

## Respect Among Disagreement



A challenge many presently face is how to collaborate for the common good within a pluralistic society. With so many issues where we disagree, is working together even possible? The Montgomery County Multi-Faith Coalition thinks so.

This coalition of faith community members and human service providers seeks to collaborate for the common good by emphasizing the principle that respect is different than agreement.

Meaningful collaboration doesn't require acting like our differences don't exist or don't matter. Instead, it comes from respecting each other out of the conviction that all people are made in God's image and have inherent value...even when we disagree.

Contact Dave Eckert, Director of Intersect  
(215) 540-2150, x1286

## Job Opportunities

**Part Time Foster Care Support Staff in Bethlehem, PA**

Provide one-on-one specialized support and intervention with children/adolescents.

Contact Nancy (215) 540-2150, x1365  
NNguyen@accessservices.org

## Roaring into the 20's

You are invited to join us on Thursday evening, April 30th at the Access Services annual charity event, "Roaring Into the 20's." We will revisit the roaring 20's and celebrate the new decade with cocktail hour 'speakeasy' drinks, dinner, music and the celebration of an inspiring achievement of one of our consumers. Why do we host special events? Proceeds from the tickets, sponsorships, silent auction

and raffle supports the array of services we offer to children and adults. It makes a difference in our ability to offer under-funded initiatives, like Hope 4 Tomorrow and Intersect. This is a fun evening that benefits a great cause! For more information, please go to our website [www.accessservices.org/roaring20s](http://www.accessservices.org/roaring20s)

Contact Linda Wasilchick, Director of Resource Development (215) 540-2150, x1357  
LWasilchick@accessservices.org



**ACCESS SERVICES**

Creating better ways to serve people with special needs

500 Office Center Drive, Suite 100  
Fort Washington, PA 19034

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## Program Highlights

### New Life Youth & Family Services Affiliation



We are happy to announce an official affiliation with New Life Youth & Family Services. This partnership builds upon a 15-year relationship between our organizations.

New Life has been providing hope, healing and new beginnings for children and their families since 1953 in southeastern Pennsylvania.

For 67 years, New Life has played a part in making a difference to the more than 50,000 children whose lives were forever changed by getting the help and support they needed. Today the New Life organization provides excellent children and family supports in Chester County.

Rob Reid, President & CEO shares, "Access Services and New Life have worked together over the last 15 years. The New Life organization has a rich history and a strong commitment to helping children and

adolescents. I believe that this affiliation strengthens both organizations children and family services. The youth today face a lot of challenges and need help and support through difficult times."

Steve Harran, New Life's Board Chairperson shares, "As we considered New Life's path forward, we felt a tremendous sense of responsibility to remain consistent with the values and commitment shared by the hundreds of employees, volunteers, members of leadership, and supporters who dedicated their lives to its mission. Our affiliation with Access will complement our thriving community-based programs and expand our ability to provide hope, healing and new beginnings to the children and families of the region and beyond for another 60 years."

The leadership of both organizations are excited about this strategic affiliation, working to strengthen and sustain each organization is this increasingly complex environment.

Contact Sue Steege, COO  
(215) 540-2150  
SSteege@accessservices.org



# ACCESS SERVICES

Creating better ways to serve people with special needs

Access Services, a 43 year-old nonprofit organization, operates in eleven Pennsylvania counties, offering services for children, adults, and families. The mission of Access Services is to empower and serve people in need of specialized supports by providing innovative services that improve their ability to live fulfilling lives in the community.

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Visit <https://www.accessservices.org>

## Questions at the Crossroads



The Intersect program sits at the crossroads between communities of faith, providers of service, and people who find themselves trying to navigate very different, equally important worlds. It also sits at the convergence of several values that drive Access

Services' approach to the people we serve, and the way we design and offer services. One of those is stepping into the gaps; between services themselves, between people and the help they need, and designing services that are responsive in real and specific ways.

Another orienting value is intentionally meeting people where they are. While Intersect embodies a conceptual framework that resonates with many of us who are trying to intentionally create collaborative space, it seeks to live very practically with real people and real struggles. "How will my faith community respond if it finds out I have depression that is overwhelming to me at times? How do I talk to my therapist about how important my spirituality is to me? Where is God when I feel so alone?" These are the questions in the crossroads...

A third value is growing in ways that make sense. Often, this means stepping out even when we aren't entirely sure what will happen. Trusting that listening well to the people being served will bring clarity along the way. And trusting that people will step up and join the effort by providing needed resources to act on that emerging vision. So, thank you for joining us as we watch and work at this unfolding effort, and for the support that makes it possible.

**Contact Mark Boorse, Director of Program Development**  
(215) 429-8385  
MBoorse@accessservices.org

## Spiritual Well-Being, An Interfaith Effort

Everyone needs an opportunity to explore and express their spirituality. Worshipping with a faith community and having an environment that encourages knowing and developing a relationship with God is a vital component of this. At Access Services, we recognize the role that spirituality can play in the recovery process for those living with mental health challenges.

Intersect, a newer initiative at Access Services, equips faith leaders and communities of all backgrounds to welcome those living with mental health challenges into their congregations. Dave Eckert, Director of Intersect, spent over 18 years working in mobile psychiatric rehabilitation services and also serves as an Associate Pastor at Grace Community Church in Chalfont, PA.

A recent partnership with the Jewish Learning Venture and Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer prompted an Interfaith Community Forum, an event which provided a context for clergy, educators and all faith community members to learn approaches to make their congregations a welcoming environment.

Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer, a staff member at the Jewish Learning Venture and organizer of the Interfaith Community Forum, shares, "When we learned about the wonderful work that Dave is doing, we wanted to bring his wisdom and experience to the Jewish community. We decided to call this event an Interfaith Mental Health forum so that we could all learn together. Whatever your religion or faith tradition, all of us, as human beings, may experience or know someone who experiences mental illness."

Faith communities of all backgrounds are recognizing the need to better support those with mental health struggles. Gabrielle shared the Jewish Learning Ventures approach, "Our goal is to make everyone feel welcomed and supported in our Jewish community and we know that people with any kind of disability—cognitive, physical, learning, psychiatric or otherwise, have felt stigmatized and not welcomed at times in previous generations when disability wasn't talked about and certainly not talked about in terms of disability awareness and acceptance. Today, our communities want to welcome and support everyone – but professionals and volunteers may lack the knowledge and resources to know how to do so. That's where our training comes in."

Dave Eckert provides similar training and consultation to faith communities across Bucks and Montgomery counties. He shares why he is passionate about this work, "This work allows me to serve the whole person. As a pastor I love being able to help people around their spiritual needs and help them to grow in that way. As a social worker, I've always been passionate about helping people with their physical and mental needs. Through Intersect, and paying attention to the spiritual, physical, emotional, and social needs, we are able to look at the whole person and serve them in a way that considers all that makes us human."

To learn more about the Intersect initiative, and upcoming trainings in your area visit <https://www.accessservices.org/intersect/>.

**Contact Dave Eckert, Chaplain and Director of Intersect**  
(215) 540-2150, x1286 DEckert@accessservices.org

