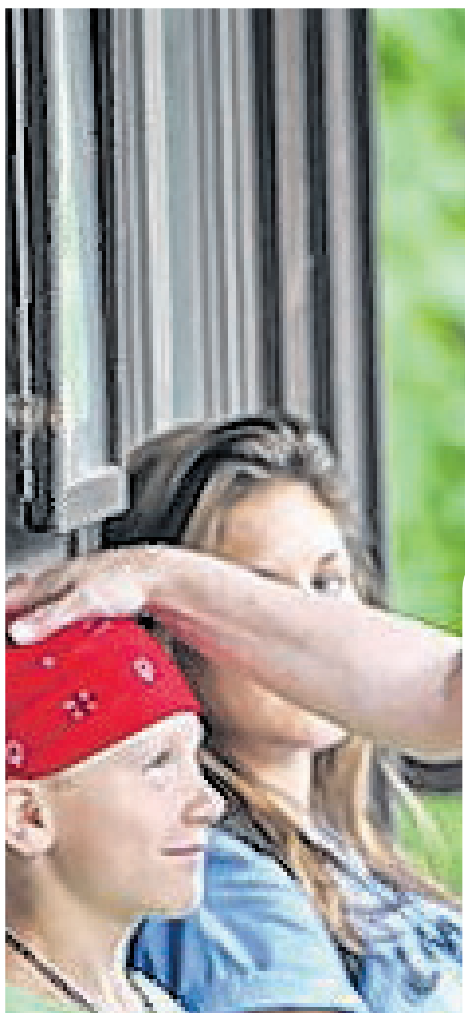


A Special Supplement to | 2019  
**TIMES LEADER**



We're a

# Valley Heart

with a

LEARN • SUPPORT • ENGAGE

*with local nonprofit organizations*



Highlighting:

Camp Koala

Commission on Economic Opportunity

Camp Orchard Hill

Circle Centre for the Arts

## Thanks for Giving

Charles M. Barber  
 President and CEO of The Luzerne Foundation

This season, many of us will be called upon to help make the holidays a little brighter for those who are less fortunate. As the cheerful time of giving and gratitude approaches, I've been reflecting on how grateful I am to be part of a generous community that works so diligently to take care of its citizens. By offering financial support to those in need, our area shows its strength and compassion. I'm truly grateful for the support of our donors, and I want to take a moment to thank and recognize those who have sought to support our foundation and the philanthropic work we do.

The financial gifts we've stewarded have helped fund everything from educational initiatives for children, to fighting hunger, to helping seniors, and caring for our environment. We've sought to support cultural, health and wellness, economic, social, and environmental causes which help our valley to thrive. Thanks to donors like you, The Luzerne Foundation has spent the past twenty-five years investing in meaningful causes that make our neighborhoods a more caring and collaborative environment.

When The Luzerne Foundation was first introduced in 1994, the founding members sought to develop an organization that would serve our community and be a trusted financial steward of regional well-being. Since that time, The Luzerne Foundation has been honored to bestow over 160 million dollars in grants to hundreds of deserving

nonprofit organizations. The dollars invested in The Foundation over these past 25 years helped make it possible to keep effectively doing our philanthropic work today.

The foresight required for philanthropic efforts in our locality is just as relevant today as it was twenty-five years ago. The Foundation's very first Fund was the Fund for Luzerne County. The primary purpose of this Fund is to meet our community's most immediate and pressing needs. As this Fund grows through public support, its grants and assistance will grow substantially. But we cannot do it alone. The Luzerne Foundation depends upon the generosity of local citizens like you to further our mission and invest in the region.

To us, philanthropy should be accessible to everyone, not just those who are particularly affluent. Our goal is to engage people from all walks of life to participate in the level of giving that feels appropriate to each individual.

Investing in your neighborhood is a meaningful way to ensure its continued growth. Whether you have just a few dollars to give, or are looking to make a larger gift, either to The Foundation or the specific charity of your choice, we're sincerely grateful for each and every contribution to help our community improve and grow. Together, we know we can make a significant impact with your support.

As you celebrate Thanksgiving and the holiday season, we encour-



age you to keep in mind the valuable contributions that have been made in the past to support our community, and to please recognize how you can continue that legacy today and for generations to come. While you consider how you can make your own unique contribution, The Luzerne Foundation invites you to weigh the lasting impact your generosity can have on our region when you choose to support a local charity or a foundation like ours. This type of giving ensures that your dollars can help make a difference at home both now and in the future.

