingston is hosting their Designer Bag Bingo on Sunday October 6. This event will benefit Wyoming Valley Children's Association.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Paint Pittston Pink that annually supports Breast Cancer research each year in Pittston. I am participating in the Gentleman's dash for 2019 and raising money for the cause. Please read our coverage for event dates and times. Again, we enjoy bringing you news about local non profits in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

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Nonprofit Spotlight — Dress for Success Luzerne County



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Dress for Success is a global nonprofit organization that focuses on providing low-income women with professional clothing in order to help them in the job application and interviewing process. While Dress for Success was originally founded in New York City in 1997, the organization found another home in Luzerne County in 2010. Founder and Executive Director of the Luzerne County branch, Linda Armstrong, was among the first volunteers back when Dress for Success consisted of only a small shop in New York. While volunteering, Linda saw how the organization was capable of changing women's lives, and this inspired her to bring Dress for Success to the women of Luzerne County; prior to its founding, the closest Dress for Success was in Scranton, leaving many women in the area unserved.

Just as Linda saw firsthand in New York, Dress for Success Luzerne County has been a force of positive change as well over the past 9 years. Linda recalled an occasion when she was shopping at a home improvement store when she noticed a woman staring at her; she was a former client. The woman told her that five years prior, Linda had helped her prepare for a job interview. Not only had the woman been employed, but she was there to buy carpet cleaner, as she was now a homeowner as well. This success story only reaffirmed Linda's passion, and served as a reminder of just how life-changing a clean, professional set of clothes can be.

About 96% of Dress for Success clients are single mothers raising 2-3 children. Dress for Success appreciates donations via either money or clothing, but encourages those interested in donating to put themselves in the position of a person getting back into the workforce. It's recommended to keep clothing donations limited to professional, lightly-used, and current: nothing more than five years old. Dress for Success Luzerne County could especially use your financial support, and you can visit their website, luzernecounty.dressforsuccess.org to donate and learn more about volunteering opportunities. You can also check out their Facebook page to stay up-to-date with any upcoming events, including their "Diamonds in the Woods" event at the Woodlands in Wilkes-Barre on October 17th.



Linda Armstrong

Executive Director

More Info:

- 570-270-4949
- luzernecounty.dressforsuccess.org

Dress for Success Luzerne County Photos



Nonprofit Spotlight — Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Conference

For about 2.5 million children in the United States, grandma or grandpa serve as the primary caregiver(s). This number has been steadily increasing over the years on both a statewide and nationwide level. As such, this growing population is not only in need of the resources that can help ensure a successful second round of parenting, but also a platform for their voices to be heard. Fortunately, for 13 years now, these families in Northeast Pennsylvania have been provided such a platform. Since 2006, the NEPA Intergenerational Coalition has held an annual Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) Conference, and this year is no different.

October 25th, 2019 is the date to save for the upcoming Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Conference, where GRG families have the opportunity to access information, ask

questions, and meet with other families. This year, the conference will take place at the Woodlands Resort in Wilkes-Barre, and will run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Howard Grossman, AICP, chairman of the NEPA Intergenerational Coalition and fundraising director at the Pittston Memorial Library, is at the forefront of the annual conference, and has worked to provide support for GRG families year-round as well; every month, the Pittston Memorial Library hosts both GRG support groups and coalition meetings.

The conference (set to a theme of "Generation of Love") will be attended by numerous familiar faces and public figures; chief anchor at WNEP's Newswatch 16 Scott Schaffer, who himself was raised by his grandparents, will be delivering a keynote address. The conference will also feature a presentation from state representative Eddie Day Pashinski regarding new state legislation relevant to GRG families. In addition, the conference will feature two panels of speakers, dozens of vendor tables, and lunch and snacks are provided as well. The conference is free to attend for any grandparents raising grandchildren, and you can learn more and register for the conference by contacting Howard Grossman at (570) 262-3443 or grossmanhj@aol.com.

Wilkes-Barré Preservation Society Photos



Nonprofit Spotlight — Sleep in Heavenly Peace Luzerne County



“No kid sleeps on the floor in our town.” That’s the motto and mission of Sleep in Heavenly Peace (SHP), an organization dedicated to the construction and delivery of beds to children in need. The organization was founded in Twin Falls, Idaho in 2012, and has since spread to nearly 200 communities throughout the United States; as of 2018, Luzerne County is among these communities.

