

THE KEYSTONE



MEMBER-CREATED NEWSLETTER
PUT PEOPLE FIRST! PENNSYLVANIA

WINTER/SPRING 2026

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WHO ARE WE?

Put People First! PA is a 13 year old, member-led, staff-free organization of the poor and dispossessed working class. We are the only statewide organization in Pennsylvania led by people who are on or excluded from Medicaid.

We believe that our basic needs—like food, housing, healthcare, education, transportation, a healthy environment, freedom of movement—are our human rights. We're a membership organization of folks who know from life experience that everyday people need to unite to have a voice.

We're rural, small town and urban. We're multiracial and politically independent. Join us and together we can change things from the bottom up!



Cover Art by Anita K. & Ramona A. Painting & collage depict the Crozer 8 dropping a banner over headlines about the healthcare crisis.

Introduction

November 1, 2025 in the U.S. brought the reality of hunger and more intense poverty for over 40 million people, with the failure to load SNAP cards and the specter of work requirements that will only work to hurt more of us. Meanwhile, we continue to suffer bipartisan Medicaid purges, rising ACA premiums, and mass closures of our hospitals. These attacks on our class have occurred under both parties of Wall Street, and they are only intensifying. The 140 million people in and near poverty continues to grow—and 800 people die of poverty every day—in the richest country in the world. This same country is dragged along by a war economy that can always find money to divide us along racial, religious, cultural, geographical, and national lines. It wages attacks on our entire class, from Palestine, to Venezuela and Cuba, and right here on our own soil.

It feels like the poor and dispossessed working class is in a struggle for survival with the billionaires and their minions, who are trying to suck the air out of our lives. Many of us are deprived of our human rights to food, decent housing, medical care; some are kidnapped, incarcerated—even beaten, or killed. Misery and cruelty are the order of the day, all in the name of greater profits for the few, the top 10 of which grew their hoards by \$698 billion in the last year alone. With the development of AI, our labor is less and less necessary.

So, we continue to unite, develop ourselves as leaders, and organize. The only thing that will save us is our own organization and unity as the poor and dispossessed—as the working class in the U.S. and around the world. In the face of bullets, raids and the denial of our basic needs, we choose the weapons of revolutionary love, political independence, and care for each other across any and all lines of division.

As one of our members put it: “The oppressors may have the pen, purse, and sword. But we have hearts to care and love one another, our minds for understanding what is truly right, and our hands to reach across the lines of separation.”

Here, we affirm our right to our own narratives. The Keystone is a statement that we need our own voices uplifted to change this system and a tool to build towards a revolution of values. This issue is dedicated to our members—experienced, new, and those yet to join. With each other, we can build a politically independent movement across all lines of division with solidarity for our class to end misery and to organize society around meeting the vast majority’s needs and a livable future.

— ***Members of the Put People First! PA Media & Communications Team***



Introducción

El 1 de noviembre de 2025 en los Estados Unidos trajo consigo la realidad del hambre y una pobreza aún más intensa para más de 40 millones de personas, con la imposibilidad de recargar las tarjetas SNAP y el espectro de los requisitos laborales que solo servirán para perjudicarnos aún más. Mientras tanto, seguimos sufriendo purgas bipartidistas de Medicaid, el aumento de las primas de la ACA y el cierre masivo de nuestros hospitales. Estos ataques a nuestra clase se han producido bajo ambos partidos de Wall Street, y no hacen más que intensificarse. Los 140 millones de personas que viven en la pobreza o cerca de ella siguen aumentando, y 800 personas mueren cada día por culpa de la pobreza, en el país más rico del mundo. Este mismo país se ve arrastrado por una economía de guerra que siempre encuentra dinero para dividirnos por motivos raciales, religiosos, culturales, geográficos y nacionales. Lanza ataques contra toda nuestra clase, desde Palestina hasta Venezuela y Cuba, y aquí mismo, en nuestro propio territorio.