Most sincerely, Thanks for giving, and thank you to all those who continue to believe in our mission and in our community. That most clearly is why, we are... *Here for Good.*

### A Note from our Publisher

Mike Murray  
 Publisher, Times Leader  
 Media Group

As we give thanks this season, remember those less



fortunate. This time of year as we get lost in the shopping, family gatherings, presents and the like, please keep in mind those who can't participate, who can't afford, who can't experience the joy of the season. They might be a neighbor, a friend, a colleague or a random individual. It doesn't matter who suffers, it only matters that they do.

Remember too, our non-profit organizations and their volunteers who take the time out of their holiday season to help those in need. They work tirelessly to make things just a little better for so many people in the region. But it's up to all of us to help them help others. No donation, whether of money or time is too small or too little. Our non-profit organizations can only succeed if we all pitch in.

Check out today's section on some of those special organizations. Check out the calendar of what's coming up with dates and times. Thank you for reading and thank you in advance for any help you might provide. Have a very safe and joyous holiday season.

## Nonprofit Spotlight — Camp Koala for Grieving Children



Death is a natural and inevitable part of life; we all have to experience the passing of loved ones at some point in our lives and endure the grief that follows. Mourning is never easy, no matter what stage of life a person is in, but children experience grief entirely differently than adults, and may need additional, specialized assistance to help them through the mourning process. Eleven years ago, Lisa Street-Liebetrau set out to provide such assistance when she established Camp Koala: a space for children and teenagers to work through the complex emotions that come with experiencing a death.

Just like the kids and teens she helps at Camp Koala, Lisa also suffered a traumatic loss at a young age; on Mother's Day, 1989, Lisa lost her two younger sisters in a car accident. About 20 years later, Lisa had still never truly dealt with the tragedy, but the founding of Camp Koala—a living memorial for her sisters—changed that. "In a way, Camp Koala helped me start to heal, and that is what led me to want to help others," Lisa said. She continued, "It led me to be authentic about my own grief journey and finally start to deal with and process my loss."

One of the primary goals of Camp Koala is to help grieving children see that they are not alone in their experience. Companionship is a core facet of many of the activities that the camp provides, whether they are traditional camp pastimes like hiking or team sports, or more focused, grief-concerned activities including art and music therapy. "Our philosophy is companionship, being a friend, and listening without judgment. Many kids think they're the only one dealing with a loss. Coming to camp helps them see they're not alone," Lisa said.

Grieving is an entirely normal and healthy process, but it can become unhealthy if it is prolonged. If, after a long period of time, a person feels depressed or unable to function normally in the wake of a death, he or she should reach out for help. It is crucial to note that grief manifests differently in children. As Lisa stated, "Sometimes a child acting out at school or exhibiting risky behavior is simply expressing their grief: their frustrations and sadness about their situation." If you are a parent or guardian, keep an eye on your child's behavior in the aftermath of a loss; they may need help or guidance, but they might not know the best way to express that need.

Throughout the year, Camp Koala offers four grief camps and six grief support groups in hospitals and schools. Camps range from one to three days, and certain camps are offered specifically for children ages 7 to 12 or teenagers ages 13 to 18. Camp Koala has recently finished its 2019



**Lisa Street-Liebetrau**

Founder

**More Info:**

- 570-825-7563
- riverfrontparks.org

programs, but they will resume once more in the spring of 2020. For a full list of events in the coming year, or to donate to Camp Koala, visit their website at [campkoala.org](http://campkoala.org).

