

The mission of the Butler Collaborative for Families is to build a unified and integrated network of services by using a multiple-agency approach to break down barriers and strengthen the system of care for individuals and families of Butler County.

I. Welcome **BCF Co Chairs, Becky Clouse & Linda Thoma**

II. Review and approval of the November General Meeting minutes

- a. M:Devin/S:Katie Approved

III. Budget & Finance Committee Report- **BCF Treasurer, Phil Schmeltzer**

Restricted Funds: \$14,593.80

Unrestricted Funds: \$ 36,695.30

Total: 51,289.10

IV. Featured Speaker: **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Phil Schmeltzer, VITA Coordinator. *Phil has twelve years of experience as a VITA volunteer and over 20 years of experience in sales management with a Fortune 500 Company. For more information, please refer to e-newsletter sent on 1/6/25.***

- a. Creating awareness of the program is their number one goal at this time.
 - Flyers are available to post in public areas to promote the program
- b. Vita is supported by the IRS and the United Way
 - Volunteers are trained and utilized to help
 - \$60,000 or less income qualifications
 - 5 centers for this service in the Butler area
 - Appointments needed, but might be able to do walk ins.
 - Can now start making appointments through the Vitaline by calling 211
- c. Earned Income Tax Credit dictates the income guidelines.
 - Earned Income Tax Credits helps encourage low income earners to stay employed.
- d. Volunteers
 - 42 volunteers. 17 from SRU and one from BC3 last year
 - College students get credit towards class for volunteering
 - Volunteers become IRS certified
 - Complete volunteer application, clearances, attend a 1.5-day training class, volunteer from mid-February through April. Ask them to commit to 1-2 shifts a week.
- e. 1,900 tax returns prepared last year through Butler Vita office
- f. January 29th 10-4 is the Vita Open House at the Clearview Mall

V.

VI. Agency Spotlight: **Lifesteps- Assistive Technology, Diane Petschauer**

- a. Materials available for more information about the program on the resource table
- b. Demonstration, consultation and training center located at main Lifesteps location in Butler
- c. Provide tools and resources that are high tech, low tech or even no technology items. Resources created to help make any daily activities easier.
- d. Free events through webinars/workshops will be held. Check the calendar on the website to find one that is applicable
- e. The services provided are funded in various ways. Making an appointment is the easiest way to get started. Consultations are free.

- f. Does not need to be Butler County resident

VII. Food Security Mini-Grant Application

- a. **Peter Bess, Butler Area Public Library-awarded \$3,525 grant**
- b. The Little Free Pantry-resembles the little free library concept
- Will be just inside the first set of double doors
 - Come when library is open
 - Take what you need, donate what you can
 - Trust that you are taking only what you need
 - No interaction with staff/income verification
 - Will host drives for donations when stock runs low
 - Focusing on shelf stable goods/canned goods/beverages (Nothing needing refrigeration or freezer)
 - Looking for additional community partners for longevity
 - Hopes is to have the pantry open by late summer/early fall of 2025

VIII. Subcommittee Reports:

- a. Marketing & Events Committee Report- Upcoming Career Fair
- March 19th at BC3 9-2pm
 - Registration will be open on 20th through the BC3 website
 - Looking for vendors (BCF or Health Care Consortium members get a free table)
 - Open to the community, not just for college students
- b. Starting a committee to plan the 30-year celebration. See Emily Snow if you want to be a part of this team.
- c. Resource and Development Committee – meets at 9:30am prior to BCF general meeting – all are welcome!

IX. Partnering Collaboratives Updates:

- a. **Butler County Prevention Council (BCPC)– Amanda Feltenberger.** If anybody is interested in participating, please email Amanda Feltenberger at afeltenb@co.butler.pa.us.
- Meet bi-monthly Friday, February 17th at 1pm first meeting of 2025. Meeting held at the County Human Services building
- b. **Butler County Local Housing Options Team (LHOT)** Please save the date for the 2025 Point in Time Count on Wednesday, January 22nd. Any Further Questions please contact -Allyson Rose at arose@co.butler.pa.us
- Still looking for volunteers to help with the Point In Time Count-contact Allyson Rose
- c. **Butler County Early Care and Education Council (ECEC)– Julie Thumma** – Next meeting Thursday, Thursday, January 16th from 1-2:30 @ BC3 Amy Wise Children's Creative Learning Center. Guest Speakers will be Diana Petschauer, Director, Assistive Technology, Lifesteps (rescheduled from November) and Candace Kantz, The Andrew Effect. During this meeting, we will discuss issues in early learning, early childhood mental health, children's health and safety, Kindergarten Transition/Registration, and Family engagement opportunities. Please come prepared to share about your organization and to discuss any needs you feel the Council could help to address. For any further information please contact Julie at jthumma@lifesteps.net
- Saturday, April 12th-Week of Young Child- seeking new home for the event-mall is not an option this year.
- d. Safe Kids- **Jill McDonald** The Safe Kids Committee is proud to announce that we have received a grant from Safe Kids Worldwide to purchase helmets and a new table cover. The helmets will be distributed at Bicycle Rodeos that we are planning to have in the Spring of 2025!

X. New Business:

- a. **Membership Renewals are still being accepted for 2025**
- Phil will be sending out emails to any previous members who have not renewed at this time.
- b. **Allison Jones started at the new BCF Marketing Coordinator- Welcome Allison!**

- XI.** E newsletter submission Deadlines: Thursday, January 16th by 5pm
- XII.** Gap Identification / Discussion-Use the sheets on the tables.
- XIII.** Next General Meeting: **February 13, 2025, at Monarch Place**
- XIV.** Adjournment of Membership Meeting
- XV.** Networking with a purpose