Parece que la clase trabajadora pobre y desposeída está librando una lucha por la supervivencia contra los multimillonarios y sus secuaces, que intentan quitarnos el aire que respiramos. Muchos de nosotros estamos privados de nuestros derechos humanos a la alimentación, a una vivienda digna y a la atención médica; algunos son secuestrados, encarcelados, incluso golpeados o asesinados. La miseria y la crueldad son la orden del día, todo en nombre de mayores ganancias para unos pocos, cuyos 10 principales aumentaron sus fortunas en 698 mil millones de dólares solo en el último año. Con el desarrollo de la inteligencia artificial, nuestro trabajo es cada vez menos necesario.

Por eso, seguimos uniéndonos, desarrollándonos como líderes y organizándonos. Lo único que nos salvará es nuestra propia organización y unidad como pobres y desposeídos, como clase trabajadora en los Estados Unidos y en todo el mundo. Ante las balas, las redadas y la negación de nuestras necesidades básicas, elegimos las armas del amor revolucionario, la independencia política y el cuidado mutuo más allá de cualquiera línea divisoria.

Como dijo uno de nuestros miembros: «Los opresores tienen la pluma, la bolsa y la espada. Pero nosotros tenemos corazones para cuidarnos y amarnos unos a otros, mentes para comprender lo que es verdaderamente correcto y nuestras manos para tender puentes más allá de las líneas de separación».

Aquí afirmamos nuestro derecho a nuestras propias narrativas. Nuestro boletín “The Keystone” es una declaración de que necesitamos alzar nuestras propias voces para cambiar este sistema y una herramienta para construir una revolución de valores. Este número está dedicado a nuestros miembros, tanto a los veteranos como a los nuevos y a los que aún no se han unido. Juntos, podemos construir un movimiento políticamente independiente que trascienda todas las líneas divisorias, con solidaridad hacia nuestra clase, para poner fin a la miseria y para organizar la sociedad para garantizar las necesidades de la gran mayoría y un futuro digno y sostenible.

— ***Miembros del equipo de Media y Comunicaciones de ¡El Pueblo Primero! PA***

Campaign Plan

We've all got bodies. We all need our health and healthcare to survive. We're all struggling in this system, which sacrifices our families and communities in search of greater profits every day.

Our **Healthcare is a Human Right (HCHR) Campaign** is how we organize and unite poor and dispossessed working class people across all of the lines that society uses to tell us we're too different from each other—where we live, the color of our skin, our age, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity, citizenship status, and the list goes on. This doesn't mean we erase our differences. It means the struggle for healthcare as a human right brings what we have in common to the front. In the process, it teaches us we have more in common than what divides us.

Through this campaign, we 1) make the invisible visible and shift the narrative, 2) hold all powerholders accountable for the policy murder that is killing us, 3) expose and confront those who profit from our sickness, and most importantly 4) identify, unite and develop leaders in all of our diversity to build the [**Nonviolent Medicaid Army**](#) and the foundation for a massive movement for fundamental change!

Our campaign work this year has included continuing our fight against Medicaid cuts and defending the right to Medicaid. We know that Medicaid Cuts equal death. We continued our Medicaid Cut Offs Organizing Drive (MCOOD) that we launched in 2023, when we experienced 25 million people purged from healthcare with the [**ending of pandemic protections under Biden**](#). We held People's Clinics to sign people up for benefits, filed Medicaid appeals and encouraged people to share their stories through #MedicaidMondays, connecting them with this growing movement in person and online. Not only did we fight for our current Medicaid rights, but also for an expansion of Medicaid to include dental coverage.

This year, facing this ongoing Medicaid purge and more attacks via the Big Beautiful Bill for Billionaires, we expanded this organizing drive for our rights. We created a [**SNAP Organizing Toolkit**](#) to assert our welfare rights in the face of cuts and hurdles added to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or Food Stamps). We are following the historical tradition of the welfare rights movement of organizing at the point of survival.