### Camp Koala Photos



## Nonprofit Spotlight — Commission on Economic Opportunity



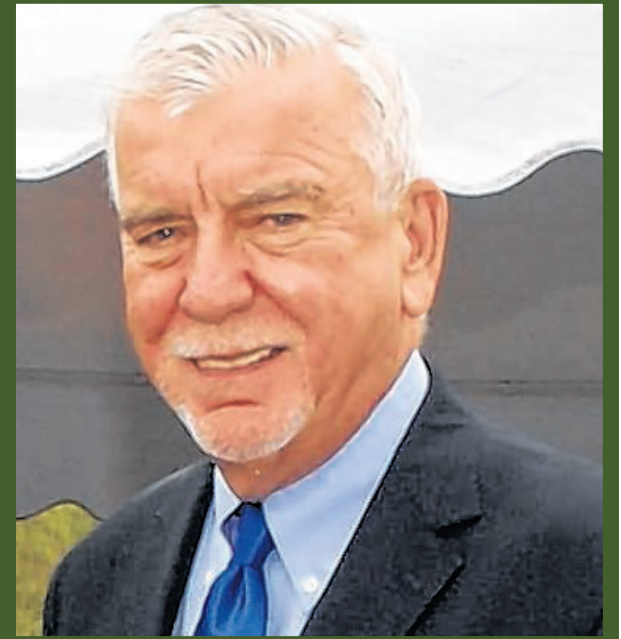
The mission is simple: "people helping people." These are the words which have guided everything the Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO) has done over the past 53 years. In 1966, CEO was incorporated as a community action agency with the goal of lessening the effects of poverty in the northeast Pennsylvania area. CEO offers a wide variety of services and programs, all focused on increasing self-sufficiency for low-income families, promoting policies that can assist these families or individuals, and accounting for the basic needs of children, adults, and senior citizens living in poverty.

CEO boasts a long and varied list of programs. Among them is its Center of Employment Opportunities, which assists welfare recipients in finding and retaining employment via helping participants prepare for the GED, fill out job applications, and send resumes. CEO also offers homelessness prevention services for individuals and families who are currently homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, or are fleeing their residence due to domestic violence. The organization's battle against homelessness also extends to its Veteran's Transitional Housing Program, which seeks to provide supportive services and transitional housing for homeless veterans who suffer from mental health and/or substance abuse issues.

Executive Director Gene Brady has dedicated himself to CEO for the past 39 years, and his message echoes the organization's "people helping people" mantra: "We cannot overstate the importance of people. We have so many people who give up their own time, and it's that tradition which enables all of this to happen." Indeed, while the organization employs more than 150 people, volunteers have historically played a massive part in the group's efficiency and success over the past half century.

As the year draws to a close and the weather grows colder, CEO will find itself helping many families with winter heating crises via its utility and heating assistance programs. Additionally, CEO will also see a rise in people taking advantage of the organization's income tax preparation services as the new year begins. CEO just recently wrapped up another successful Thanksgiving Project, having served thousands of families the Thanksgiving meal that everyone deserves, but the organization also works to help feed families year-round. As Gene stated, "Without generosity, without volunteers, we wouldn't be able to do any of this," so consider donating to or volunteering with CEO by visiting their website at [ceopeoplehelpingpeople.org](http://ceopeoplehelpingpeople.org), or [givefood.org](http://givefood.org) to provide a gift to the Weinberg Northeast Regional Food Bank.

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**Gene Brady**

Executive Director

**More Info:**

- 570-408-9874
- ceopeoplehelpingpeople.org

### Commission on Economic Opportunity Photos



## Nonprofit Spotlight — Camp Orchard Hill



The history of Camp Orchard Hill dates back to 1972, when it was purchased by the Evangelical Free Church of America. In the 47 years that followed, Camp Orchard Hill has become a non-denominational Christian camp, serving over 12,000 guests annually.

Executive Director Jim Payne's association with Camp Orchard Hill began in 1996, and he became the camp's executive director two years later in 1998. Reflecting on his history with Camp Orchard Hill, Jim commented, "Camp was a great place for

my wife Sarah and I to raise our two children, Grant and Madeline. We're now empty nesters but enjoy interacting with thousands of kids every year. It's been exciting to see camp grow and God has certainly blessed our ministry!"

Indeed, the camp done quite a bit of growing over the past few decades. In addition to the camp's summer day and overnight camps, Camp Orchard Hill also offers family camps, as well as men's and women's retreats. "We're more than what people typically think of as a traditional camp," Jim said. As part of its mission, Camp Orchard Hill also seeks to be actively responsive to community needs. For example, in the wake of a recent Dallas School District strike, the camp established a daily program that provided child care options for those who needed it. The camp has enjoyed a close relationship with several schools in the Wyoming Valley; Camp Orchard Hill offers students a summer camp experience through its scholarship program, and many camp staff members help at various after-school programs in the area.

As for upcoming events, Camp Orchard Hill is preparing to hold its 11th Christmas at Camp Event from December 16th to the 27th. Fitting with the camp's mission of meeting community needs, the event originated in the Christmas season of 2008, when the camp welcomed nearly 70 homeless men from Mother Teresa's Haven, an emergency shelter in Wilkes-Barre. For two weeks, Camp Orchard Hill provided these men with shelter, clothing, and food, including a banquet in their honor on Christmas Day. Since then, Christmas at Camp has become tradition, with hundreds of volunteers pitching in and donating each year. "Many of these men are in danger of losing all hope," Jim said. "Our goal is to show them that there is hope beyond their present situation and that God loves them, we love them, and we are here to help meet their needs."

