



## A new home for all our neighbors: SHIM Family Center moves to Wallace School Building

Eleven years ago, a unique need was evolving. Pittsburgh, and particularly the South Hills, was beginning to open its doors to an increasing number of refugees – many of whom lived in refugee camps in unimaginable conditions for more than a decade. Resettled in Whitehall's Prospect Park

friends and grew into high school graduates, three-year-olds learned how to read, and so on. But we were quickly growing still, and the separate apartments at Prospect Park were very cramped and did not offer any space for staff, groups or community members to gather.

The new space allows SHIM to host more activities for our Youth Mentoring program; we're able to reach more neighbors who need help finding resources; and our families have more privacy for therapy sessions and conversations. Our Early Childhood Program will transition to the new



In order for SHIM to continue moving forward and helping more neighbors, we decided to find a new, larger home just down the road in the Wallace School Building in Baldwin. Hundreds of families, students and neighbors have walked through our doors for services since the move to our new space this March, and we're so glad to help.



community, these families who made immense sacrifices needed support to adjust to a completely new way of life.

That's why SHIM opened the Prospect Park Family Center, with support from the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, in the heart of the Prospect Park community. It served as a place for families, neighbors and foreign-born friends to find assistance with paperwork, taxes, general inquiries and more.

It quickly grew into something so much more. What started in one tiny apartment, expanded into two floors of an apartment building. And what began as a place for general support, turned into a friendly community space where neighbors supported each other, women received counseling and guidance, kids met their best



"We opened the Family Center in the apartments at Prospect Park 11 years ago, and we've continued growing to meet the community's needs since then. The new building allows us to reach beyond the Prospect Park community and connect with even more of our foreign-born and native neighbors who might need our resources," said Courtney Macurak, director of programs at SHIM.

space this fall, where they'll have access to a larger classroom, a playground, and be in close proximity to Baldwin Library for potential learning activities.

"The new space allows us to welcome new and existing neighbors into a comfortable, convenient space," Courtney explained. "We're excited to continue growing in our new home."

And we're looking forward to sharing our new home with you. Contact the SHIM Family Center at 412-885-0284, ext. 350 if you'd like to come meet with staff, take a tour of the new space and learn more about what we do. To learn more about the services provided at SHIM's Family Center, visit [shimcares.org/self-sufficiency](http://shimcares.org/self-sufficiency).

Backpacks, binders and buddies:

# South Hills kids go back to school, thanks to you.

Tamara has everything she needs neatly tucked inside the pink backpack she chose because it matches her glasses. Evan is looking forward to starting fifth grade, new notebooks especially for his favorite subject, science, in hand. And Ellen is nervous about starting high school – “It’s so big!” – but being

Castle Shannon mom. “Going back to school is expensive, so this helps a lot. My neighbor is on a tight budget, so I brought her daughter with us,” she added as the eight-year-old beamed nearby.

More than 1,100 backpacks and thousands of dollars of supplies were

bookmarks after selecting their supplies. His daughter exclaimed that she was excited to start school, like her big brother and she hoped kindergarten would mean “lots of crayons!”

One woman, a nurse new to Pittsburgh since her employer relocated her and her two daughters, scanned the room at



prepared with pens and pencils, binders and books, puts the rising Bethel Park freshman at ease.

During two busy weeks in August, the South Hills community came together to support more than 1,100 children, from kindergarten through grade 12, with school supplies. Families across SHIM’s service area, from Baldwin to Upper St. Clair, were invited to participate with no prior connection with SHIM necessary.

“It’s a wonderful program,” explained a

distributed during three events, thanks to the generosity of many individual donors, groups that held school supply drives and local organizations like Centimark, which donated all of the backpacks. Dozens of volunteers, including employees from Erie Insurance, guided families through.

“Getting together with the community is good for all of us,” noted one grateful dad who stood by his two kids as they colored

the Bethel Park Community Center. “I’ve never seen anything like this,” she said. “What a great experience.”

“We meet lots of new families during these events,” explained Molly Patterson, SHIM’s senior operations coordinator. “And as a result, we’re able to offer services to help in other ways. It’s a really good start to the year.”



## From Lost to Found: Daniel’s Story

On a cold day in Pittsburgh’s South Hills, Daniel Pach happily strolls into SHIM’s offices dressed head-to-toe in Pittsburgh sports gear. He greets everyone with a smile and is quick to share his love for the South Hills and for supporting his neighbors.

Those who meet Daniel would have no idea what he’s been through, the struggles he’s faced, but as he sits



Daniel Pach

down to reveal a glimpse at deep, harsh scars lining his ankles and shins, it is clear this gentle, charismatic man has faced unimaginable trials.

Continue reading about Daniel’s story of resilience, determination and kindness as part of our refugee experience series, available at [shimcares.org/neighbors/daniels-story](http://shimcares.org/neighbors/daniels-story).

