

# EAST END COOPERATIVE MINISTRY NEWSLETTER

2024 | FALL

EECM.ORG

## DIGITAL LITERACY PROGRAM LAUNCHED

### NEW COMPUTER SKILLS CLASSES BEING OFFERED BY EECM

In this digital age, we often take for granted that everyone knows how to turn on a computer and surf the internet. But for many Pittsburgh residents, this isn't the case.

East End Cooperative Ministry's Education & Employment program (E&E) works to place all people in the community in gainful employment. This often requires teaching people new skills. One of the most in-demand trainings is basic computer skills.

"I noticed that some of EECM's residents and people in the community simply didn't know how to use a computer, period," said James Blount, E&E program coordinator. "We knew a digital literacy program was needed to give them a chance to find a decent job."

EECM held its first digital literacy class in January of 2024. Participants quickly signed up for the ten available spots. Over the course of four weeks, students learned computer fundamentals such as using hardware, creating MS Word documents, browsing the internet, using social media, and perhaps most importantly, searching and applying for jobs. At the end of their four-week course, participants received a certificate and their own laptop at no cost to them.

And this class was just the beginning.

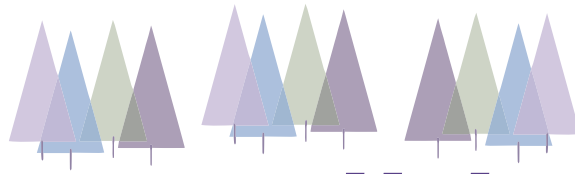
Moving into the fall and winter, EECM will continue to host these classes every month with support from the Department of Labor and Industry. We expect hundreds of people to walk away with new confidence in their computer knowledge and a new laptop with which to practice their skills.

To learn more about the Digital Literacy Classes and the Education & Employment program, please email: [jamesb@eecm.org](mailto:jamesb@eecm.org).



The first digital literacy class successfully completes the program.

# HELP EECM



# *Deliver the Holidays!*

## Food Drive & Fundraising Event

Saturday, October 5 | 9:00 am–1:00 pm

EECM was founded in 1970 to help alleviate the struggles of the low-income community of Pittsburgh. One of the early programs EECM instituted was the food pantry. Now in its 54th year, more individuals and families access our pantry than ever before. In fact, the need has doubled since 2022, with the pantry receiving over 20,000 visits in 2023. We are on track to break that record in 2024.

Our Community Kitchen serves a lunch every weekday to anyone who needs one. We also provide three meals a day to the 50-some residents that occupy our Emergency Shelter and Recovery House. We served over 106,000 meals in 2023 and will likely break that record, too, in 2024.

Because of the growing need, we rely on the Pittsburgh community to help shoulder the costs of this enormous undertaking. Over 600,000 pounds of food are donated to EECM and redistributed to over 2,000 families and 4,000 individuals every year. We work with the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank to purchase food at a greatly discounted rate. But, even with all of this phenomenal support, we are still in need.

This October 5, we ask the community to come together and donate what they can to our cause. This

includes both food and monetary donations. It is in an effort to prepare for the upcoming holiday season when we see a spike in need for food each year. From 9 am to 1 pm, volunteers will be on hand to accept these donations on Harvard Street, just off of Centre Avenue in East Liberty.

Non-perishable food items needed include: rice, pasta, macaroni, boxed mac and cheese, soups and broth, peanut butter and jelly, canned fruits and vegetables, canned meat and fish, breakfast cereal, pancake mix and syrup, jello, and pudding and cake mixes, as well as other shelf-stable items.

If you can't make it to the donation drive-up event, please use the QR code shown below to make a quick donation online. A local foundation will match all donations dollar-for-dollar, up to \$25,000. That means your \$1 donation turns into a \$2 donation, and \$25,000 raised turns into \$50,000.

For more information on how you can help, please email: [development@eecm.org](mailto:development@eecm.org).



EECM IS PROUD TO HAVE HIGHMARK WHOLECARE AS OUR EVENT PARTNER.



## SUCCESSFUL SEASON

### GARDEN PROMOTES SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRACTICES

East End Cooperative Ministry's community garden yielded all kinds of delicious and nutritious produce in 2024, including tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, zucchini, lettuce, and a variety of herbs. From spring to fall, volunteers, staff, and clients tended to the garden and helped it flourish so that anyone who passes by can stop and take what they need. The garden is a years-long project to promote sustainable food practices and gardening education in the community. To learn more about the community garden, please email: [cfs@eecm.org](mailto:cfs@eecm.org).

## MEET THE STAFF

# JAMES BLOUNT

James Blount is EECM's dedicated Education and Employment Coordinator, overseeing community case management services to help individuals and families meet their essential needs. James plays a vital role in empowering those he serves by focusing on connecting people to housing resources, securing employment, obtaining benefits, and accessing critical services such as insurance and healthcare. Since joining EECM in October 2023, James has made a significant impact with his commitment and passion for helping others. Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, James brings his rich background and dedication to every aspect of his work.

James loves serving the community and finds deep fulfillment in uplifting those around him. He believes in the power of connection and works tirelessly to ensure every client feels supported and valued. James's dedication to



social services goes beyond professional responsibilities—he sees it as his calling. His favorite part of the job is witnessing the positive changes in clients' lives, saying, "I love working in social

services and uplifting people." Outside of work, James enjoys spending time with his daughter and grandson, exploring new places, and indulging in his love for all kinds of music, from Billy Joel to JAY-Z. He's an avid fan of Marvel movies and never misses Shark Week on the Discovery Channel. Guided by his personal mantra, "Proper preparation prevents poor performance," James approaches every challenge with determination and a positive spirit. His unwavering commitment to the community continues to inspire everyone at EECM.