SNAP TOOLKIT



Put People First! PA (PPF-PA) has also continued to fight against hospital closures across the state, which we have been engaged in since 2019. Private equity, nonprofit and for-profit owners closed 26 hospitals in all regions of PA in just the last five years. We are building a mass movement to keep our hospitals open and put healthcare into the hands of workers and communities, instead of lining the pockets of Wall Street.

In addition to our regular base building, we held art builds, community meals, marches, vigils and more to reach those impacted by hospital closures. PPF-PA members gathered stories about how these closures are impacting our communities, met with elected officials and got hundreds of signatures for our petition to pressure powerholders. These demands include creating a Public Healthcare Advocate in PA, an office at the state level that would fight for the healthcare rights of all Pennsylvanians, against monied interests. Put People First! PA engaged in our first nonviolent civil disobedience as the “Crozer 8” and took over the lobby of the shuttered Crozer-Chester Medical Center in Delaware County demanding it be reopened as a public hospital. We did all this to bring together our communities to fight these murderous closures and demand more. In the upcoming pages, read more about the fight against hospital closures in SEPA, NEPA and SWPA!



As part of the National Nonviolent Medicaid Army (NVMA), we held powerholders accountable with a statement in [English](#) & [Spanish](#) exposing the Big Beautiful Bill for Billionaires. We made hundreds of calls to Congress, changing the narrative that this policy murder is only being committed by one party of the ruling class. We insisted instead that no politician or party is coming to save us.

In June, we demanded, [**“Fund Medicaid, not War!”**](#) making the connection that the war economy is an attack on people’s lives abroad and at home through the denial of our basic needs. In September, the NVMA held our first ever nationally synchronized Day of Action against Medicaid Cuts and Hospital Closures. With the National Union of the Homeless, we cried housing IS healthcare!



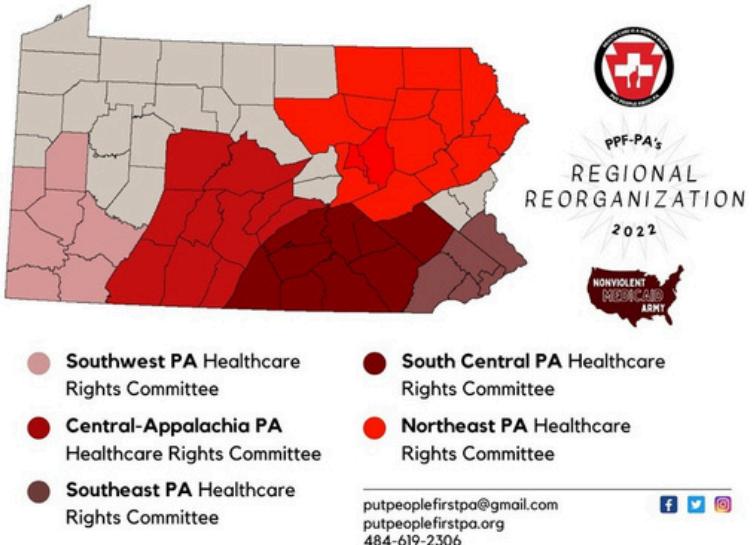
As the economic crisis deepens and political conditions shift, there are significant dangers but also important opportunities. Our work to identify, develop and unite leaders in the movement to end poverty led by the poor is more necessary than ever. As we face growing attacks on the poor and working class, the need to organize and unite around our common struggles for survival becomes more urgent every day. ▽

Reflections from Regional Healthcare Rights Committees

Put People First! PA is a member-led grassroots organization made up of five regional Healthcare Rights Committees (HRCs) across the state.

These committees are made up of people most affected by the healthcare crisis. They shape the statewide campaign plan and move it forward locally. These regional HRCs meet regularly, twice a month. An HRC is a vehicle to organize, unite, and build the leadership of our entire class in their region and across the state. It is not a social club or a small group of like-minded individuals. HRCs provide a vehicle for people to take action together, build trusting relationships, and develop leadership. HRCs are also a great place to share your healthcare stories and get support—they are open to all, and we are all in this fight together!

