

# WAYNE TOMORROW!.COM

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**Wayne Tomorrow! A county-sponsored, community-based collaboration focused on the projects, resources and infrastructure needed to move Wayne County, its people, its culture and its economy into a vibrant future.**

## Top Stories . . .



Collaborations Expand as Wayne Tomorrow! Moves Forward

Community Foundation Launches Challenge to Support WT! Fund



**PARTNER PROFILE**  
Workforce Alliance Champions People, Passion in Development



PA Career Link® Aims to Transform Lives, Biz [\(hyperlink to story\)](#)

## Collaborations Expand as Wayne Tomorrow! Moves Forward



The Wayne County Emergency Food Relief Program (EFRP) owes its success to the collaborative power of Wayne Tomorrow! partnerships. These partnerships were born out of the long-term economic and community planning initiative. Facing challenges from COVID-19 strengthened relationships as people focused on meeting an immediate need.

Wayne County Food Pantry Program Coordinator Clarissa Wimmers has a keen view of how it all came together and, even more importantly, how those partnerships reverberate into additional opportunities to work together in and among county departments and within the broader community.

When Wayne County Commissioner Joe Adams sounded the alarm about the looming threat of food insecurity in the community following COVID-19 restrictions, the County turned to their in-house professionals at the Food Pantry Program and Human Services Agency. The commissioners summoned key Wayne Tomorrow! partners in the non-profit, public and private sectors.

Wimmers stood at the center of it all. "In nine working days we had a system for distributing food at five locations north, south and west," she said, "and on the 10th day we started distributing food." She said the program's senior volunteers provided technical assistance to duplicate the pantry model at the schools.

School districts were key in helping make it all possible. WT! Community Network Specialist Kim Rickard organized the volunteers from the schools to provide Wimmers with a cadre of volunteers she trained to help operate the sites and work through the COVID-era logistics of feeding hundreds of families each week.

The Wayne County Community Foundation, a local non-profit organization and key partner, provided a means for accepting online tax-deductible donations and to allow community members, local businesses and foundations an opportunity to support the program.

Wimmers said while food supply lines were crumbling, EFRP capitalized on the wholesale vendor relationships in the Area Agency on Aging Kitchen to supplement the available pantry supplies, and would also help to support other pantry efforts by The Cooperage Project and local churches.

The addition of fresh, local foods grew out of discussions that predated the pandemic. Wimmers had only recently assumed her role as Pantry coordinator, but knew that farms could play a role in the program.

"I think the entire year has been an evolution of relationships," Wimmers said, in particular with the agriculture community through another key partner Jane Bollinger, who served as a critical community liaison with farmers.

Through this relationship, local farmers devastated by the evaporation of restaurant and other wholesale markets, provided EFRP participants with fresh local milk, eggs and a wide variety of fresh vegetables, all accompanied by recipes and tips for preparing them in a Pantry Newsletter.

All these relationships continue to grow. For example, a local orchard offered its excess harvest to the pantry, and groups of volunteers gleaned 3,000 pounds of apples for distribution. Collaborations continue with Wayne Memorial Hospital and its Food Prescription Program.

The partnership with The Cooperage Project has been particularly fruitful, starting with the 800 meals distributed last fall. The Cooperage served as the non-profit sponsor of the USDA Farmers to Families program. The collaboration continues with its monthly community-wide effort to provide hot meals for seniors, distribution of school lunches and providing snacks for local elementary students.

"People are reaching out to me who want to know how they can help," Wimmers said.

She also said the EFRP focused the whole community's attention on the reality of food insecurity in and galvanizing the organizations agencies and individuals trying to address it. With so many people reaching out for help for the first time ever, she said, she hopes the pantry and its services have increased awareness of food insecurity issues in our community.

"I want the (pantry) program to be available to all individuals who need support -- without judgement," she stated. Wimmers said she hoped to expand service and provide enrichment programs that will encourage greater participating from everyone in the community.

## Community Foundation Launches \$10K WT! Fund Challenge

COVID-19 made it clear that things can change at a moment's notice, and the Wayne County Community Foundation recently launched a campaign to better position Wayne County to adapt to those changes in the future.

The Foundation established the Wayne Tomorrow! Fund to focus on building up a reserve to address the ever-changing needs of our community. Executive Director Rianne Jennings said a new Recovery Challenge creates an opportunity for local people to donate a portion, or perhaps all, of their latest stimulus payment or tax refund to support the future of Wayne County.

Jennings said the Foundation will match those donations up to \$10,000 to support the fund, which can be used to provide matching dollars for grants and community projects, seed money for innovative ideas and "rainy day" funding when a crisis emerges.

So far, the campaign has raised \$3,500 and counting. You can [make your donation securely on the foundation website](#) or by check or stock transfer with "Wayne Tomorrow Fund" in the memo to the Wayne County Community Foundation, 214 9th Street, Honesdale, PA 18431.

## PARTNER PROFILE

### Workforce Alliance Champions People, Passion in Development



[SHINE students model the lab coats made after a visit from Wayne Memorial Hospital.](#)

The [Wayne Pike Workforce Alliance](#) takes responsibility for the people side of economic development, but according to its Executive Director Lucyann Vierling, it is so much more.

Vierling moved into her position in 2013, but had worked with the organization in its infancy and has an extensive background in workforce development. One of the agency's crowning achievements has been the designation by the PA Department Education as a Community Education Council.

