

COAL COUNTRY HANGOUT YOUTH CENTER

Coal Country Hangout Youth Center (CCHYC) celebrated the 20th anniversary of its founding on Saturday, March 19 from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. The celebration featured a spaghetti dinner sponsored by the neighboring City Hotel, and a program featuring past and present accomplishments at the center. Pastor Marty Cartmell (St. Paul Presbyterian Church and Saint Benedict Presbyterian Church) and Deacon Ann Staples (Saint Thomas Episcopal Church) co-founded CCHYC in 1996 in partnership with the Northern Laurel Highlands Ministerium. CCHYC had several locations prior to the purchase of the former St. Edwards RC Parish in 2001.

Beginning in 2002, CCHYC inaugurated its three-part program: Daycare/preschool, Teen Center, and Experiential Education Curriculum entitled "Cambria-Re-Coal-Lections. In March 2016, CCDaycare/Preschool was designated a STARS II facility by the Quality Improvement Rating System set up by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Since that time, CCDaycare has focused its attention on the creation of an early learning STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) Center for its preschool, introducing students to the beginning concepts aligned by the Pennsylvania Department of Education early learning standards. They are the focus of the full-day preschool recently established. CCHYC is an agency member of the United Way of Laurel Highlands and a Jubilee Ministry of the Episcopal Church.

In 2015, CCHYC, in partnership with the Northern Cambria Community Development Corporation, secured grant funding dedicated to the expansion of community and economic development for the Northern Cambria region. As a result, a steering community headed by Deacon Ann Staples, Executive Director of CCHYC and Board President of NCCDC, was formed to begin the process of revitalization. The committee unanimously agreed to hold an event that would bring the entire region together to celebrate its heritage. The resulting Heritage Day, held on Saturday, July 9, was a grand success.

CCHYC sponsored a 5K *Kare for Kids* walk/run to kick-start the day, while the rest of the day hosted local history/artifacts displays, posters and essay contest applicant entries. St. Thomas contributed its used book sales in a booth on the main street. It is hoped that continued development of the Heritage Day will direct attention to our magnificent region for the entire central-western parts of Pennsylvania.

St. Thomas and CCHYC have delighted in the presence of Julie Smith, who is exploring ordination to the priesthood. She is serving an extended internship with both institutions having recently been elected to the CCHYC Board Directors.

Deacon Ann Staples, Executive Director
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