

**A Note from Art Williams**  
**Gather the Spirit for Justice**  
**Board Vice President and Program Committee Chair**

Summertime, and the living is.... hot!

Mother Nature sure shifted gears on us pretty quickly temperature-wise.

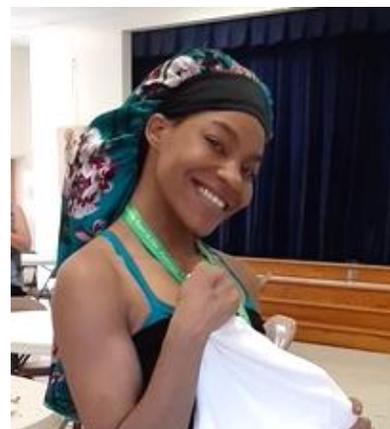
And I am so grateful that we can all spend a cool, comfortable, peaceful few hours together each Saturday morning, visiting as neighbors while the day heats up outside. This last Saturday morning we hosted a little over 250 guests and volunteers, so if you joined us, you had a great chance to meet someone new. And if not, there is always next week!

We discussed moving to a ‘summer menu’ with cooler food options; but we asked around, and it turns out that people like their grits! Even though it may warm the tummy more than you want, it also feeds the soul, as good comfort food is known to do. So, we will more-or-less keep to our familiar ‘stick-to-the-ribs’ menu throughout the warm months.



We have now been located at First Church of the Brethren for 10 months. We can’t really call it our ‘new location’ anymore, but I AM happy to report that we kind of have our breakfast serving organized into a smooth process now. (I know, it may LOOK like chaos, but... )

I’m always grateful to the dedicated volunteers who join us regularly when they are able. We always appreciate the folks who lend their hands to do the work, but also help with ideas and suggestions on how we can make things smoother, better, friendlier. Thanks for what you do and for bringing your whole selves to the process.



## A Visit from Area Lawmakers

State representative Nate Davidson, State representative Dave Madsen, and State Senator Patty Kim joined us at the Community Center in May. They spoke individually with a number of our neighbors to learn about issues and needs in Allison Hill. They also visited our ESL classes and enjoyed a pancake breakfast. We appreciate their attention to the concerns of our local community.



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## English as a Second Language (ESL)

Our ESL programs will be on a "relaxed" schedule for this summer. Beginning the first week in September, we will conduct a special push to start new classes. In the meantime, we will offer one-on-one and small group tutoring for students who wish to practice their English. The tutoring sessions will be every Saturday at 10 a.m. in the usual classrooms. ~ Glen Dunbar

Our ESL class for French/Creole speakers continued to see new and returning students in June with student counts in the upper 20s. In June, we started a new beginner class with 11 students. July's first two Saturdays have had fewer students with 18 and 15 students respectively. We continue to build relationships with them through these difficult times for immigrants. ~ Kevin Geist

# You're Invited: Gather the Spirit for Justice Planning Meeting

Join us for an important planning session as we work together to strengthen our impact in the Allison Hill community!

 Date: Wednesday, August 27

 Time: 5:30 PM

 Location: First Church of the Brethren, 219 Hummel St., Harrisburg, PA

Gather the Spirit invites community members, volunteers, and partner organizations to come together for a dynamic brainstorming session. We'll be focusing on ways to enhance collaboration with other nonprofits serving our neighbors in Alison Hill. In addition, we'll explore ideas around volunteer engagement and fundraising strategies to help support and sustain our mission.

Whether you're already involved or looking for a way to make a difference, your voice and ideas are welcome. Let's gather, share, and build together! For more information, contact Brian DeBease at [brian.debease@scouting.org](mailto:brian.debease@scouting.org).

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## Story of a Neighbor

One of our ESL instructors reported: I was recently contacted by a student who hadn't been to class since winter. He told me that he had a stroke in February and has been in the hospital since then. Charles speaks some English and would appreciate hearing from new friends as he has no family in the USA. He likes sports, so maybe you would like writing to him about basketball or soccer (football as he calls it). You may send a get-well card to Charles c/o Gather the Spirit, 219 Hummel Street, Harrisburg, PA 17104.



