

# THE NEWS

## Schuylkill Community Action Newsletter



### Celebrating 60 Years of Impact

2025 marked Schuylkill Community Action's 60th anniversary—six decades of service, growth, and partnership in Schuylkill County. Since 1965, SCA has worked alongside neighbors to overcome barriers and build brighter futures, evolving programs to meet the changing needs of our community.

From housing support and financial education to emergency assistance, food distribution, and home preservation, SCA's work touches thousands of lives each year. At the heart of it all is our mission: empowering individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency.

We celebrate the dedicated team, volunteers, partners, and supporters who make this work possible and the countless residents who have gained stability, independence, and hope for the future. As we honor this milestone, we look forward to continuing to strengthen Schuylkill County and ensuring it remains a place where everyone can thrive.

### Ribbon Cutting: Mobile Food Truck

Schuylkill Community Action celebrated an exciting milestone this fall with a ribbon cutting on Thursday, November 6, at the Port Carbon Scout Memorial Building, launching the Schuylkill Food Network's new mobile food truck. Made possible through the generous support of Geisinger, the truck brings nutritious food directly to communities across Schuylkill County, particularly where transportation is a barrier.

The mobile truck strengthens the Food Network's capacity by allowing staff to pick up additional food from suppliers, support distributions across the 21-pantry network, and deliver food to communities without a permanent pantry location. The ribbon cutting offered community members and partners a first look at the truck in action and marked a significant step forward in advancing equitable food access.

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PAST 6 MONTHS

SCA's 60th Anniversary

Mobile Food Truck  
Ribbon Cutting

Volunteer Appreciation  
Banquet

Employee Highlights

PA Navigate

Summer Youth Programs

Veterans Awareness Day

Brighter Holiday Project



## Volunteer Appreciation Banquet

On October 3, Schuylkill Community Action hosted the Schuylkill Food Network Volunteer Appreciation Banquet at Saint Nicholas Hall in Pottsville. Over 100 volunteers joined to celebrate their dedication and the impact of their work.

In the past year, volunteers helped serve 6,554 households and 15,305 individuals, distributing more than one million pounds of food through 21 pantry locations. With new sites in Port Carbon and Gordon, the network continues to expand its reach and impact. The evening included a catered meal, raffle prizes, and special recognition of volunteers and supporters, highlighting the vital role they play in bringing “Food and Health Delivered” to families across Schuylkill County.



## Employee Highlights

SCA is proud to recognize staff achievements and professional milestones:

- **Jenn Strausser** earned her HUD Housing Counselor Certification, strengthening housing services for the community.
- **Crystal Albert** completed The Leadership Program for Schuylkill County’s Emerging Leaders, honing skills to strengthen SCA and local leadership.
- At the 2025 CAAP Conference, the following awards were received:
  - **Kate Spofford** – CAAPacity Builder Award (innovating and inspiring growth in the organization and community)
  - **Richard Bigg** – Dependable Difference Maker Award (steady dedication and lasting impact)
  - **Jen Slifka** – Hidden Hero Award (quietly ensuring programs run smoothly and families receive needed services)

These recognitions reflect the passion, professionalism, and teamwork that define Schuylkill Community Action’s staff.



Jenn Strausser



Crystal Albert



Kate Spofford



Richard Bigg



Jen Slifka

## PA Navigate: Strengthening Connections

Schuylkill Community Action continues to expand access to essential services through PA Navigate, a statewide referral platform connecting residents to food, housing, utilities, transportation, and more. Requests submitted through PA Navigate are received directly by staff for timely follow-up and coordinated referrals.

At this year's CAAP Conference, Erin Muldowney, Administrative Assistant, represented SCA on a panel during the PA Navigate CBO Convening. The event brought nonprofits, healthcare systems, managed care organizations, and statewide partners together to share successes, introduce new tools like the Findhelp KIIP case-management platform, and strengthen cross-sector collaboration. Erin continues to lead PA Navigate trainings in partnership with HIVE, helping local organizations improve referral pathways and expand service access throughout Schuylkill County.



Pictured left to right: Marianne Smith (Product Manager, Central PA Connect HIE), Kat Ketter (Jefferson Health Plans), Dani Perra (Jefferson Health), Erin Muldowney (Schuylkill Community Action), Eric Saunders (New Hope Ministries), Beck Moore (CEO, CAAP)

## Summer Youth Programs: BLAST & MY Work

**BLAST** (Better Lives Always Start Today), partnering with Schuylkill County MH/DS and Drug & Alcohol Program, welcomed 105 students across four locations—Pottsville, Tamaqua, Mahanoy City, and Frackville. Participants enjoyed games, crafts, enrichment activities, and workshops, including financial education lessons, alongside healthy meals each day.



Through **MY Work**, SCA partnered with the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP) to host high school students in a summer employment program. Students supported the Food Network by packing boxes, distributing food, and assisting pantry operations, gaining valuable work experience while making a meaningful impact in their community.



## Veterans Awareness Day

On November 21, SCA hosted Veterans Awareness Day, welcoming 75 veterans and family members to a day of learning, connection, and support. Participants attended 15 educational sessions covering benefits, financial safety, healthcare, mental health, and more.

Resource rooms featured over 40 participating agencies, providing services in veterans' programs, healthcare, employment, and human services. Lunch and refreshments were donated by several local businesses and organizations, and gift baskets were donated by participating agencies for a free raffle. The day's success was made possible by presenters, community partners, and volunteers along with dedicated SCA staff members who helped create a meaningful and supportive experience for local veterans.



## Brighter Holiday Project

Each year, SCA works to bring joy and comfort to as many local families as possible through the Brighter Holiday Project. Our staff, who work directly with families throughout the year, identify households that may need extra support during the holiday season. While we wish we could help everyone, limited resources mean we prioritize families facing significant challenges.

This year, 20 families and 49 children received thoughtful gifts, warm clothing, and holiday meals before the break. Generous donations from the community made this possible, also ensuring each family could enjoy a holiday meal and treats. Families also received supplemental food to help cover the holiday break, giving parents peace of mind and children a joyful season.

One parent shared their gratitude, saying:

*"I want to thank the Brighter Holiday Project for helping my kids have a great Christmas. They loved everything—I'm so grateful. There are times when we struggle, but there's always a light at the end of the tunnel. Again, thank you so much for making our Christmas amazing."*

Through the dedication of our staff, volunteers, and donors, the Brighter Holiday Project provides more than just gifts—it delivers hope, warmth, and dignity to families in need. Projects like this showcase the power of community partnerships in making the holidays brighter for local children and families.

To learn more about Schuylkill Community Action or to get involved, contact us directly or visit our website and/or social media pages.



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