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Community Benefit Report | Summer 2023



Thriving Communities, Mobilized Residents

This spring, the U.S. Department of Transportation named The Borough of Pottstown among the 64 communities across the nation that will benefit from a [Thriving Communities grant](#), a two-year technical assistance grant that will lay the groundwork for Pottstown residents to equitably benefit from transit-oriented development.

The grant is a result of a shared effort among the Borough of Pottstown, Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation, the Montgomery County Planning Commission, and more than a dozen local and regional stakeholders that convened as a learning cohort over the last two years. The borough will benefit from technical assistance under the program's Networked Communities category, which will help develop strategies as Pottstown is poised to tackle new opportunities—and challenges—brought about by the [proposed Philadelphia to Reading passenger rail line](#).

A key first step in the process will be mobilizing community members.

An intermodal transit center connecting PART, SEPTA, and Amtrak bus routes, the Pottstown Station has lacked passenger rail service since 1981. Passenger rail service could be restored as part of Amtrak's proposed Philadelphia to Reading line.

"The Thriving Communities grant will inform community mobilization strategies and what the focus should be. The consultant will come in with necessary expertise, assign roles, and help get policy ready in the borough. The goal is to set the table for voices that are needed for an equitable process," said Howard Brown, PAHWF senior program officer.

Ultimately, the grant will ensure that equitable systems and policies are in place to support area residents, including benefiting from jobs created by new development, business owners' ability to successfully bid on contracts created by new projects, and current homeowners and renters safeguarded from large increases in property values and rent.

The community mobilization builds on the work that has been done over the past few years by Brown and other Pottstown community leaders working with [Mpace: Mobility, Community, Possibility](#) (formerly Rail-volution) to understand and anticipate the housing dynamics,

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A Message from Our President



Dear friends,

As we at the Foundation mark 20 years since our founding, we are reflecting on how the purpose-driven organizations we have supported over the years have shaped Pottstown area communities over the past decades—as well as the traditions of public charity and civic engagement that our community is built upon.

The Foundation is proud to have supported over 250 mission-driven organizations that serve a population upwards of 240,000 in our region. These nonprofit organizations work every day to make the Pottstown area a better place to live, work, and play.

Pottstown area nonprofits improve life for our entire community, regardless of your place on the income scale. They are part of the unique character of the region, and contribute to a more prosperous, cohesive, and compassionate community. In fact, we've put together a resource for sharing a more complete understanding of how nonprofit organizations contribute to the character of the Pottstown area: pottstownfoundation.org/nonprofits.

The organizations that we support empower residents by collaborating on workforce development, healthcare, mentorship, civic engagement, parks, education, and economic revitalization—all of which create opportunities for our neighbors to come together to build a stronger community. And while they might not generate monetary gain, they pay dividends in creating the kind of community we can all be proud to call home.

David W. Kraybill, President

A Community Growing Together

Pottstown and the wider TriCounty Area is home to many passionate and caring people. We know you care deeply about your community.

Do you know someone special that you would like to honor? Do you have a passion that you would like to see come to life? Or do you just have a generous spirit and want to give back, perhaps by helping a non-profit organization in your community? There is no limit to what our community can accomplish if we work hand-in-hand to dream big and plan wisely.

We care too! The Foundation is made up of people who care deeply about our community. Our strength is our passionate, professional staff and diverse Board of Directors who have a wealth of knowledge of the community in which we serve. With years of expertise and roots in the area, the Foundation can connect you to organizations to help create long-term stability and plan for future growth. We make the most of every Foundation dollar to promote lasting and equitable impact.

What kind of gifts can the Foundation accept? Transforming Lives: Your support will amplify our impact. Your philanthropy directly impacts the work we are doing in the community. Some of the most popular donor gifts are bequests, retirement assets, appreciated securities, and life insurance. We can also work with you to create a donor-advised fund or an endowment fund or provide management for private foundations.

Who can be donors? Anyone can contribute a gift large or small. Donors can be individuals, families, corporations, foundations or nonprofits. You don't have to be rich to be generous, just have a giving heart.

What do I do to set up a fund? Getting started is easy. You can work with your financial advisor or accountant to set up an unrestricted fund for your cause through the Foundation, or we can help you pick a purpose that needs support. Contact our Philanthropy Coordinator, Sheri Waldman, by email at swaldman@pottstownfoundation.org, by phone at 610-323-2006, or visit pottstownfoundation.plannedgiving.org.