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## IDs

It is humbling to meet with people who are seeking assistance in replacing/updating their PA IDs. It is a stark reminder of the struggles middle-class people rarely experience...struggles that are often a constant experience for the people who come to Gather the Spirit. We see immediate relief in their faces when we confirm that we can help them. Many voice their need for an ID to continue working or to get medical care. Please consider funding an ID to honor someone in your life. ~ Ann Van Dyke

## **Note from Ben Perez, Program Director**

It is hard to believe that it is already mid-July! The Summer of 2025 is flying by, and Gather the Spirit for Justice's programs continue to thrive. This month, I'd like to call your attention to some things that are taking place behind the scenes that greatly affect the quality of our programs:

1) This past Sunday, Gather the Spirit received a generous donation of 10 large pizzas from Yum Pizza (2327 Walnut Street in Harrisburg). One of our regular volunteers—Stacei Dennis—told Yum Pizza's owner about our Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon programs and asked if he wanted to help. By chatting casually with this local small-business owner, Stacei facilitated donation of restaurant-quality pizza. The pizza was thoroughly enjoyed by the first 40 guests to come to our Sunday afternoon shelter on July 13th. When the owner—Mohamed—heard that his donation had brightened the lives of 40 hungry neighbors, he offered to donate pizzas once a month!

Our Sunday Shelter relies almost 100% on in-kind donations to feed its guests; if we don't get donations in a given week, we have to fall back on dry snacks and ramen noodles. Amazingly, though we are entering the eighth month of the shelter's existence, we have never once had to resort to that. All it takes is each of us approaching a local business that you already patronize, tell them about the good work that we are doing on Saturdays and Sundays, and ask them if they would like to get involved!

2) One of our newest Board members—Mary Kelly—has set her sights even higher! In addition to approaching small businesses, she has been reaching out to larger retail chains to establish new avenues of in-kind donations. She has secured donations from Costco and Home Depot already, and is constantly expanding her list of businesses and organizations to contact.

I thank both Stacei and Mary for taking that initiative. If each volunteer, donor and Board member would approach only one business that they know, our number of in-kind donations would explode. It is not necessary that their donation be recurring! A one-time donation is enough to turn that business or organization into a partner that can be approached again. For example, due to Mary's successful outreach to Home Depot, we received new hardware that increases our Sunday shelter's phone-charging capacity by 100%.

Thank you to everyone who keeps Gather the Spirit in mind during their busy week. You are finding ways to make a difference and providing local businesses an opportunity to show the Allison Hill community that they care! In future newsletters, we will keep you informed on which businesses and organizations are stepping up (in the hope that readers will patronize their businesses).

That's all for now. See you on Hummel Street!



## **Grants and Gifts**

***The Roman Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg and Saint Francis of Assisi Catholic Church:*** Saint Francis Church, which serves many of the same neighbors here in Allison Hill as does Gather the Spirit, sponsored us for a Matthew 25 Grant. These grants are awarded by the Diocese to support the Biblical call to “help provide food, clothing and shelter for our brothers and sisters who are less fortunate.” The grant provided Gather the Spirit funds to purchase food and supplies for about 15 Saturday community breakfasts and will help us expand the variety of foods available during our Sunday shelter for the unhoused.

***Yum Pizza:*** A new business has moved into the area and immediately offered to donate to us! Mohamed Abdelkader and his brother run Yum Pizza at 2327 Walnut Street in Penbrook. Read how Stacey Dennis helped Mohamed become a partner in the *Note from Ben Perez, Program Director* earlier in this newsletter. Our goal is to improve life on Allison Hill. We want to do that one person at a time and one business at a time. So please stop into Yum Pizza, thank them for their support of Gather the Spirit and give those fine folks some business! [yumpizzatogo.com](http://yumpizzatogo.com).

***Josiah W. and Bessie H. Kline Foundation:*** Last year the Kline Foundation awarded Gather the Spirit a grant to help us provide photo IDs, driver’s licenses and birth certificates to neighbors who cannot afford these documents. The documents are essential for driving, applying for employment, accessing services, applying for housing, obtaining health insurance, cashing a check, etc.; however, the cost is prohibitive for many of our low-income and unhoused neighbors. (IDs and licenses range from \$40.50 to \$42.50 and birth certificates cost \$20 - we generally write about 10 checks each week.) In response to our request for support again this year, the Kline Foundation generously provided a gift of \$4,000, which will assist approximately 100 neighbors to attain these vital documents. Because getting an ID/license can smooth the path to employment, housing, and needed services, the impact of this grant will be tremendous.

***Lower Paxton Township Lions Club:*** The Lions Club gifted Gather the Spirit \$100 to apply toward our overall budget. Many thanks to the Lions.

***Harrisburg Keystone Rotary Club:*** The Club has been collecting toiletries for us! Special thanks to Yolanda Perez for arranging toiletry pickups and to Amy Powell for sharing the needs on her dog training business website, [doggieullc.net](http://doggieullc.net).

