Thriving on Third Street

Third Street Alliance for Women & Children inspires and equips women, children, and families to live, learn, and thrive.

- Expanding the Learning Center will help more families in our community
- Learn how landlord relationships are helpful for our clients
- How your contributions help Third Street Alliance continue to grow

Pool to School

Third Street Moves Forward with Learning Center Expansion

After sitting unused since 2012, the pool space at Third Street Alliance will be undergoing work to become additional classroom space, expanding The Learning Center program.

The project is tentatively scheduled to begin in January and will be completed by August 2022, just in time for the 2022-2023 school year.

The adaptive reuse project will provide 47 additional early learning student spaces for lower-income families and create seven full-time, living-wage, teaching jobs, helping Third Street Alliance to serve more families in the Easton and Lehigh Valley area.

Finding a new use for the pool has been a goal of Executive Director Alisa Baratta. The pool was decommissioned in 2012, as it needed more than $1 million in upgrades and maintenance at that time.

“For over 50 years Third Street Alliance’s aquatic program taught generations of Easton children to swim, providing a venue for countless hours of enrichment and fun. In 2012 due to mounting costs associated with keeping the aging system running and ADA compliant the pool was finally decommissioned,” said Executive Director Alisa Baratta. “We are happy that this space can now be repurposed in a way that allows us to continue to educate and enrich the lives of children in our community.”

The adaptive reuse project will cost about $2 million to complete and will involve filling in the pool and turning the space into three classrooms that will be used for our early learning program, as well as reinforcing the roof to the already existing structure. This will allow for any future additions above the space, such as a playground or shelter space. The work will also include three new bathrooms, two offices, storage space and installation of an ADA lift into the space. The project will be funded through a variety of sources, including financing, public funding, grants and private fundraising.

Windows will also be added to meet childcare center standards, as well as painting and furnishing the completed space. The agency hired Boyle Construction Company and Alloy5 Architects for the expansion.

The project adds to the existing nine early learning classrooms, S.T.E.A.M. lab, library and resource room, commercial kitchen, gymnasium and sensory room. The conversion will allow Third Street Alliance to continue its strategic goal of expanding early learning opportunities for families in the Easton area and providing more people with living-wage jobs.

www.thirdstreetalliance.org
A Note From the Executive Director’s Desk

Expanding a Community Asset on Third Street

I’m writing this note to you all on a Thursday afternoon in October. I have my windows open for a nice breeze and can hear the sounds of the children on our playground. Lots of little voices, but two voices really stand out. They are pretending to be dinosaurs — growling and roaring. It’s a wonderful thing — to be able to see and hear these children as they learn and play.

Right behind our playground is the old YWCA swimming pool, taking up space, and no longer contributing to the quality of life in Easton. So, it is time to turn this space into a functioning community asset — new early learning classrooms.

We know that too many families lack access to affordable early learning classrooms, and because of that too many children lack exposure to the experiences necessary for kindergarten readiness. We are looking forward to offering new early learning opportunities to more families in the area.

How You Fuel Growth at Third Street

As you can see from the contents of this newsletter, Third Street continues to evolve to meet the needs of our at-risk community. With this expansion to our programs and delivery comes a need for significant agency growth.

The ability to make modifications quickly and with efficiency depends greatly on the strength of our current operating budget. Simply said, without the finances to support new and expanded programming, getting our clients services they need when they need them would be extremely challenging.

The TSA operational budget for 2021 is $2.5M. The reality for all nonprofit organizations is that there is a considerable gap (deficit) between public funding and program revenue and what the agency needs to balance our budget.

Annually at Third Street, this gap is between 25-30% of our budget, or approximately $550,000. To bridge this gap, we rely on securing private funding — individual, foundation, corporate, and legacy donations.

Each time you make a gift to one of our fundraising appeals like our online Spring Appeal, #GivingTuesday, Bistro, Good Neighbors monthly donor program, and Year End Appeal you are making a commitment to ensuring that our work can continue.

We are grateful for your financial support and that you have chosen to join us in our mission to inspire and equip women, children, and families to live, learn, and thrive.
TLC Looks Toward Expansion

The renovation of the pool area will expand The Learning Center by 30 percent, providing the opportunity for us to reach more students and families in our community, while providing additional teaching jobs in an industry that was devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The expansion to The Learning Center will provide 47 additional spots for early learning classrooms at Third Street Alliance, increasing the capacity to reach more students for high-quality early childhood education, as well as provide resources that are important for a child’s development and family success. Currently our early learning program can serve upwards of 160 children.

Start Strong PA, an initiative of Early Learning PA, conducted a survey of child care centers throughout Pennsylvania and found that more than 850 providers closed permanently between March 2020 and August 2021. Currently, more than 26,000 children sit on waiting lists for child care. If these families cannot find a spot for their children, parents are often forced to stay out of the workforce which creates financial instability for most.

The Learning Center provides the opportunity to level the playing field for many families who would not otherwise be able to afford quality, early learning experiences. The center provides these opportunities for children 6-weeks old through grade 6, and includes the Infant-Toddler Contracted Slots and Pre-K Counts programs, which are income-qualified programs.

