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## SIXTH STREET



## STORIES



SIXTH STREET SHELTER | SPRING 2023

# Upcoming Event

## HIGHMARK WALK

### Saturday, June 3rd

Register and donate now! We are excited to invite you to join prominent local businesses and become a sponsor of the Sixth Street Shelter during the upcoming Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community on June 3rd at DeSales University in Center Valley.

The Highmark Walk is an annual fundraiser benefitting local health and human service agencies. The goal is to help participating organizations raise money for their individual missions, giving the Sixth Street Shelter an opportunity to raise funds through a community-wide event without the added expense of hosting.

Located in Center City Allentown, the Sixth Street Shelter provides safe, short-term housing for families of any configuration (including those with fathers and teenaged boys, multi-generational families, and those from the LGBTQ+ community) experiencing homelessness. The property has 25 private apartments, a Family Resource Center, playground, and a full-choice food pantry for residents. Our 18-to 24-month transitional housing programs in Allentown and Easton make it possible for parents to pursue educational or vocational training while working towards self-sufficiency. We believe education or vocational training play a valuable role in helping families thrive while attempting to end the cycle of generational poverty.

We would love to count on you as a walk sponsor! Registration is donation-based. To qualify for the 2023 Highmark Walk T-shirt, you must be a registered walker AND have a minimum of \$30 credited to your walker account. With your support, we can continue to make a difference in our communities.

Scan the QR code on the back of this flyer to register on behalf of the Shelter!

## JESENIA RIOS

had a long journey within the Sixth Street Shelter program. Prior to entering, she was living unstably from house to house with her 3-year-old daughter and 5-year-old son. In need of a job, Jesenia accepted a position in the medical field as an aid worker, discovered her passion of caring for others, and set a goal to become a nurse by enrolling in an LPN program at Lincoln Tech. Long hours of classes and clinical work were demanding and Jesenia utilized public transportation with her two children each day before sunrise. Sometimes the days were so cold, she worried about her children's warmth while waiting for the bus. Jesenia acknowledged the Shelter was not her ideal location, but knew we could help her become self-sufficient and succeed in providing family stability.



Suddenly, COVID hit. All classes went virtual and daycares closed. Life became more taxing and challenges mounted at the Shelter. Jesenia was helping her children with schoolwork, studying nursing, and trying to find focus time. Making life even more difficult, the Shelter did not have internet at the time, so Jesenia utilized her phone's hotspot providing spotty connection. Stuck in a small, enclosed apartment with her children begging for attention, Jesenia began to feel hopeless. With a heavy heart, she felt she had no choice but to withdraw from the nursing program.

Shortly after, Jesenia received news that she was eligible for the Shelter's long-term program at Turner Street. She prayed with all her heart that she and her children could enter the program and experience stability in a new apartment. Soon enough, they moved to Turner Street and were provided a stronger foundation. Jesenia enrolled in LCCC and began taking classes while working as a part-time nurse's aide. Managing her children, work, and school, she began feeling overwhelmed again and was not passing her classes. Jesenia almost gave up and didn't know which way to turn.

Jesenia reached out to her Shelter caseworker who gave her the confidence she needed to not give up. Together, they produced a new plan involving class flexibility and signing up for manageable work shifts. Jesenia re-enrolled in the LPN program and picked up where she left off. Although there were days she just wanted to stay home with her children, Jesenia held strong and told them, ***"sometimes in life, there are going to be things you don't want to do, but you NEED to do. This is going to benefit us in the future."***

Setting a positive example for her children was a priority to Jesenia. She proved that anything is possible if you put your mind to it and commit. ***"Everything I do and have done is for my children, for our future. I want to make them proud. I am so thankful to the Sixth Street Shelter for allowing me to be become someone my children can look up to. Thank you to my caseworker, Lizette, for always being there, pushing me, and celebrating my victories. My children can now say their mommy is a nurse!"*** Jesenia graduated from nursing school on December 19, 2022.

The Sixth Street Shelter assists families experiencing homelessness to secure safe housing through family-centered services, in-house programming, and referrals to community resources, while advocating that affordable housing is a human right.

Learn more about the Sixth Street Shelter at [www.sixthstreetshelter.org](http://www.sixthstreetshelter.org) or [@SixthStreetShelter](https://www.instagram.com/SixthStreetShelter).

# ART HAUS

Throughout January and February 2023, Allentown's ART HAUS on Hamilton Street held a Black History Month Celebration in collaboration with the Sixth Street Shelter to support our local youth and their artistic abilities.

The ART HAUS donated space for youth to exhibit their work alongside three master artists. One participant, Nevaeh Edwards, is a resident of the Shelter. With support and encouragement from our staff, Nevaeh has been selling her work to save money with her mother to end their experience of homelessness while also saving towards schooling.

## NEVAEH: ARTIST & WRITER

Nevaeh Edwards, a 13-year-old resident of the Sixth Street Shelter, is a rising star! She had been working on writing a chapter book and painting regularly until she and her mother found themselves in an environment where they felt unsafe, and soon after began experiencing homelessness. While navigating these challenges, Nevaeh stopped creating.

Once they arrived at the Shelter, Nevaeh built trusting relationships and began to share her story. She was encouraged to create and given canvases to begin painting again. Her confidence and focus began to blossom as she sold several pieces of her beautiful, unique artwork, some of which depict characters in her book. Her canvas paintings are now on display and for sale at La Vida Café, a luncheonette in Allentown that values the success of our community's youth.