Do I have to give a gift for only health & wellness? We will accept gifts for arts & culture, music, community development, faith-based, education, health & human services, the environment, nonprofit organizations and many other areas. We have knowledgeable Program Officers that can also help by providing information on our community nonprofits and areas of need.

What are the tax advantages and financial benefits of making a gift? There are many financial benefits through giving. Our Foundation manages two portfolios large enough to generate economies of scale, so fees to you are lower. Gifts receive the maximum tax advantages allowed by law. Please consult with your financial advisor or tax attorney.

A Legacy of Giving. We want every generous gift we receive to be rewarding for the donor and to live on. That's why we would like to share with you some of the ways you can plan a gift so that it can create benefits for the entire community. If you've already made PAHWF part of your estate plan, thank you! If so, please let us know so that we may thank you and recognize your commitment.

We hope you will partner with us to care for those in the region. Getting started making a gift is easy. You can work with your financial advisor or accountant to set up a fund for your cause through the Foundation, or we can help you pick a purpose that needs support. Please contact our Philanthropy Coordinator, Sheri Waldman, by email at swaldman@pottstownfoundation.org or by phone at 610-323-2006 (ext. 23) or visit us at pottstownfoundation.plannedgiving.org.

“It’s a Beautiful Thing”

New Board Members Build Community Around Causes that Matter

The Foundation has welcomed two new board members this year, both of whose experience exemplify service and leadership in the greater Pottstown community. Dr. Jaime Parris, Dean of Students at Pottstown School District, and Frank Strunk, a retired commercial banker who actively works with a multitude of Pottstown nonprofits and veterans organizations, each bring perspective and experience vital in leading the Foundation to engage with the community we serve.



Joining the board in February of this year and serving on the communications committee, Dr. Jaime Parris was born and raised in Pottstown, graduating from Pottstown High School before earning degrees from Hofstra University and Cabrini University, culminating in his Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership.

Parris returned to his hometown—and his home school district—to give back as an elementary school teacher and basketball coach.

Now, as Dean of Students, Parris is connecting with students on a personal level to emphasize responsible thinking, mutual respect, and decision making skills.

“I talk to a lot of kids about my upbringing, about things that happened in my life,” said Parris. “For you to relate to some of these kids, it’s important to talk about your story—how even though I might wear a shirt and tie, I still grew up in the same neighborhood you grew up in. And even though I’m in this role, it’s not like I don’t go through struggles today.”

In addition to recently becoming a father, Parris keeps busy working in the community, including organizing an independent basketball league, Pottstown PRIDE, which teaches third through eighth grade students the values of confidence, commitment, and integrity.

Now, as part of the Foundation board, Parris is looking to build community in new ways.

“The thing that really drives me is being part of an organization that is able to give back to the town I grew up in and has the resources to help connect people and help bring people together. It’s a beautiful thing for sure,” said Parris.

Joining the board in April, Frank Strunk is a community leader and Air Force veteran who brings a wealth of finance and development experience to the board. Strunk served in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War as part of the Air Rescue Helicopter Combat Support Group, attaining the rank of staff sergeant and participating in 20 combat rescue missions. Among his many military honors were the Combat Air Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with two campaign stars, and the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross.

After returning from war, Strunk pursued a career in the financial services industry, retiring after 48 years of working with commercial and small business clients across our region. His current efforts as a volunteer honor those who’ve served in war while also striving to serve the community more broadly. Strunk spends much of his time working with the veteran community, and is president of Vietnam Veterans Chapter 565-Pottstown and is the treasurer and a board member of the Veterans Island Project.



Frank Strunk

“I, along with fifteen other members, started the Vietnam Veterans Memorial almost 30 years ago. We’ve been maintaining that memorial every year and enhancing its beauty because it honors the 26 from this area who were killed in Vietnam,” said Strunk, noting that the Vietnam Veterans Chapter has also been working to restore the World War II and Korean War memorials and smaller individual memorials in the park.

Strunk also serves on the advisory board of Pottstown Hospital – Tower Health, The Foundation for Pottstown Education board, and is a past president and member of Pottstown Rotary. As a member of the PAHWF development committee, he would like to see PAHWF engage with the community as a partner for making positive change.