We are so grateful to all our regular donors who give whatever they can, whenever they can. Their continued support makes the work of Gather the Spirit possible.

## **Save the Date: “Gather the Guitars” Benefit Concert — February 8 at The Abbey Bar**

Get ready for an unforgettable afternoon of music and community spirit in Harrisburg! On Sunday, February 8, Gather the Guitars returns to raise funds for our local nonprofit at The Abbey Bar, nestled inside the Appalachian Brewing Company at 50 N. Cameron Street. Doors open at 2:30 PM, and guests are invited to enjoy an all-ages showcase of guitar-driven performances—all for a great cause.

### Mark Your Calendar

-  Sunday, February 8
-  Doors open at 2:30 PM
-  The Abbey Bar at Appalachian Brewing Company, 50 N. Cameron St., Harrisburg, PA —an intimate and stylish setting with a strong local brewing reputation
-  \$25 admissions, 21 and older or accompanied by an adult, walk-ins welcome

### What to Expect

Local guitarists and singer-songwriters will share the stage in an afternoon showcase of soulful tunes, energetic riffs, and heartfelt melodies. This family-friendly event offers something for every music lover and provides a unique opportunity to support a meaningful community cause.

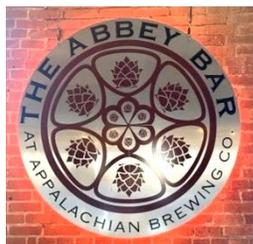
### Why You Should Attend

Your ticket purchase supports the mission behind Gather the Spirit for Justice, a Harrisburg-based nonprofit dedicated to making a positive impact. Alongside raising funds, the event celebrates local artists and fosters community engagement in a laid-back, welcoming environment.

### Venue Insight

The Abbey Bar at Appalachian Brewing Company is a beloved Harrisburg hotspot known for its cozy ambiance, craft brews, and live entertainment.

Stay tuned for announcements on performers and special guests. In the meantime, save the date, check out the pictures below from last year’s celebration, and prepare for a day of music, community, and purpose! If you'd like to get involved with the planning committee, please don't hesitate to contact Linda at [ldebase@icloud.com](mailto:ldebase@icloud.com).



## The Free Store

Gather the Spirit volunteers work sorting donations and restocking the Free Store every Wednesday at 1:00 pm. The church opens the store on Fridays. Please contact Ann at [avandyke3@outlook.com](mailto:avandyke3@outlook.com) if you can join us Wednesday afternoons. Also please help gather gently-used donations. We are particularly in need of housewares and men's clothing.



## Toiletries

Toiletry Needs Change with the Seasons!

The needs of our low-income and unhoused community are changing with the season and returning to our basic toiletries, but the numbers keep growing. Last Saturday we handed out two items to 159 neighbors or roughly 270 items.



Our toiletry supply comes through donations from individuals, faith-groups, civic organizations and local businesses. Our greatest needs currently are **shampoo, dish soap, bars of soap, body wash, deodorant, hand sanitizers, and cleaning supplies**. Also high on our need list is **large tubes of toothpaste**; we have plenty of toothbrushes for adults but not toothpaste to pair them with. Finally, for children we particularly need **children's shampoo, toothbrushes and wash**. Almost anything you have will be needed by someone!  
~ Gail Ismart [gismart@mac.com](mailto:gismart@mac.com)

## Gather the Spirit Statistics

Check out our attendance numbers from Guy's weekly tracking report. Our number of Saturday breakfast guests continues to increase; it rose from an average of 166 in the first quarter 2025 to an average of 176 in June.



Date	5/3/25	5/10/25	5/17/25	5/24/25	5/31/25	6/7/25	6/14/25	6/21/25	6/28/25
Saturday Guests	172	185	180	187	205	180	145	175	205
Saturday Volunteers	42	33	28	42	33	31	20	27	46

## Profile of a Partner

We at Gather the Spirit for Justice rely heavily on other organizations in the Harrisburg area to help us **Build Community on Allison Hill**. In our next few newsletters, we will profile a few of the groups we partner with.

One of those groups is the **Central Pennsylvania Food Bank**. Each Wednesday, Ben and Art visit our friends at CPFB and load up carts full of free and very price-reduced food and paper products that we can make available to our guests on Saturdays and Sundays.

Forrest Gump would say that the bins at the Food Bank warehouse are *“like a box of chocolates... you never know what’s inside.”* On any given week, we may load our cars up with fresh fruit, cheese, eggs, milk, juice, cakes, pies, croissants, snack bars, pancake syrup, coffee, paper towels & plates, soap, shampoo, and yes, occasionally a box of chocolates!