The founder of SHP’s Luzerne County chapter, Denise Ogurkis, first encountered Sleep in Heavenly Peace while on a trip in Salt Lake City, Utah. Denise, alongside her children, decided to volunteer for a SHP Build Day: an event where beds are built en masse, to later on be delivered to local children who don’t have a place to comfortably lay their heads. Afterwards, on the way back to Northeast Pennsylvania, Denise and her children reflected on the Build Day and realized it was, by far, the highlight of their trip; this inspired Denise to bring SHP back home with her to Luzerne County. Since its founding not too long ago, SHP Luzerne County has been operating in full force, fundraising, building beds, and delivering them. During deliveries, the volunteers are sometimes able to record the children’s first reactions to their new beds; you can see for yourself how much happiness a clean, new bed can bring a child, as these reactions are often shared on SHP Luzerne County’s Facebook page.

As it stands now, SHP Luzerne County has more requests than they have beds to spare; this is why they could especially use your donations. In addition, the organization is seeking local businesses to sponsor upcoming Build Days. Such sponsorships would help cover the cost of lumber, mattresses, and everything else that goes into making brand new beds that help give



Denise Ogurkis
Founder

More Info:

- 844-432-BEDS
- shpbeds.org

kids a good night’s sleep. You can learn more and donate by visiting Sleep in Heavenly Peace Luzerne County on Facebook, as well as their website, shpbeds.org

Sleep in Heavenly Peace Luzerne County Photos



Nonprofit Spotlight — Irem Temple Restoration Project



For decades, the historic Irem Temple building on North Franklin Street in Wilkes-Barre has sat in disrepair, serving as a mere relic of the past; that’s about to change. While efforts to preserve and renovate the landmark were previously made when the building was purchased by the Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce in 2005, these efforts fell through due to the financial crisis of 2008. However, ever since a group of citizens interested in the revitalization of the building convened in 2016, new life has been breathed into the endeavor. The Irem Temple Restoration Project (ITRP) was the eventual result of this meeting, and the group’s goal is to transform the building into a space for events and performances, as well as into a museum focused on the history of Wilkes-Barre and the Wyoming Valley.

A key figure in this process is the organization’s new executive director, Betty DeCosmo Dean, a Wyoming Valley native who is returning home after enjoying a successful career in financial services and nonprofit work in Delaware and Virginia, having worked in the non-profit industry since 2001. “I grew up loving the Irem Temple,” Dean stated, and upon arriving back home and seeing the ITRP executive director position open, she jumped at the opportunity. “I wanted to be a part of the revitalization of Wilkes-Barre that we’re currently seeing,” she said. With such a consummate professional at the head of the operation, ITRP is expected to flourish in its efforts moving forward. The organization hopes to restore the Irem Temple to operational status by 2022. Board Chairman Christian Wielage noted that the building, in its completed and revamped state, would ideally serve as a complementary venue to the F.M. Kirby Center. The organization also anticipates that, if acquired, federal historic tax credits and new market tax credits would fund 45% of the project. Currently, ITRP is planning a groundbreaking ceremony for construction sometime this fall.

The preservation and restoration of this Wilkes-Barre icon is a massive undertaking, and thus your help would be massively appreciated. You can donate and learn more about the Irem Temple’s history and its planned future by visiting the ITRP website, iremtemplerestorationproject.com, and stay informed by staying up-to-date with their Facebook page.

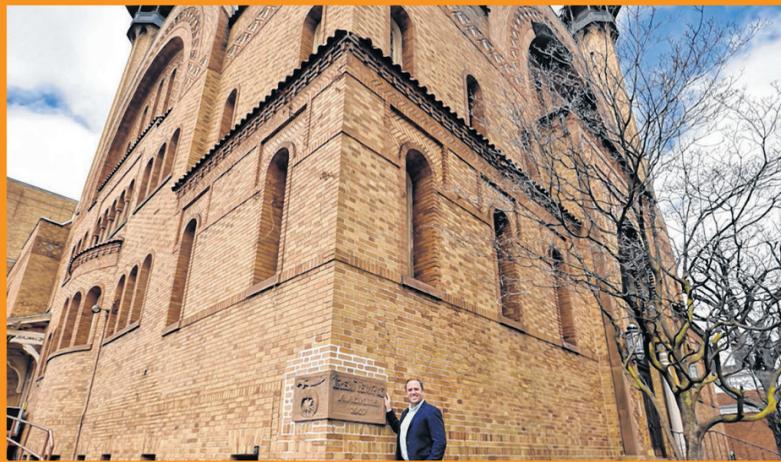


Betty DeCosmo Dean
Executive Director

More Info:

- www.iremtemplerestorationproject.com
- 914-374-2300

Irem Temple Restoration Project Photos



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Annual Awards Dinner

Thursday, October 10, 2019
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5:30PM Cocktail Reception

6:15PM Gourmet Food Stations

7:00PM Program

Kindly respond by Thursday, October 3

to Amy at 570-693-3555 x223

or amy@northeastsight.org

\$125/person

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Many amazing live and silent auction items will
also be up for bid!

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