“I am a firm believer in giving back to the community in as many ways as I possibly can,” said Strunk. “I’ve noticed the many, many great things the Health & Wellness Foundation has done in the community... we’ve got to be up front and personal with people and saying this is what we do, and we need you to help us continue doing it.”

In the Neighborhood

workforce needs, and social changes set in motion by the potential return of passenger rail service. Brown now serves on the National Steering Committee for Mpart, observing how equitable transit-oriented development (ETOD) is implemented in communities across the country.

“On the National Steering Committee, I learned about how unique it was for a community to have done this kind of work at this stage,” said Brown. “With the exception of large cities with federal support, most communities don’t have this groundwork—community engagement often comes after the project is scoped, planned, and awarded, so we’re really set up for success here.”

In addition to the Thriving Communities partners, nonprofit organizations across the community have been at the table as part of that groundwork. Some of these include: ACLAMO, Hobart’s Run, Genesis Housing, Montgomery County Housing Authority, Mosaic Community Land Trust, SOUL, Tower Health, TriCounty Community Network, Valley Forge Tourism & Convention Board, and the YWCA Tri-County Area. The business community has also been represented by US Axle, The Iron Globe, PAED, and TriCounty Chamber of Commerce.

Ensuring that the community is working in unity towards a shared vision is vital to future federal funding opportunities, including from the Department of

Transportation, the Environmental Protection Agency, and Health and Human Services—all highly relevant funding sources for Pottstown’s future. One of the stated goals of the Thriving Communities program is to grow the pipeline of communities that can successfully compete for federal funding to include municipalities that lack the grant seeking capabilities of larger, wealthier communities.

“Communities that have long faced historic underinvestment and disadvantage are finally going to get the technical assistance they need to explore innovative concepts and build better transportation solutions through the Thriving Communities Program,” said Build America Bureau Executive Director Morteza Farajian in the Thriving Communities announcement.

The Foundation and the Borough of Pottstown have invested in efforts to study opportunities and address needs including the [Urban Land Institute Advisory Services Panel](#), the [Keystone Economic and Employment Plan](#), and the [Keim Street Gateway Plan](#).

Just as importantly, grassroots engagement and assessment efforts, including the [Community Health Needs Assessments](#), have been instrumental in learning about the lives of folks who should be prioritized to have the opportunity that comes from transit initiatives. With strong community involvement so far, Pottstown is well primed to have residents as part of the process.

Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds 2023



One of the area’s longest-standing summer events for professional development promoting wellness in the school and community is back for 2023, and the theme for this year’s event is Building Relationships for Healthy, Equitable and Engaging Experiences for the School Community. Hosted annually since 2011, the conference offers public and private school programming informed by the work of planning committee members, including local educators, experts from Medical University of South Carolina, and Fizika group LLC.

A live keynote and 19 sessions will inform the following focus areas:

- Community Connections
- Equity
- School Wellness Checklist© Implementation
- Trauma-Informed Practices
- Nutrition and Physical Activity

The site for the in-person event is Montgomery County Community College, Pottstown Campus. The conference is free to attend and professional development credit for PA educators will be provided. More about the event including track and session descriptions, presenter bios, images from past events, and much more can be found on the conference homepage at: www.bit.ly/HBHM2023





2023 Home Garden Contest

Summer is nearly here, and as gardeners across Pottstown and Boyertown get their gardens blooming for the annual Home Garden Contest, there are plenty of opportunities for growing the gardening community.

Registration for the garden contest is open through Friday, June 23. For more information and to register, visit homegardencontest.com, call 484-214-5046, or email. tracy.purdy@temple.edu. Judging will take place July 7-19.



Whether you decide to sign up for the contest or not, please join us for a self-guided tour through some of the most beautiful gardens

in Pottstown and Boyertown on Saturday, July 8, from 8 a.m. to noon. For more information, visit mosaicclt.org. Tickets will be available online at mosaicclt.org for \$20 in advance and \$25 on the day of the tour.



Play Streets 2023

The award-winning Pottstown Play Streets program, led by the Borough of Pottstown's Department of Parks and Recreation, is temporarily closing streets to traffic in neighborhoods and providing play equipment to create safe, fun & healthy spaces for children, families, and neighbors to connect and play right outside their doors. Thursday evening Play Streets events feature:

• Play Equipment • Info Tables • Activities & Games

Thursdays 5:30-7:30 p.m.

