



North Light Community Center 2014-2015

North Light Community Center is a place where children learn and play in a safe and nurturing environment, teens learn life and entrepreneurial skills to realize their full potential, and parents seek counsel and civic engagement. In 1936, a principal and police captain founded NL as North Light Boys' Club. In the 1940s, NL expanded to include girls and social supports. Today, NL is a member of the Federation of Neighborhood Centers. Programs include a state-licensed childcare facility with year-round school-age programs, arts and recreation, emergency supports, on-site tutoring, youth leadership training and workforce development, parenting education and access to technology. Programs nourish personal empowerment, help reduce high-risk behaviors and positively impact youth, strengthen families and enrich our community. Driven by a compassionate Board of Directors, dedicated staff, and a talented pool of more than 650 volunteers offering 10,000 hours of service annually, North Light is an essential community hub.



NL's contributions are widely recognized. NL was named a 2011 Philabundance (the region's largest hunger relief organization) Favored Food Cupboard, which places us in the top 12% of best practices household provisioning programs in the area. In 2004, NL was one of four groups honored for outstanding arts programming for youth in the City of Philadelphia's "Year of the Child" celebration. In 1998, The Philadelphia Foundation selected NL as a finalist in the Williams Award for Organizational Excellence. In 1997, NL received a national award from Apple Computer and the Community Technology Centers Network for increasing neighborhood access to technology. NL received the Keystone Award of Excellence as the Governor of Pennsylvania Community Group of the Year in 1986.

Population Served

North Light's overall constituency consists of a multi-ethnic mix of low-income and working class families, their children and senior citizens; 91% of direct service clients served in FY15 were economically disadvantaged (incomes below 250% of federal poverty guideline) including 71% who fall below 100%. Our Childhood Education and Enrichment Development program (CEED), which includes KidZone and summer camp, serves at-risk youth (pre-K-6th grade) in need of out-of-school time activities. Seventy-one percent of children served in 2014-2015 fell below Federal Poverty Income Guidelines. Thirty-six percent of children served in 2014-2015 come from single parent households. North Light prides itself on never turning anyone away due to an inability to pay. With funding for state childcare subsidies getting smaller and smaller each year, North Light offers a sliding pay scale to families who need childcare services but are unable to pay our full tuition. Last year, only 22% of the program fee income for CEED came from families paying full tuition for KidZone or summer camp.

On September 30, 2014, two hundred volunteers converged on North Light with one mission: to build a brand new playground. Members of the community, local contractors, students, business owners, and generous donors came together to create a beautiful, sustainable, colorful space that gives the children in our neighborhood a place to play, imagine, and just be. NL was fortunate to receive a grant from KaBOOM!, a national non-profit that connects corporations looking to build playgrounds in urban spaces with schools and community centers in need. The resulting outdoor play space has not only provided a vibrant place for the kids in our programs, but also has become a visible marketing tool for welcoming new families into NL. We additionally engaged the Community Design Collaborative to create a design plan that integrates all sections of our outdoor space (playground, swings, outdoor classroom, container gardens, spray park, and various seating) into a visually cohesive area and create additional elements for watershed education, most specifically rain gardens. We are developing a capital campaign to support the next phase of this project.

Programs and Services

In fiscal year 2014-15, ninety-one percent of our direct service clients were economically disadvantaged (incomes below 250% of federal poverty guidelines). Seventy-one percent fell below 100% of federal poverty guidelines. The **Childcare Education and Enrichment Development program** provided care for about 90 at-risk school-age children (pre-K–6th grade) in our KidZone after-school and summer camp programs. Seventy-one percent of the children served fell below poverty level. In a survey, seventy-one percent of parents/guardians responded there is no supervision for their children after-school, and only eight percent knew of another affordable, community-based option should North Light cease to exist. This past summer our camp theme was “Water, Water Everywhere,” utilized a curriculum developed by the Green Schools, Clean Waters Initiative of the Philadelphia Water Department, and was in partnership with Destination Schuylkill River. Campers visited the Fairmount Water Works, John Heinz Refuge Center, Independence Seaport Museum, Philadelphia’s Water Treatment Processing Center, Venice Island’s underground storage basin, and the Adventure Aquarium in Camden, NJ. NL contracted with two specialists to provide lessons in the areas of Music and Dance. Each specialist worked with all three age groups of campers and conducted lessons, which enhanced the summer camp experience. In addition to the specialists, Literacy, Cooking, Science, Computer time and Fitness were implemented by group leaders once weekly with each group. After camp ended, one parent stated, “I cannot put into words how much I appreciate NL and everyone there.”