Leaders from our five HRCs have contributed regional reflections, sharing glimpses of what our members have done and the lessons we've learned over the past year. Some of these reflections reference the phases of the year. These phases structure our work towards base building, consolidation, fundraising, study and training, which allows PPF-PA to build membership and turn "thinkers into fighters, and fighters into thinkers."



PPF-PA Year in Phases



[Read more about the arc of the year here.](#)

These phases also make a pattern to how we do things, that we repeat, and improve over time. Each season brings some specific areas of focus, they are all connected, and each one builds on the next and then the cycle repeats. We try to get better and better each time, and we make the struggle a school, consistently debriefing and analyzing our own work and what we're up against. Understanding the arc of the year can help us see that every meeting, every visit with a legislator, every 1-on-1, every People's Clinic, every statewide call, every action is not an end in and of itself, but part of a larger plan. Understanding that helps us make the most of each opportunity. ▽

Southeast Pennsylvania Being permanently on the ground – focusing on Delaware County

Anita K. | SEPA HRC



Southeast Pennsylvania (SEPA) is home to approximately 3.6 million people and is a center for capital in the state. Here, we see poverty amidst plenty, with millions suffering from the healthcare crisis. As a Healthcare Rights Committee (HRC), we have leaders across the five counties, which means we may feel tempted to rush to every fight. This can result in scattered activity across the region. In reflecting on our terrain, our previous years' activities, and looking at the successes of other HRCs and sister organizations, we decided in 2025 to focus primarily in one part of our region to organize—Delaware County. There the healthcare crisis is acutely playing out in the form of hospital closures.

In 2016, Prospect Medical Holdings, a for-profit vehicle for Wall Street firm Leonard Green & Partners, acquired the main hospital system in Delaware County, Crozer Health System. Through our Landscape Assessment in 2022, we found out about a failed deal to buy the system and started paying closer attention. Prospect followed a familiar pattern of private equity looting healthcare—first ending ambulance services and then emergency and inpatient services at Delaware County Memorial and Springfield Hospitals. That same year, we began to push back—taking six actions with workers and patients and sounding the alarm about the link between private equity and hospital closures. When Prospect filed for bankruptcy in January 2025 it became clear that its remaining two hospitals, Taylor and Crozer-Chester, were in dire straits. With this mounting crisis, we knew we had to shift our attention here completely. Both hospitals completely closed by May 2, 2025.

When our HRC launched spring base building in March of 2025, people were rightfully concerned about the future of the hospital. Our members took on new and different roles in base building. We tabled outside of Walmart, Rita's Water Ice, Sam and Sam's Meats, a local grocery store, and door-knocked in neighborhoods around the hospital.

We spoke with many people and heard their healthcare stories. We also spoke with various elected officials and their staffers. From community members across lines of difference, we heard, "This is a crime! Our families are dying! How could they take away our lifeline?!" From some of the electeds, we heard, "We don't need hospitals like we used to." A shocking response. [Click here to read more testimonies.](#)