Supporting families through pantries and produce

# SHIM Volunteer Profile: Michael Schneider

Upper St. Clair

When Michael Schneider retired in 2012, he had extra time on his hands, so he began searching for ways he could contribute to his community. A long-time South Hills resident, he was familiar with SHIM and inspired to sign up to help out in the food pantry.

“There are people in need in the South Hills,” Michael said. “I’ve gotten to know some people that come to the pantry, and you really see how SHIM is doing so much.”

After a year of volunteering in SHIM’s Bethel Park food pantry, Michael noticed the organization needed some help in the gardens, so he signed up there, too. “I spent my whole career working indoors, so it’s great to use my hands, be outside, and help harvest vegetables for people in the community who need them.”

SHIM has 14 gardens where volunteers, like Michael, help grow tomatoes, peppers, lettuce, herbs and more



*Michael and Stephanie Schneider*

to provide food pantry clients with thousands of pounds of fresh, local, good food to feed their families.

“I think the gardens are great because it is good, healthy food. People really appreciate it and like getting the produce,” Michael reflected.

Michael sees the impact the gardens have on his neighbors first hand. “I get to see the food grow and then see people take it home with them. It’s nice to see the appreciation and the excitement from the families.”

Now, Michael’s wife volunteers in the food pantry with him every Thursday. Through their volunteerism at SHIM, they have made friends and developed new relationships. “We’re meeting people who have the same goals as us, and we’re doing good work at the same time,” Michael said.

To learn more about SHIM’s garden program, visit [shimcares.org/programs/family-community](http://shimcares.org/programs/family-community).

Hands-on volunteering inspires financial support

# SHIM Donor Profile: Gordon and Anne Mitchell

Mt. Lebanon

Sipping on coffee and reminiscing about the 10 years they’ve been involved with SHIM, Gordon and Anne Mitchell’s eyes glow with the warmth of cherished memories. Their devotion to SHIM is displayed in laughter, joy and the recounting of special moments and lessons learned, such as accompanying neighbors as they shop through the food pantries, building friendships with fellow volunteers and helping young students with their homework after school.

It began when members of their congregation, Bower Hill Community Presbyterian Church, invited them to a SHIM event. That night sparked a new interest in the couple to get involved.

And get involved, they did. They’ve volunteered in practically every area of SHIM’s mission – working in the food pantries, the after school program, picking up and organizing donations, helping pack and distribute school supplies, participating in interfaith celebrations and more.

“Once you start to volunteer and get to know and understand people, you realize they really need this help,” said Anne. “You realize what a good organization SHIM is, and it makes you want to give.”

Their hands-on experience with their neighbors in need, and seeing the gracious responses and impactful outcomes, inspired the couple to become regular financial donors, too.

“People think the South Hills are well off. It’s interesting to



*Gordon and Anne Mitchell*

know how many people really need help. And it’s growing,” Gordon remarked. “At SHIM, we’re seeing it first-hand. That’s why we give.”

Over the years, the couple has also been energized by the evolution of SHIM’s programming to meet the growing and changing needs of the South Hills.

“We like where SHIM is now,” Gordon stated. “SHIM has evolved, engaging more organizations and people in the community. They’ve had to grow and make changes to help an increasing variety of people. This has made us advocates for SHIM.”

Consequently, Gordon and Anne continue to be ardent supporters and dedicated SHIM volunteers and donors.

“I get more out of supporting SHIM than I think I give,” Anne reflected. “We are blessed and thankful for what we have and love to give back. It’s worth it.”





To learn more about how you can support SHIM, please contact Seth Dubin at [sdubin@shimcares.org](mailto:sdubin@shimcares.org) or 412-854-9120, ext 109.



**Fifty years of neighbors helping neighbors**

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-  Give – [shimcares.org/give](http://shimcares.org/give)



## Meet your neighbors at our new website.

Thousands of our South Hills neighbors struggle with hunger, poverty and making a better life for their families. At the same time, just as many step up to help. This is the power of South Hills Interfaith Movement. Check out our new website: [shimcares.org](http://shimcares.org)

## Make a difference.

SHIM's work relies on one thing. You. Your generous gifts power the work that helps our struggling neighbors across the South Hills.

Together, we served more than 4,000 people last year. But there's so much more we can do. Please join us to make the South Hills better than ever.

Donate now: [shimcares.org/donate](http://shimcares.org/donate)

## Join the movement.

South Hills neighbors make the best volunteers. And in the last year, volunteers served 20,200 hours – that's 842 days of non-stop volunteering by the South Hills community. But there's more work to be done. During the school year you can:

- Assist with our after school programs for students in grades K-5
- Be a Youth Mentor to middle and high school students in a group setting
- Be a Homework Helper to middle and high school students with math, English, science and history assignments

Want to do more? Check out all of the volunteer opportunities: [shimcares.org/volunteer](http://shimcares.org/volunteer)