Robbie Matthews, the Shelter's Director, shared an important connection, **"Black History Month is a time to celebrate the past, present, and future accomplishments of those who have come before or after us. It is a time to recognize African Americans in our present time who continue to carve out spaces of excellent achievements while encouraging our young people to embrace and forge onward with a sense of pride. It is an honor to be an African American woman who has a voice which can be heard whether through creativity or acts of kindness toward others."** The Sixth Street Shelter is grateful to ART HAUS for their partnership and opportunity to help support artistic expression in a positive, safe environment while also saving towards schooling.

Nevaeh continues to work towards her dream of becoming a successful artist and writer to help her mother end their experience of homelessness. When a donor heard about Nevaeh's story, she contacted Sam Royer, co-author of *Called to Serve: The Inspiring, Untold Stories of America's First Responders*. Mr. Royer shared Nevaeh's story with his team and connected her with co-author, Dava Gurin, who was also touched by her story. Dava shared knowledge with Nevaeh on how to become a successful writer, how to edit her work, and explained the process of publishing a book when she is ready. Nevaeh is building more confidence and growing into the success she always wanted to become! Her long journey has taken her to a place where she is supported by the Shelter, her mother, and our local community.

# CHRISTMAS IN SPRING

## In Honor of Alan Blanks

For decades, Alan Blanks of Allentown brought joy to thousands of children by playing the role of Santa Claus in a special suit that looked like it came straight out of storybook. His mission was to spread happiness and the magic of Christmas to children, and it warmed Alan's heart by fulfilling a special purpose.

A couple of years after Alan passed, his wife Laverne was ready to let go of the suit that meant so much. It was a difficult decision, but she woke up one morning and said a prayer hoping to find a new home for the special Santa suit that would carry on Alan's tradition of bringing Christmas delight to numerous families. Laverne called the Sixth Street Shelter to explain her story. Coincidentally, the Shelter was in need of a Santa suit for the Eagle Scouts' holiday party scheduled two days later in our Family Resource Center! The suit was humbly accepted in honor of Alan Blanks. His tradition carries on and will continue to serve as a blessing of joy, happiness, and smiles for years to come. Thank you, Laverne!



## Shop with a Cop

The Allentown Police Department (APD) brought holiday fun to children with families in transitional housing during our Shop with a Cop event last December. Fifteen youth, aged 9 to 17, were paired with an officer to enjoy an exciting ride in police vehicles to purchase holiday gifts for themselves and their families. The event was funded with APD's "No Shave November" fundraiser, which raised about \$3,000.

While strolling down the aisles in Target, Dorney Park's Snoopy delighted everyone with his holiday cheer! After purchasing, everyone met at Americus Hotel to wrap their presents and enjoy lunch with MelVin from the Phantoms. We ended the day with pizza, dancing, and laughter as the officers and youth made their way back to the Shelter with sirens on, announcing their arrival back home.

The Sixth Street Shelter is so appreciative to the Allentown Police Department, Target, Dorney Park, New York Stromboli, the Americus Hotel, and the Lehigh Valley Phantoms for making this holiday super special!



## Toy Shop

The Sixth Street Shelter expresses extreme gratitude to our community and anonymous supporters who donated an abundance of toys for children of all ages last holiday season. Your generosity made it possible for the Shelter to have its first ever "Toy Shop!"

Resident parents of the Shelter listened to holiday music while taking the opportunity to browse gifts for their children without the worry of cost. Our Toy Shop allowed residents to have a Christmas they believed they could not have. When Tayanna Galarza opened the door to the Toy Shop, she began to cry, "I just started working, but my paycheck won't come until after the holidays. I can't believe this! I was so afraid of disappointing my children because I couldn't afford any presents and now the Shelter gives us this. You gave my kids the best Christmas ever!" After Tayanna and the parents finished shopping, they were given wrapping paper donated by Target and community members, tape, and decorative bows.

All of us at the Shelter thank everyone in our community who took action to brighten the holidays for our families in transitional housing. Without you, we would not have been able to create this experience.



# ULINE DONATIONS

Shipping and business supplies company, ULINE, kicked off its new Community Involvement Committee program by donating 26 large bins and buckets filled with necessities for ALL of our 25 apartments!

We are grateful for their generosity and sincerely thank Mishaal and Jordan for the delivery.



# ULINE

SHIPPING SUPPLY SPECIALISTS

## WAYS TO GIVE

*Become a  
Monthly Donor*

Giving monthly is the most effective way to give. No matter the size of your donation, your gift ensures continued financial support of the Shelter and empowers us to continue our work. Your employer may be willing to match your donation!

*Sponsor  
An Apartment*

This \$3,000 donation goes to apartment interior needs including new appliances. Your individual, family, or organization name will have a customized nameplate outside the apartment door.

*Give By Phone*

Call our Development Officer at 484-821-2809.

*Donate/Sponsor*

Donate to or sponsor a walker at our upcoming Highmark Walk on 6/3/23. Scan the QR code.



## BY THE NUMBERS

During 2022, 71 families resided at the Shelter and developed Family Service Plans based on their housing, educational and financial goals.

**53%** of individuals served over the past year are under the age of 10 years.

**79%** of community families saved money toward rent or a security deposit upon leaving the Shelter.

**76%** of community families achieved their Family Service Plan short-term goals.

**90%** of families created a written budget to understand credit and money management as a part of their goal plan.

**50%** of families created a written resume to assist in their job search.

**62%** of families moved into stable housing upon leaving the Shelter.

If you would like to take a tour, donate over the phone, or learn more about how you can get involved at the Sixth Street Shelter, please call our Development Officer at 484-821-2809.

For general inquiries, call our front desk at 610-435-1490.  
To quickly and easily donate online, visit [sixthstreetshelter.org](http://sixthstreetshelter.org).



PROGRAM OF  
**COMMUNITY ACTION**  
LEHIGH VALLEY

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[SixthStreetShelter.org](http://SixthStreetShelter.org)  
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