## THANK YOU HIGHMARK WHOLECARE FREE FARMERS MARKET BRINGS FRESH PRODUCE TO COMMUNITY



On July 25, Highmark Wholecare hosted a "Free Farmers Market" at EECM where people came to collect produce in the style of a farmers market, but without the cost!

Having access to fresh produce is difficult for those on a budget, but it is an important aspect of nutrition and health. We work hard at EECM to ensure accessibility for nutritional foods to our clients, and many members of our community were able to stop in to collect cauliflower, oranges, celery, and more.

Highmark Wholecare also presented a big check for \$50,000 to EECM. Reverend Darnell Leonard and Reverend Tracy Hudson were present to accept the donation and say a few words of gratitude for the partnership with Highmark Wholecare. There were big smiles to accompany both the big check and the big assortment of produce provided that day.

# GIVE BIG PITTSBURGH



## GIVE BIG PITTSBURGH / GIVING TUESDAY IS DECEMBER 3, 2024!

Mark your calendars for "Give Big," the Pittsburgh community's day of giving – an opportunity to unite our community around causes in which we truly believe and help nonprofit organizations connect to the larger community.

[GIVEGAB.COM/NONPROFITS/  
EAST-END-COOPERATIVE-MINISTRY](https://givegab.com/nonprofits/east-end-cooperative-ministry)

## THANK YOU!

EECM raised \$16,146.50 on #ONEDAY! A huge "Thank You" to all of our donors that participated in this year's Critical Needs Alert, sponsored by The Pittsburgh Foundation, who matched a percentage of all donor contributions. We participate every year and are grateful for our members who continue to support us on this day in order to maximize their support. Only nonprofits that provide direct services in child care, food and nutrition, housing, physical & mental health, or transportation in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties were invited to participate.

# HOLIDAY EVENTS

## THANKSGIVING GIFT CARD DRIVE

EECM's Thanksgiving gift card drive is back! If you are interested in donating a grocery store gift card of \$20 for families to purchase a Thanksgiving dinner, please mail or deliver to EECM by November 8, 2024. Please note "Thanksgiving" on the correspondence. If you have questions, contact Rev. Tracy Hudson: [tracyh@eecm.org](mailto:tracyh@eecm.org)

## THANKSGIVING MEAL

Every year, EECM hosts a full Thanksgiving meal for the community the week before the holiday. This year, we will host the event on Thursday, November 21 from 11 am to 2 pm in our dining room. Volunteers and donations are always appreciated for this festive event.

## HOLIDAY TOY DRIVE

Make the holiday special for a child in need and sponsor a child(ren) this holiday season! Participants can provide the gifts, or give a monetary donation and EECM will purchase the gift. If you are interested, please fill out the participation form that can be found at [eecm.org/drives](https://eecm.org/drives) and return via mail, or email to [tracyh@eecm.org](mailto:tracyh@eecm.org) by October 25, 2024. If you want to purchase a gift, Rev. Tracy Hudson will contact you with a specific child's wish list this holiday season.

## FESTIVE HOLIDAY MEAL

EECM will serve its annual Christmas community meal on Thursday, December 19 from 11 am to 2 pm. Members of the community along with shelter and Recovery House residents enjoy a delicious holiday spread prepared by dedicated staff and volunteers.



# SUMMER CAMP 2024

ANNUAL CAMP IS SUMMER FUN FOR OVER 200 PITTSBURGH YOUTH

Summer is a fun time here at EECM when we host our annual day camp for youth ages 5 to 19. And this year was no exception!

Over 200 campers enjoyed five full weeks of activities that included swimming, flying drones, biking, playing basketball, and bowling. We hit the road and traveled to Laurel Caverns to explore caves and learn more about geology. And it wouldn't have been a Pittsburgh summer without trips to the Carnegie Science Center, the Pittsburgh Zoo, Kennywood Amusement Park, and Sandcastle Water Park. Our theme this year was *You Have the Power to Become Much More*. In between recreational and educational activities, campers learned more about themselves and what they want for their futures.

All 200 campers worked together to create and put on an incredible performance at the end of camp. This involved creative writing, video and audio production and editing, choreography, stage direction and design, and tons of teamwork. Hundreds of friends and family members cheered them on as they performed skits, danced, sang, and played instruments. What a culmination of talent and hard work!

We can't wait to see what's in store for summer 2025! To learn more about our summer day camp program and Children and Youth Services, please email [terryl@eecm.org](mailto:terryl@eecm.org).





EAST END  
COOPERATIVE  
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# SHARE THE WARMTH 2024



EECM is collecting new and gently used winter coats for the 2024 Share the Warmth winter coat drive. Donated coats will be distributed to community members in need. New coats with tags, and gently used coats, may be dropped off at EECM through October 18. We are also partnering with Strong Dry Cleaners who will provide free dry cleaning for used coats donated at their locations (and will give discounts for participants' personal dry cleaning). Strong will be accepting coat donations between September 3 and October 18. Visit [eecm.org/drives](https://eecm.org/drives) for more information.