We really enjoy our visits to the Food Bank and look forward to it for the friendly people, and as a weekly adventure in treasure hunting. :)

Just like Gather the Spirit, the Food Bank relies on community donations and volunteers to keep serving our area. We extend our thanks to both the great folks at the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank and, by extension, all of the organizations and individuals who donate their time, money and groceries to keep this vital organization operating in our community for the betterment of all.

Sandra (L) and Jessica (inset) are always ready to greet us with a warm smile, and keep our orders and purchases organized. Nellie (R) is our primary partner at the Food Bank; she keeps us informed about new developments and offerings relevant to our mission.

Randy, in the warehouse, grew up on Allison Hill and really appreciates our mission. He takes note of what to look for each week and helps us find what we need in the stacks. Both Randy (below left) and Jose (right) are amazing driving a forklift.



Ben selecting treats from the Food Bank



## Volunteer Appreciation Day

Many thanks to new Board member Mary Kelly for hosting a volunteer appreciation dinner at her home on July 1st. Not only did she provide her home and much of the food, she also updated our volunteer contact list in the process! We know that having 40 of us in her home and creating a complete and accurate contact list took a lot of time and effort, and we are very grateful!

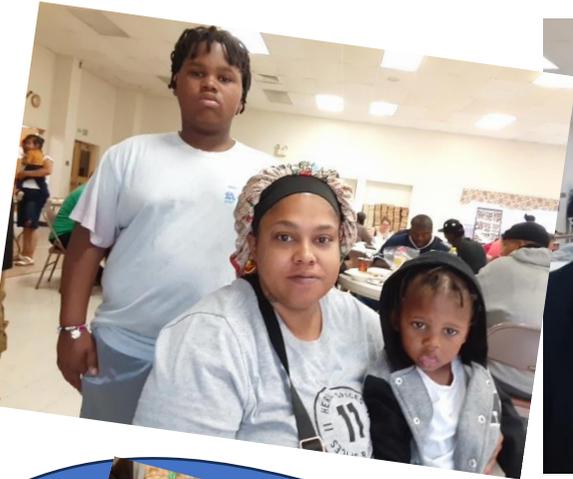
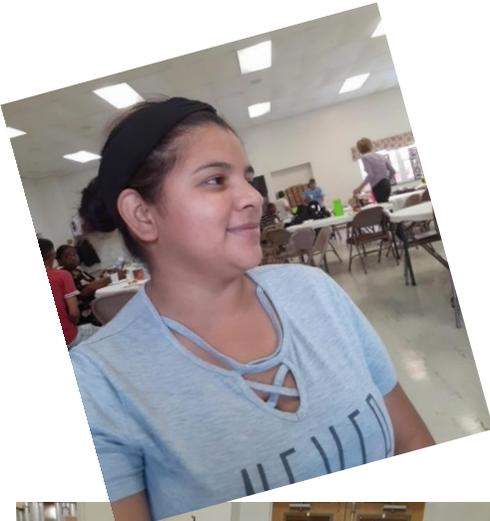


## New Volunteers:

Just in the last two months, several new volunteers have joined the Saturday morning crew! Welcome and many thanks to -- among others -- Abdur and Sabriya and their dad, Sister Evelyn, Pastor Kate, Chelsea, Sage, Julian, Erica, Francisco, Eric and even greeter dog Ace. A few are pictured below; others are in the *Meet Some of our Neighbors and Volunteers* section later in this newsletter. Some are students just available during the summer months. While we are grateful for the new help, we WILL NEVER have too much help! We have a list of tasks that can be addressed only after we get more help.



# Meet Some of our Neighbors and Volunteers



# More Neighbors and Volunteers



## Sharing News from Our Friends

**Heeding God's Call to End Gun Violence** is installing the Memorial to the Lost in the yards of a different place of worship in the Harrisburg area every month and asking those congregations to sign letters to their five legislators requesting support for specific gun safety legislation. The Memorial will be in front of the Friends Meeting House at Commonwealth and Forster July 17 - 31. The Harrisburg area has lost 245 people to gun violence since 2009. Contact Ann Van Dyke at (717) 982-1050 for information about how you can help.