June 22: Pottstown Middle School Field
June 29: Cherry Street Park
July 13: Barth Elementary School Field

July 20: Washington/West Park
July 27: Chestnut Street Park
August 10: Spruce Street Park



Pottstown Play Streets kicked off the 2023 series June 15 in Maple Street Park.



pottstownfoundation.org/playstreets

Spring 2023 Grant Round

The Foundation awarded **\$1,325,800 to 43 projects** and programs in the Pottstown area.

Developing Youth Potential: Early Childhood Development
\$140,000 was awarded to four projects.

Wonderspring

Music, Yoga and Mindfulness Enrichment Program

Victim Services Center of Montgomery County

Care for Kids

Pottstown School District

PEAK Whole Child Wellness

Mother Goose-Read to Me

New Books for Infants and Young Children

Developing Youth Potential—School Programs K-12
\$420,000 was awarded to eight projects.

Boyertown Area School District

Whole Child Wellness

Pottstown School District

Healthy School Communities

Pottsgrove School District

2023-24 Health & Wellness Grant

Daniel Boone Area School District

DBASD Wellness Program

Spring-Ford Area School District

Spring-Ford Wellness

Owen J Roberts School District

Fit for Life Program

Brookeside Montessori

B-Well Program

St. Aloysius Parish School

Healthy Kids Project

Developing Youth Potential—Youth Preparedness
\$210,000 was awarded to ten projects.

Julian Dorsey Foundation

Continuing our Pottstown youth programs for soccer and life skills

Project Purpose

Mentoring with a Purpose

Foundation for Pottstown Education

Planned Giving and Monthly Draft Campaigns

Greater Pottstown Tennis and Learning Association

Game, Set, Advantage

Big Brothers Big Sisters Independence

Beyond School Walls Program

Pottstown Area Police Athletic League

Supporting Program Implementation and Offering Opportunities in Youth Sports

Foundation For Boyertown Education

Community Impact & Sustainability for Enhanced Student Experiences

Community First Development Corporation

Youth by Design - Teen Leadership Program

Penn Playmakers

Berks Warriors New Balance Circuit 2023

Pottstown Branch- Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA

Dragonfly Forest: Structured Play, Social-Emotional Learning, and Disability Rights

Promoting Equitable Health & Wellness—Built Environment
\$225,000 was awarded to ten projects.

North Coventry Township

Riverside Park Boat Ramp and Adaptive Kayak Launch

Pottstown Area Police Athletic League

Completing the Construction of a Permanent Dek Hockey Facility

Birdsboro Community Memorial Center

Gymnasium Repairs

East Coventry Township Parks and Recreation

Tow Path Park Phase 1a Improvements

Expressive Therapy Concepts

Smashville Badminton: Kids and Adult Fitness Program

Lower Pottsgrove Township

Ringing Rocks Park Paving and Signage Project

Township of Upper Pottsgrove

Hollenbach Park Phase 1 Engineering

Washington Township

Washington Park ADA Access and Parking Improvements

Save Our Land Save Our Towns Enterprises

Growing and conserving Pottstown's street trees

Boyertown Rotary Foundation

Boyertown Community Park - Pickleball Expansion

Promoting Equitable Health & Wellness—Health Equity
\$260,800 was awarded to eight projects.

Chester County Food Bank

Fresh2You Mobile Market and FreshRx

Family Services of Montgomery County

Project HEARTH (Helping Elderly Adults Remain in Their Homes)

The Salvation Army, Pottstown

Job Readiness Training and Counseling

TriCounty Community Network

Systems Change for Community Collaboration

TriCounty Community Network

Resident Engagement, Power Building, Health Equity

United Way of Boyertown Area

Providing Equitable Health & Wellness to the Boyertown Area

Homeless and Near Homeless

MontCo Anti-Hunger Network

Pottstown Area Food Pantries Connection to Large Scale Food Resources

Camphill Village Kimberton Hills

Village Support Fund

Promoting Equitable Health & Wellness—Health Access & Delivery
\$70,000 was awarded to three projects.

Maternal and Child Health Consortium of Chester County

Ensuring a Healthy Start and Access to Benefits for Pottstown Families

Mitzvah Circle Foundation

Critical Needs for Healthy Families, Diaper Bank, and Period Supply Programs

Royersford Outreach

General Operating Funds for Building and Program



The fall grant cycle will open Sept. 1 with a simplified process for applicants.
Visit pottstownfoundation.org/grantmaking for more information.