Teens 4 Good, an urban farm program, entered its seventh year in the fall. In 2014, Teens 4 Good launched a CSA (community-supported agriculture), giving the program a boost of funds to supplement the season’s operational costs. The CSA also created an opportunity to engage customers more directly with the growing process by providing access to volunteer work days at the farm, and with NL through weekly pick-ups at our facility. The **Urban Sustainability Leadership Academy** helps in-school youth build core 21st Century Skills including post-secondary enrollment and retention and proficiency in workplace competencies. In FY15, 49 students total participated in USLA through internships, college and career readiness workshops, college visits, and leadership development initiatives. The program is centered on six modules: Urban Sustainability, Post-Secondary Preparation, Work Readiness, Social Entrepreneurship, Leadership, and Business Development. During their 12th grade school year students are



introduced to the aspect of work readiness, what it means, how to be work ready, and began working on resume building and interview skills. Students are given the opportunity to participate in a paid internship opportunity that relates to their career interest. NL partners with Roxborough High School, Saul Agricultural High School, and Lankenau High School.

Our longest running teen program, **SCEP (Summer Career Exploration Program)**, continued to place area teens at summer internships in our community and city-wide. Overall, 35 youth were placed at 27 different worksites. Our staff maintains an open door policy, critical to developing relationships with students, and often act as much as counselors as college and career coaches. In a recent follow-up survey with SCEP alumni from 2003-2013, the following positive long-term outcomes were reported:

- 99% graduated high school
- 95% of the high school graduates attended college or graduated college
- 91% are currently or have recently worked part- or full-time employer paid jobs
- 91% said SCEP WorkReady influenced or aided them in going to college
- 67% said that SCEP WorkReady helped them improve their academic performance (24% stated that their academic performance was already good)
- 35% stated that their school attendance improved (45% stated that their attendance was already

NL partners with the Initiative for **Women in Medicine (WIM)** to offer specialized programming for adolescent girls. WIM is an all-female student group at Drexel University College of Medicine that seeks to work with adolescent girls who are interested in entering healthcare or learning more about the field. The mentorship program provides participants with guidance and advice from current medical students, along activities to introduce them to healthcare in fun, exciting ways. We have also partnered with a Drexel computing and informatics professor to launch the **Rainbow Computer Club** this past fall, aimed at getting middle school-aged girls interested in technology through e-textile projects. Using conductive thread, they created a cloth bookmark with a circuit that lights up when a switch is pressed. For Valentine's Day they created paper cards that light up in response to the receiver's action. They learned how to use a light sensor, so that they could turn a light on in response to the stimuli. One girl used this to create a book bag with a light that turned on so you could see the bottom when the bag was open (and detected the light). The program has been renewed for the upcoming school year.

NL's Emergency Services Program helped approximately 1,500 people in 2014-2015, all of whom live, work, worship or attend school in our communities, and including 95 new households. **Friends in Supplying Help Community Food Cupboard (FISH)** gave out nearly

120,000 pounds of food, household products, and vouchers valued at \$221,271.80 to nearly 1,000 food insecure neighbors, a 36 percent increase over last year. Through NL's Holiday Assistance Program (HAP), nearly 1,300lbs of food were distributed to families in need, almost 700 meals delivered to homebound elderly and over 80 holiday meals served to families at the annual NL Holiday party. We were able to add meat and frozen foods to our offerings through the SHARE program, which is the lead agency for Philadelphia County for the State Food Purchase Program and The Emergency Food Assistance Program. NL employs the innovative Choice Pantry Model, empowering our clients to choose the foods that best work for their families instead of handing them pre-packaged shares.

Assistance is available to all persons who live, work, attend school or worship in our community. 2010 US Census data indicates that over 52,000 people live in NL's immediate service area. As the only multi-service community center in our area, NL has for decades been known as the go-to place for needy people in our neighborhoods. In addition to serving community members and families that participate in NL's youth programs, the Emergency Services Program reaches a wider population through our work



with other area service institutions. We receive referrals from faith-based organizations, senior and children's behavioral health programs, and a half dozen local schools, etc. In the upcoming year, NL seeks to continue reducing community hunger through our food cupboard, FISH, by providing over 100,000lbs of food to over 1,500 people and increasing nutritious eating by procuring a minimum of 50,000lbs of fresh food, including produce, baked goods, and dairy products.

NL also offers short-term **case management** to our FISH clients and others additional assistance via a case management intern (MSW candidate) from Widener University twice weekly. A more in-depth intake questionnaire for clients was created covering a host of need-based services including: medical, legal, education, employment, utilities, cash, housing and childcare services. Clients who complete the questionnaire are contacted to schedule an in-person qualitative assessment. During the assessment, the case worker learns details about the types of services needed and records the session on a Qualitative Written Assessment form. Based on assessments, the case manager, who is supervised by a long-term practitioner and a Widener University professor, researches and locates resources and referrals for clients. A primary source utilized is the Benefits Bank, an online database that obtains applications for medical assistance, LIHEAP, SNAP, etc. This database is a clearinghouse and enables an easier tracking system for client applications for various types of assistance. Profiles are created for each client who, are also counseled through the entire application process. A great deal of effort is put into following-up with each client to assure they are continuing the necessary steps to complete their eligibility for assistance. Resources that are not included in the Benefits Bank are researched and referrals provided. Additional follow-up is conducted to determine outcomes.

A mainstay in the community since 1936, North Light Community Center is critical to ensuring that families in Lower Northwest Philadelphia find the support and services they need to thrive.