Looking further ahead, the camp is already quickly selling out of spots for Winterblast 2020, weekend camp sessions of winter activities and worship, held from January to March. To learn more about upcoming events, to donate, or find out about volunteering opportunities, visit [camporchardhill.com](http://camporchardhill.com)



**Jim Payne**

Executive Director

### More Info:

- 570-333-4098
- [camporchardhill.com](http://camporchardhill.com)

### Camp Orchard Hill Photos



## Nonprofit Spotlight — Circle Centre for the Arts, Home of the Wyoming Valley Art League



For 65 years, the Circle Centre for the Arts has provided NEPA citizens with the opportunity to enjoy the exchange of culture right in their own backyard. Since 2011, the Art League has been located on South Franklin Street in Wilkes-Barre, but it originally began in 1954, when a group of artists aimed to improve the cultural standing of Wilkes-Barre and the surrounding area. Due to this initiative, the Circle Centre now stands as a beacon of artistic expression and advocacy in the Wyoming Valley.

Don Armstrong, president of the Art League, sees great importance in spreading the arts to any and all demographics in the area. "We're in our 65th year," Don said, "and we're very much committed to the arts and we really want to create a positive and vibrant impact in the community." This outreach and impact takes shape in the form of

the various programs and galleries held by the Art League on a regular basis. This past spring, for example, the Circle Centre held its spring juried art exhibit, showcasing nearly 100 different works, running concurrently with the Fine Arts Fiesta. The Centre strives to exhibit both local and out-of-town artists, and is proud to host monthly opening receptions for these exhibitions, twelve months a year.

The Circle Centre also seeks to encourage a camaraderie and sharing of knowledge amongst artists, and they offer an array of classes and workshops in their efforts to do so. Among these classes are twice-a-month "Life Drawing" classes, and coming soon in January of 2020 is a series of printmaking workshops. Other events, like Sundays at the Circle, skew more theatrical or musical in nature; an upcoming Sunday at the Circle event is the annual reading of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, featuring a collective of familiar Wyoming Valley faces like Tony Brooks and Erika Funke as readers.

The Circle Centre also prides itself on its community outreach endeavors; twice a month, the organization teaches art classes at Ruth's Place Women's Shelter. Don Armstrong and Coordinator Robert Husty also noted that the Centre has a close relationship with K-12 schools all around the valley. Don noted, "We offer gallery tours to quite a few schools. Art programs are kind of being pushed to the side in public schools, but we're trying to let the children know they have an outlet for art at the Circle Centre."

To learn more about the Art League, find out about upcoming events, and make donations, visit their website at [wyomingvalleyartleague.org](http://wyomingvalleyartleague.org). You can also visit the Circle Centre in person on Tuesdays through Thursdays from 12 to 4 p.m., and during their 3rd Friday Art Walks on every third Friday of each month.

### Circle Centre for the Arts Photos



**Don Armstrong**

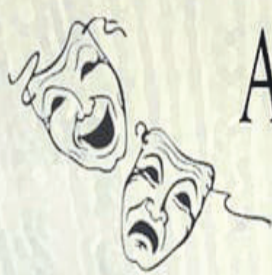
President

### More Info:

- 570-288-1020
- [wyomingvalleyartleague.org](http://wyomingvalleyartleague.org)



# SUNDAY at the Circle



A Celebration of the  
Performing Arts



Wyoming Valley Art League/Sunday at the Circle Presents

The 5th ANNUAL READING of Charles Dickens'

## A Christmas Carol

This year's readers include:

TONY BROOKS  
ERIKA FUNKE  
ANNE RODELLA  
LARRY VOJTKO

& Others

Ghostly music by

JASON SMELTZER on theremin

Holiday favorites by

BRENDA NIGHBERT on piano

December 1, 2019 at 3pm

Note new start time!

free & open to the public • food & drink • suggested donation of \$5 is appreciated



wyomingvalleyartleague@gmail.com  
wyomingvalleyartleague.org  
phone: 570.288.1020

Rear 130 S. Franklin St. Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701  
Access from S. Main St. Behind Bell Furniture  
Building is not presently handicap accessible