



SPONSORED CONTENT



A publication of

Editor, Janis Merrell
GoodLife@LifePathMA.org
(413) 773-5555 x2255

THE GOOD LIFE

Find past editions on www.LifePathMA.org

www.facebook.com/LifePathMA



LifePath and The Care Collaborative Hold an Open House for the Community Engagement Center



By Noelle McManus, Client Services Senior Program Assistant

On Monday, November 13, LifePath and The Care Collaborative opened the doors of the new Community Engagement Center (CEC) to the public for an open house. Earlier this year, the Healey-Driscoll Administration awarded LifePath over \$450,000 to create a space for caregiver respite. As that space, the CEC can host up to 15 individuals daily. It supports caregivers and their loved ones in connecting, accessing supports, and participating in entertaining activities.

The goal in creating the center was to combat caregiver isolation, especially as the pandemic exacerbated it. Rachel Broudy, physician and LifePath board member, said that the burden was “extraordinary, unlike anything we’d ever seen.” According to the Public Health Institute, turnover rates for caregivers are estimated to be between 40% and 60%. Sue Pratt, Executive Director and founder of The Care Collaborative, explained, “There’s a shortage of formal caregivers and home health aides, so a lot of family members are having to fill that gap.”



Local caregivers are not alone.

The burden on family caregivers only worsened when the only two adult day health programs in the area, formerly located in Greenfield and Athol, closed. “All of the work” that has begun with the CEC, said Pratt, “originates from the foundational belief that, in order for elders to be well cared for and supported, they must have

well-supported caregivers.” She stated that the Center has a dual purpose: Not only do caregivers receive respite, but they also have access to support services and can rest assured that their loved ones will be engaged in stimulating activities.

“We started thinking about a center with belonging and inclusion as central tenets,” Broudy said, “and we wanted it to be as non-medical as possible.”

Now, just mere months after the acceptance of the grant, the CEC has opened with those tenets in mind.

“I am thrilled the CEC is open,” said Diane Robie, Director of Client Services at LifePath. “Caregivers are so grateful to see their loved one in a safe, nurturing environment. We see the center as a one-stop shop for caregivers. We want them—paid and unpaid—to know they are not alone.”

In addition to snacks, beverages, and promotional materials, guests at the open house were offered schedules detailing a typical day at the Center. It includes light exercise in the morning, creative activities like arts and crafts or music, physical play, and storytelling or reading to wind down

Caregivers are so grateful to see their loved one in a safe, nurturing environment.

the day. The space also has facilities for licensed massage, private meetings, and caregiver training skills labs. A multitude of other services—including office hours with a rotating staff of social workers, nurses, physicians, dementia coaches, case managers, caregivers, and other topic experts—are planned.

Robie, who had a chance to spend time with participants at the CEC, said, “They were all engaged and having a great time. It was the best part of my week.”

“Once we get rolling and have an established rhythm, we can start to develop programming tailored specifically to the caregivers we work with,” said Jill Predmore, Program Director of The Care Collaborative. “I’m excited about being able to support caregivers in finding community, building relationships with other caregivers, and giving them some hope and strategies for future empowerment.”

Echoing Predmore’s excitement, Pratt mentioned, “It’s coming full circle in my career. We’ve been working for 15 years in partnership with Greenfield Community College and at the state level with the Standards Committee. For a long time, I’ve

been pulled away from direct care, but that’s where I started. It’s thrilling to be able to work with elders again.”

Because of the grant, she said, the Center can assess and respond directly to needs in the community. As both she and Robie agreed, the hope of both LifePath and The Care Collaborative is that the program will be replicated in other communities.

“This is a grant,” Pratt explained. “It’s a demonstration project. Hopefully, we’ll be able to recreate it elsewhere, not just here in Sunderland. We’ll see what happens.”

Although the Center only just recently opened, a positive impact can already be seen in caregivers and their loved ones alike. “We’re getting great feedback,” said Pratt. “The participants are enjoying the stimulation, and the caregivers are enjoying time to themselves without feeling guilty.”

“Now that we have day programming for the participants, I am looking forward to offering more support programs to caregivers, including education and trainings, peer support, and self-care activities,” added Robie. “I also want to stress that we have respite scholarships available for caregivers providing care to relative children, an adult with a disability, and older adults.”

The program seeks to create an infrastructure of peer-to-peer supports between caregivers. That way, they can develop stronger connections with others who share their experiences and feel less isolated in an increasingly isolating time. “No one is given an instruction book for how to properly care for aging and ailing loved ones,” mentioned Donna Bigelow, CEC Program Manager. “The CEC can provide the support and guidance caregivers need.”

“The open house provided an opportunity to highlight the work done by the Care Collaborative and LifePath staff to launch this program so quickly,” said Robie. “A special thanks to Donna Bigelow from LifePath and to Sue Pratt and her team from The Care Collaborative.”

For more information on the Community Engagement Center, including how to make a referral, go to <https://lifepathma.org/what-we-offer/care-at-home/community-engagement-center-cec/> or call (413) 773-5555, ext. 1230.

Ready to make a difference?

We need **Volunteer Ombudsmen** to advocate for residents in nursing homes and long-term care facilities.

- *Free training
- *Set your own schedule
- *Only a few hours a week



Visit www.lifepathma.org/volunteer or call 413.773.5555 and ask for Volunteer Resources.



Reach thousands of existing and potential clients with an advertisement in The Good Life.

GREENFIELD RECORDER
recorder.com
Your community news 24/7

Elizabeth Coté or **Suzanne Hunter**
203-912-4680 413-772-0261 x 228
ecote@recorder.com shunter@recorder.com

NE-388448