**Pax Christi Harrisburg:** Please mark your calendar for Sunday, August 10 at 6:30 pm. SHANE CLAIBORNE, Christian peace activist and author will speak at MARKET SQUARE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (20 S. Second St, Harrisburg). His presentation is "Another World is Possible." In previous years, Pax Christi Harrisburg organized Candles on the Water to remember the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This year, Shane's presentation will be our focus. Instead of walking to the river to float candlelit boats, we will conclude the event with a ceremony in the church with lit candles. Please share information about this event with your contacts. Interested groups may also become co-sponsors for \$50. If your group is willing to co-sponsor the event, please contact Ann Marie Judson at [annmariejudson512@gmail.com](mailto:annmariejudson512@gmail.com).

**Christ Lutheran Church**, 124 South 13th Street, Harrisburg, PA 17104 Phone (717) 236-8382

- Medical Clinic: Free, nurse-run, walk-in clinic that provides simple lab tests, basic physical assessments, and health ed. Mon-Fri 10 am-2:30 pm. No appointment needed. (717) 260-9320.
- Dental Clinic: Volunteer dentists, support staff, and translators offer care 3 days a month for urgent dental conditions requiring simple extractions and fillings. No appointments, all walk-in, first-come-first-served, free of charge. Call to learn upcoming dates.
- Fit on the Hill: Exercise class Saturdays begins at 11 am. All ability levels are welcome.
- Spiritual Care: Pastor Best offers spiritual care to church members, community residents, and staff of partner organizations. Please let him know if you would like to talk about how he can provide spiritual care. He will be in the Medical Clinic waiting area from 1:00-2:00 pm every Wednesday to chat.

**Tec Centro Capital Region:** Tec Centro provides free and low-cost education, career training, and support to help adults obtain higher-paying jobs, build lasting careers, and improve their overall quality of life. Services include: Employment Support, English as a Second Language, Allied Health Professions, Adult Basic Education, Basic Computer Skills and Skilled Trade Professions. For more info: [www.teccentrocrc.org](http://www.teccentrocrc.org)

**First Church of the Brethren** holds Vacation Bible School July 29<sup>th</sup> – July 31<sup>st</sup>. This year's theme is Waves of Wonder. Contact Pastor Lexi, Jaylene Ortiz or Renee Hart at (717) 234-0415.

## Tell Us How to Use Your Donation!

If one of our activities especially touches your heart, you can designate how we use your donation:

- Sponsor an ID, driver's license or birth certificate. Donate \$42.50 for an ID or license or \$20 for a birth certificate. (Indicate "vital documents" on your check or with your donation.)
- Sponsor one Common Ground Coffee breakfast for \$150 **OR** bring us enough pastries, fruits, juice and paper plates to feed 160 individuals **OR** (*this is the most fun of all!*) bring enough food and paper plates to feed at least 160 individuals and bring your own crew to do the serving. Contact Art at [artwilliams7@gmail.com](mailto:artwilliams7@gmail.com) to arrange a Saturday of your choice.
- Sponsor an English textbook for \$10. (Indicate "ESL" on your check or with your donation.)
- Help sponsor a toiletries distribution. (Indicate "toiletries" on your check or with your donation.) You can also drop toiletries off at the community center any Saturday morning or leave them anytime on the porch at 4384 North 6<sup>th</sup> Street in Harrisburg.
- Contribute to general administration and the salary of our part-time Program Director



Checks for donations to Gather the Spirit can be mailed to: **Austin Cheers, CPA, Miller Dixon Drake, PC, 701 N 2nd Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102**

You may also use Paypal with the address [gtsfjinfohbg@gmail.com](mailto:gtsfjinfohbg@gmail.com)

[https://paypal.me/Gather the Spirit?country.x=US&locale.x=en\\_US](https://paypal.me/Gather%20the%20Spirit?country.x=US&locale.x=en_US)

venmo us @Gather the Spirit or donate via our website: [gatherthespiritforjustice.org](http://gatherthespiritforjustice.org)



**You can also help by volunteering:** VOLUNTEER every Saturday morning, 9 to 11 am for coffee and conversation! Volunteers prepare and serve snacks, welcome and interact with guests, and assist with setup and/or cleanup. To volunteer, contact Art at [artwilliams7@gmail.com](mailto:artwilliams7@gmail.com) or drop by any Saturday morning. This link will take you to our volunteer signup page: <https://ttsu.me/zu5ejm> Or contact Glen at [gdunbar47@gmail.com](mailto:gdunbar47@gmail.com) to volunteer in our English as a Second Language classes.

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## Contact Information

Located in First Church of the Brethren, 219 Hummel Street, Harrisburg, PA 17104

<https://gatherthespiritforjustice.org>

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Sol Vazquez-Otero

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**OUR MISSION:** **Gather the Spirit for Justice seeks to strengthen community in Allison Hill, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.**