“It is important for all children to have quality learning experiences prior to kindergarten," said Nancy Frederick, Director of The Learning Center. “The experiences that our students have in our classrooms and in the community help them develop as an individual, as well as building their character and social skills.”

According to researchers, 90 percent of brain growth happens before kindergarten and is nearly full-grown by age 5. During that time in a child’s life, early experiences affect the development of the brain, providing the foundation for future learning, behavior, and health, according to the Center on The Developing Child at Harvard University.

“Students coming from our program at The Learning Center are well prepared for kindergarten, as well as for their education career,” Nancy said.

Students learn important social skills critical for school, in addition to early literacy skills, mathematical concepts and scientific exploration. They also learn about their neighborhood, the community and people surrounding them.

“The students in The Learning Center are encouraged to share their talents, teaching each other and their teachers,” Nancy said.

“Our families and students develop meaningful friendships that often last outside of Third Street and beyond,” Nancy said. “When a child is enrolled in our program, they become a part of our close-knit family that learns together, plays together and thrives together.”
Landlord Engagement Aids in Housing Searches for Clients

Preventing homelessness happens on a myriad of levels. Third Street is expanding our efforts to identify affordable housing for our clients by creating partnerships with landlords in our community.

Chris Hess, Rapid Re-Housing Coordinator at Third Street Alliance, is tasked with engaging landlords to work with the agency to help clients move into housing through the Rapid Re-Housing program.

The program pays for a client’s rent for the first three to six months, or a portion of the rent, on a sliding scale. Eventually, the tenant is responsible for the entire payment. The program is federally funded through the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Many times, Chris’s first conversation with landlords includes telling them about Rapid Re-Housing and its benefits for both the landlord and the tenant.

Landlord Steve Guenther said he didn’t know about the program until his tenant, Amy, had seen his apartment listing about six months ago. Amy had been at Third Street Alliance for eight months, going to school and working part-time. After graduating from Northampton Community College, she got a full-time job and was able to move out on her own.

Steve became familiar with Third Street Alliance and the Rapid Re-Housing Program through Chris. After Chris explained how the program worked, Steve decided to sign Amy and her young son into his apartment.

“Once trust is established, it is easier to market clients to landlords that may have a background that the landlord would otherwise pass by,” Chris said. “With a solid, positive working relationship in place, our agency is looked upon favorably and trust allows for easy and open communication.”

From the landlord side, Steve said it’s important for non-profits like Third Street Alliance to communicate with landlords so they become more familiar with the programs that are offered to clients, which helps build trust with other landlords. It also helps landlords to fill vacancies they may have in their units.

“Engaging with landlords provides me with an opportunity to develop a positive, professional relationship with them,” Chris said. “It allows me to talk to them about Rapid Re-Housing and to provide a solid foundation in which to help our clients to move forward.”

Third Street Alliance and New Bethany Ministries in Bethlehem are welcoming participation from area landlords through an event called Coffee and Conversation. The time is set aside for property owners to learn more about the different programs our clients may use when finding housing and provides an opportunity for landlords to ask questions about other programs and get feedback on issues they may be experiencing.

If you’re a landlord and would be interested in learning more about Rapid Re-Housing, you can contact Chris Hess at 610-438-9438 or by email at CHess@thirdstreetalliance.org.
Moving Forward From the Eviction Moratorium

When the National Eviction Moratorium ended on July 31, the staff in the homeless services department braced for what would come next.

At Third Street Alliance, what came next was a flurry of applications for Emergency Rental Assistance, and an influx of new families in the shelter. Between Aug. 4 and Sept. 15, more than 90 families and individuals applied for more than $500,000 of assistance through Third Street Alliance. In that same time, more than $400,000 was paid to landlords.

While some states and areas have been slow in disbursing their Emergency Rental Assistance Program monies, Third Street Alliance has been processing each request as quickly as possible. As long as all the information is submitted together, a landlord can receive the check within 14 to 30 days.

Pennsylvania received about $569 million in federal money for rental assistance, according to the commonwealth’s Department of Human Services. Northampton County received a little more than $9 million and has processed more than 70 percent of these funds.

Third Street Alliance has distributed almost $3 million, serving more than 600 families across the county, since January. Some tenant/landlords can receive up to 18 months of back-rent. New Bethany Ministries, ProJeCt of Easton and the Easton Area Neighborhood Center are also distributing money in the county.

For those who find themselves homeless or at risk of homelessness call 211 to go through the Coordinated Entry process.

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Be A Good Neighbor!

A small monthly donation makes a large impact.

You can make a difference for as little as $10, or more, a month.

Set up easy automatic payments through our website. Go to www.thirdstreetalliance.org/donate
Save the Date for #GivingTuesday on Nov. 30!

Support Third Street Alliance during this International Day of Giving!

Look for more details about this year’s #GivingTuesday at Third Street on our social media channels and in your inbox!