

Bucks homeless groups receive grants

By Sarah Siock

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The W.W. Smith Charitable Trust awarded grant money to the Bucks County Opportunity Council and the Keystone Opportunity Center to support programs serving those in need in Bucks and Montgomery counties.

The BCOC received a \$40,000 grant and Keystone Opportunity Center received a \$10,000 grant.

The W.W. Smith Charitable Trust is a private foundation established by William Wikoff Smith in 1977. The trust awards grants to organizations within Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties.

The Keystone Opportunity Center and the BCOC are non-profit organizations that aim to reduce poverty locally.

"Our mission is to educate, encourage and empower community members in need to become self-sufficient," said Alan Raisman, manager of advancement at Keystone Opportunity Center, based in Souderton.

The grant money will be used to help expand Keystone's Homeless Diversion Program. This program helps families who are homeless return to self-sufficiency. The program is run by Keystone's community case manager and is essential in efforts to reduce homelessness in the area.

The organization offers other services that include permanent housing, rapid rehousing and affordable permanent housing.

"This grant from W.W. Smith Charitable Foundation means we can help prevent homelessness for many more people," said Arlene Daily,

executive director of Keystone Opportunity Center, in a press release.

The BCOC's mission is to reduce poverty and partner with the community to promote self-sufficiency. The organization currently operates five programs: a food program, emergency services, home energy program, volunteer income tax assistance and economic self-sufficiency.

The grant money will be going into the emergency services program to provide services for low-income families. The program provides housing, utility, and basic needs assistance to low-income people to increase education and employment in order to be free of all government subsidies.

"This grant means we can continue to assist families who need help," said Joe Cuozzo, director of development at



Linda Chaplin of the Keystone Opportunity Council meets with a client. Keystone received a \$10,000 grant from the W.W. Smith Charitable Trust to support its homeless prevention program. The trust also awarded the Bucks County Opportunity Council \$40,000 to support its programs.

[CONTRIBUTED]

BCOC.

Cuozzo further described the broad effects the grant will have, "This money will help prevent families from evictions and even help other families move into a home. It will help families begin to get stability."

Both the Keystone Opportunity Center and BCOC strive to help those in the community and donations like this help make their mission a reality.

"It is astounding how many local residents we help in this program," said Daily, "especially considering that it receives no government funding – it runs on donations from individuals, congregations and foundations."

Information about how to donate to the organizations and the services they offer can be found at bcoc.org and keystoneopportunity.org.