



Community Connections - connect in your community

Via's Community Connections facilitates relationships between individuals and the communities in which they live. Via connects people to their community through volunteer, recreational, social and educational activities. Via's supported living program helps adults live independently in their community and form the bonds and relationships of a neighborhood.

Via's Community Connections provides...

- Individualized volunteer opportunities at more than 20 local organizations.
- Life skills development for students transitioning from high school to adult life.
- Recreational activities tailored to individual preferences.
- Opportunities to participate in continuing education and enrichment courses.
- Independent living opportunities through supported living in the community.

Community Mentoring



Adults want to be valuable, active, and productive members of their community. Via helps individuals discover preferences and choose recreational and volunteer activities in their community to

participate in as independently as possible. These experiences help people develop interpersonal relationships and explore vocational options. In addition to life skills, Via staff coaches people individually or in small groups on communication skills, socialization, vocational skills, public transportation, volunteerism and recreation.

Via staff assists adults in developing volunteer opportunities at local organizations based on their personal interests. Once an opportunity is developed, Via staff helps each person learn volunteer responsibilities, develop friendships with other volunteers, and gain valuable vocational skills. Via helps students transitioning from high school by focusing on life skills development

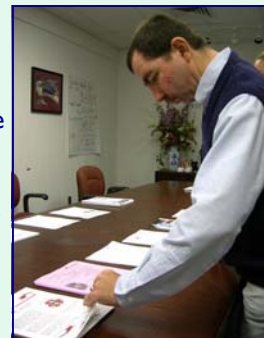


and pre-vocational opportunities. Via also assists individuals attend community college and take enrichment and continuing education classes.

Via works with individuals to tailor recreational activities to personal preferences. Recreation may include cultural events, art classes, and various community and social activities.

Community Connections volunteer sites include:

- Lehigh Valley Hospital
- The Crayola Factory
- Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Lehigh Valley Arts Council
- Salvation Army
- Meals on Wheels
- Valley Youth House
- Turning Point
- Project of Easton
- Sixth Street Shelter
- Phoebe Home
- Boys & Girls Club of Allentown
- Bethlehem YMCA
- Allentown YMCA/YWCA



Supported Living

People want the freedom to choose where they live, and feel happy, safe and in control of their lives. Via's Supported Living program helps individuals live independently in their own accessible apartment or home. A planning process helps individuals explore where they want to live and if they want to live with a friend or on their own.

A Via team provides guidance and support to access resources and locate funds and grants to subsidize costs. Via staff provide support to people throughout the process and provide coaching and guidance once a living option is selected.



Retirement Services

People are living longer, healthier lives. They can expect to spend more time in retirement than ever before and staying involved with family, friends and neighbors is an important part of retirement. Via helps people who are over or nearing age 55, transition to retirement to maintain skills, participate in leisure and volunteer activities, and stay active. This process involves discussion of what retirement means and helping them connect with activities in community settings.

Whether individuals reside with family, in a residential program or an adult living center, Via helps older adults choose activities to



meet their needs and interests. Activities occur in the community and at senior centers, and focus on maintaining skills, giving back to the community, and staying active.

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Taren – The Crayola Factory



As a volunteer at the Crayola Factory in Easton, Taren works with hundreds of children every day. Taren's shy and quiet demeanor disappears once she puts on her volunteer smock and starts handing out craft projects to the children. This wasn't always the case. When Taren started volunteering, she was shy and rarely talked to anyone other than her Via Community Coach. But over the past two years, Taren's sense of independence has grown and so has her confidence.

Now she readily initiates conversations with other volunteers and interacts with staff, her volunteer director and the children and families at the Crayola Factory. She often tells her friends and family about her volunteer work and how much she likes volunteering. And the staff at Crayola has taken notice. Taren is often asked to help on side projects that aren't a part of her normal responsibilities and is asked to cover breaks for other volunteers.



Taren was recently recognized with The Crayola Factory 2007 Spirit of Volunteerism Award. Because of her dedication, style and grace, the Crayola Factory considers Taren an asset to their volunteer team. Taren's sense of independence has grown and so has her confidence. She is a valuable member of her team, giving of her time to support the community and working with hundreds of children every day.

Alan – Chamber of Commerce, Meals on Wheels, Boys & Girls Club



When Alan started working with Community Connections, he wasn't interested in trying anything new. He was focused on his routine and didn't want to do anything to alter his daily activities. He often refused to go to volunteer sites and wouldn't talk with his peers or other volunteers.

Fast forward to today and you can catch Alan at any number of community sites volunteering with his friends. Instead of declining volunteer opportunities, Alan requests certain sites that involve activities he enjoys most like clerical work and any site that involves working around other people.

Alan is part of a team and initiates conversation with friends and other volunteers – he's no longer satisfied to be on the side lines. His sense of

humor has flourished and he's always ready to joke around with his friends and other volunteers with one of his one-liners.



One of Alan's volunteer sites, Meals on Wheels, involves interaction with other community members on a consistent basis and Alan jokes with the customers at every stop. Alan continues to develop communication and other life skills needed for independent living and through Community Connections has developed bonds and relationships within his community.

Via of the Lehigh Valley is a non-profit agency that provides services for children and adults with developmental disabilities like cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism and intellectual disability. Via's mission is to provide leadership, support, opportunities and resources for people with disabilities so they may be independent, productive and enjoy full lives within the community.

The official registration and financial information of Via of the Lehigh Valley, Inc. may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1 (800) 732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.



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