

REVITALIZING SCHUYLKILL COUNTY ONE HOUSE AT A TIME

October 24, 2018



October 30 marks **National Weatherization Day** (<https://nascsp.org/wap/advocacy/weatherization-day/>), which highlights the **National Weatherization Program** (<https://dced.pa.gov/programs/weatherization-assistance-program-wx/>) (WAP)'s impact at local, state, and national levels and recognizes the dedicated community assistance providers who implement it. The Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) helps administer the program — which increases the energy efficiency, safety, and health of homes — to low-income families across the state.

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*We spoke with Ted Dreisbach, **Schuylkill Community Action***

*(<https://schuylkillcommunityaction.com/>) (SCA) Executive Director, David Young, SCA Director of Planning, and SCA community partner Cindy Daley, Director of Community Redevelopment Initiatives at **Regional Housing Legal Services** (<http://www.rhls.org/>) (RHLS) to learn about their partnership and how they deploy weatherization programs in Schuylkill County.*

How do your missions overlap to create a positive partnership?

SCA's service model to help clients is three-tiered. We strive to address the basic needs of Schuylkill County residents through food assistance, utility assistance, housing support, and counseling. For those whose basic needs are stabilized, we provide support to help them on a longer-term basis with programs such as transitional housing, welfare to work, budget counseling, and weatherization. We also address broader community development and housing issues that will improve our neighborhoods and make our communities more conducive for growth and job development.

We're really excited about the partnership we created here in Schuylkill County with RHLS and its sub grantee MidPenn Legal Services (MidPenn). RHLS represents community organizations working to expand housing and economic opportunities for low-income Pennsylvanians, and MidPenn helps individuals hold on to their homes.

When organizations like ours connect, we're able to get resources out to the people who truly need them. We also get together to brainstorm creative ways to help the community, constantly asking ourselves, "How do we help keep folks from losing their home?" or, "How does the condition of where people live and their housing affect the condition of their health?"

How has DCED helped your partnership improve the Schuylkill County community?

Currently, we use DCED and other state funding sources to improve our neighborhoods. We focus on the county's northern tier, consisting of Frackville, Ashland, Girardville, Shenandoah, and Mahanoy City. Part of housing and community stability means ensuring resident homes are in safe, livable conditions, which includes weatherization.

Weatherization is the process of improving energy efficiency in homes by reducing energy costs and increasing comfort, which also promotes safer and healthier homes. However, it's important to note that not every home can be weatherized right away. Sometimes when we audit a home, we find health and safety issues such as mold, leaky roofs, and old knob and tube wiring that **Weatherization Assistance Program**

(<https://dced.pa.gov/programs/weatherization-assistance-program-wx/>) (WAP) guidelines don't allow us to repair.

We have access to various funding streams to simultaneously address needed repairs or code deficiencies and execute weatherization efforts. To execute the rehab work, we utilize awards from DCED-administered programs, including the **HOME Program**

(<https://dced.pa.gov/programs/home/>), **Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP)**

(<https://dced.pa.gov/programs/neighborhood-assistance-program-nap/>), and **LIHEAP Crisis Program** (<http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/heatingassistanceliheap/>), as well as from a

Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) program, the **Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Fund (PHARE)**

(<https://www.phfa.org/legislation/act105.aspx>). Once repairs have been made, we can fully weatherize the home using funds from WAP. We've already completed several homes in this manner, and we're excited to continue the progress.

What is on the horizon?

We're participating in a pilot program created to provide additional financial assistance to homeowners who do not meet eligibility requirements for the Weatherization Assistance Program. We're one of only four agencies in the commonwealth selected to participate, and we're thrilled to have the opportunity to help low-income residents. You see, Schuylkill County has some of the oldest housing in the state. Additionally, lower-income and fixed-income elderly residents often do not have the finances needed to fix serious health and safety issues in their homes in a timely manner.

We're also excited to announce that MidPenn is opening a second office in Shenandoah, supported by CRLA. This is fantastic, because the expansion will bring legal services to the northern part of the county, allowing MidPenn to expand its reach and help more people in need.

What makes you proud to be a part of this community?

We're proud to be part of a community that is ever-evolving and growing. Although SCA has been in the community for more than 50 years and has a solid reputation, we can't help but smile when we receive thank-you notes from residents we've helped detailing how much the program has improved their lives.

It's also reassuring to know that we live in a state where leaders are committed to making Pennsylvania a great place to live and work, from the largest cities like Philadelphia to smaller communities like Girardville. DCED Deputy Secretary of Community Affairs **Rick Vilello took a tour** (<https://dced.pa.gov/newsroom/wolf-administration-tours-state-supported-blight-remediation-and-housing-access-projects-in-girardville/>) of blight remediation and housing access projects in Girardville this past July. Those projects were also state-supported through the HOME and Keystone Communities programs.

Residents in Schuylkill County are truly benefiting from the positive partnerships we've built. Without them, we wouldn't be able to provide affordable and safe housing to those who need it. Thanks to the state's investments in our community, we've seen a domino effect. It's given area residents an incentive to invest in the upkeep of their older homes. As a result, we have a more vibrant community — one that encourages business growth as well. We're proud to live here.

Visit the **Schuylkill Community Action website** (<https://schuylkillcommunityaction.com/>) and **Regional Housing Legal Services** (<http://www.rhls.org/>) to learn more about their work in the community. To learn more about the various programs that DCED has to offer, visit **the DCED website** (<https://dced.pa.gov/program/>). Continue to stay up-to-date on all Pennsylvania company news by following us on **Twitter** (<https://twitter.com/PADCEDnews>), **LinkedIn** (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/pennsylvania-department-of-community-&-economic-development?trk=biz-companies-cym>), and **Facebook** (<https://www.facebook.com/PADCED>) and by signing up for our **monthly e-newsletter** (<https://dced.pa.gov/newsletter/>).

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Theodore R. Dreisbach, a graduate of Penn State University, has served as Executive Director of Schuylkill Community Action (SCA) for the past thirty-three years. Prior to that, he served six years as the agency's Director of Planning. During his tenure as Executive Director, SCA has continually developed new partnerships and expanded financial resources to assist low-income residents of Schuylkill County work towards self-sufficiency.



David Young is the Director of Planning at SCA, where he began working as a Case Manager in 2010, and was promoted to Director of Planning in July 2016. In his current role, Dave is responsible for grant preparation, strategic planning, Annual Report preparation, and social media outreach efforts. Mr. Young has received Certification through the Association of Nationally Certified ROMA Trainers, allowing him to provide training to other Community Action Agencies.



Cindy Daley is the Director of Community Redevelopment Initiatives at Regional Housing Legal Services, a position she has held since May 2017. From 1986-2004, Cindy was a staff attorney at Regional Housing representing community organizations engaged in the development of affordable homes. In the interim, Cindy was the Policy Director at the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania.

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