The designation means regular and reliable funding for the agency but it also solidified the Workforce Alliance as a champion of lifelong learning - in the business community and among educators, students and workers.

"Workforce Alliance integrates education into all aspects of community development," Vierling explained. "Part of our core mission is to bring educational opportunities to our rural community, be they academic, practical or technical."

From start to finish, Workforce Alliance puts the people first, and the [SHINE \(Schools and Homes in Education\) afterschool program](#) provides an excellent example. This evidence-based, hands-on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math)-focused enrichment program serves students from kindergarten to grade five at three Wayne County school districts in five centers.

Classroom teachers refer students to the program who would benefit from additional academic support. Vierling said while many of the students come from low- to moderate-income families, and those statistics are reported out, the primary criteria is academic need.

Unlike many afterschool programs, SHINE has a heavy focus on academics and STEM, and it focuses on meeting the broader needs of the family, such as food insecurity, unemployment, mental health and more.

Vierling said the school districts are key partners in any workforce efforts, and programs like [Teacher in the Workplace](#) provide opportunities for academics to get a first-hand look inside local businesses or manufacturing firms to see how their instruction relates to practical applications. Workforce Alliance puts an early emphasis on passion to help students and all workers find a career path, not just a job.

She also said the alliance educates businesses regarding the important role they play in workforce development and especially the value of [internships](#). "Students who participate in an internship are far more likely to remain in the company and in the community," Vierling stated. "It gives them a chance to see what opportunities are right here in Wayne County."

Vierling said one challenge Wayne County faces is a shrinking labor force, as development of regional job opportunities lure workers, especially those with young families, away to other communities. To engage young workers in the labor force, Workforce Alliance establishes registered apprenticeships in the community: for farm machinery mechanics, diversified vegetable growing and dairy grazing -- to start.

Vierling recently submitted a School-to-Work grant to help establish pre-apprenticeship programs in the schools. "If we are going to have apprenticeships," she said, "Then we are going to need a pipeline for interested students."

Workforce Alliance will also need a partner to handle the administration of the program. Through the Wayne Tomorrow! collaborative network, Vierling reached out to The Cooperage Project and its Food Program to help the alliance with that aspect of the grant.

Partnerships and grants play a crucial role in so many aspects of Wayne Tomorrow! and its effort to build a prosperous and sustainable community.

"I've been told I'm opportunistic when it comes to grants, but when I see a need out there I try to find a way to address it," Vierling explained. Often, Vierling said, the first step in the grant process is identifying other organizations whose missions align with the goal and can help spread the weight of program administration and oversight.

To learn more about the Wayne Pike Workforce Alliance, take a look at their [latest annual report](#).

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## Wayne PA Career Link® Aims to Transform Lives and Businesses

For many people in Wayne County, PA [Career Link®](#) may be the most familiar face of the Wayne Pike Workforce Alliance, but it is also one of its newest roles, having taken it on in 2018.

From the start, Director of Workforce Development Helene Mancuso set her sights on making contact with the office a transformational experience, rather than simply a transaction.

Some individuals come to then PA Career Link® to take advantage of a specific training program they heard about from a friend, for example. Mancuso said they ask for Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training but really want to be a heavy equipment operator or they want medical billing training but really want to be a nurse. "We take a holistic approach and try to fit them to a career," she explained.

Through a Recovery to Work grant, PA Career Link® helps individuals successfully re-enter the labor market following substance use and mental health recovery programs or incarceration. Mancuso said for many people their previous employment may have been a stressor or trigger for their situation so going back is not necessarily a viable option for long-term recovery.

"We go the extra mile to create relationships that allow us to have frank conversations about career pathways, and not just jobs," she said. All Career Link staff members are trained as certified career coaches.

Mancuso takes the same approach with the funding side of the equation. Using a funding toolkit, she matches the needs of each worker, and just as importantly each business, with the most appropriate pool of resources available.

Mancuso said the PA Career Link® functions as an external Human Resources department for Wayne County's small business, the majority of which have fewer than 10 employees. [Wayne County PA Career Link®](#) can help them establish their workforce needs - the skills and talents, and identify potential candidates for jobs as well as provide funding to help cover their training and even some of their wages.

"We look at how we can partner with you. Does that mean On-The-Job Training, Paid Internships or Paid Work Experience?" she explained. The Wayne Pike Workforce Alliance also has funding to help businesses identify members of their existing workforce whose targeted training could position them for advancement.

Investing in their employees breeds loyalty, Mancuso explained, and it benefits both sides of the equation. This service in particular can be a vital resource for companies in succession planning, which involves determining who will take over when someone retires, becomes ill or moves on and getting them ready for that day.

COVID-19 exposed businesses' vulnerabilities; success, as it's been, favored those who were actively involved in planning prior to the pandemic and were therefore ready to pivot. That is true for business, and for Career Link, which Mancuso proudly notes was operating 100 percent virtually in just a few short days after the statewide shutdown, while some neighboring counties were closed for months.

Wayne Tomorrow! strives to position Wayne County to prosper, and the Wayne Pike Workforce Alliance leads the charge in engaging businesses and as well as current and future workers in preparing for a vibrant future.



[Resume writing help at Honesdale Career Link.](#)

**[www.WayneTomorrow.com](http://www.WayneTomorrow.com)**