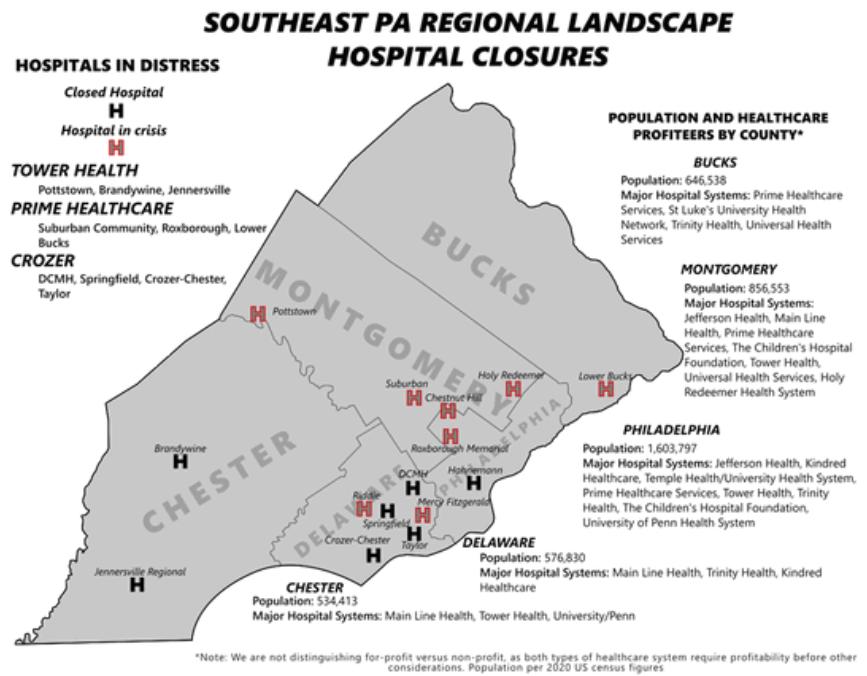


We talked with folks about how every community deserves good and decent hospitals, primary care, and other services that ensure our human right to healthcare. Everyone agreed that we need to come together to fight for our right to healthcare and to demand that our leaders take greater action, including demanding that the government take the hospitals over.

The government didn't take action, so we did. In May on the heels of the closing we gathered people in the community, joined with the Crozer-Chester Nurses Association (PASNAP), and our sister organizations Movement of Immigrant Leaders in PA (MILPA) and the Philly chapter of the National Union of the Homeless (NUH) in a [vigil and rally](#). As the hospitals stayed shuttered and community members remained outraged, we escalated, [taking action again in September](#). We led up to this with regular base building, community art making, speaking out at events and County Council meetings, and joining with other organizations in making demands of our elected officials. With the NAACP, we delivered a petition with 900 signatures to Senator Kane, state senator in the Chester area, [raising our key demands](#).

In the past few months, there have been private, for-profit buyers for three of the four hospitals. There is no word that hospitals will return to the area anytime soon and people remain in a deadly limbo. We will continue to fight. Looking forward, every conversation we've had will directly build to the next year's course, so we can reach further and dig deeper in the county and **build a movement that will put people first.** ▽

[Click here to watch the Crozer-Chester Sit-In livestream!](#)



Map created by Anita K., SEPA HRC

Regional Reflection

Central Appalachia
“I wanted to be part of a group actually doing something”

Frank S. | CAPA HRC



Put People First! PA's Central Appalachia Healthcare Rights Committee has seen tons of growth, specifically in the Oakhurst housing development. At the Membership Assembly I spoke to Ta'Keisha and Jonice on what brought them into the organization and inspired them to attend the Assembly, and I used their framing to speak to our core leader Josh about how this organizing was accomplished.

Ta'Keisha told me that she wanted to be part of a group actually doing something and that our meetings not only made her feel less alone, but also that they have given her fire to do more things! She said she identified the group as “misfits” and that we made it welcoming for people like her.

What do you think we've done to make the meetings welcoming like this?

Josh: “When people isolate we are vulnerable, but when we come together with our vulnerability we can break our isolation. When we admit we have nothing to lose and everything to gain, that's where we show our strength.”

What do you think we've done in the structure of our meetings to encourage that vulnerability?

“This year we returned to in person/hybrid meetings at least once a month. We leave space in the agenda for folks to share what's on their minds and process what they're seeing in the news. On the second meeting of the month, we benefit from meeting after the statewide call. We encourage members to be present and watch that together, reminding them that it isn't only local, but statewide and even national that people are going through these struggles. It shows them they can do something.



We continue to remind people of our political independence, but not political ignorance. We educate about the actions coming from 'both' political parties and how they distract us from uniting and divide us from our communities while at the same time being clear about what we are up against. We run into so many people that say they are not political. When I say we are not politically ignorant, I mean that everything is connected to politics under this system and we can't be ignorant to that fact."

Jonice reflected that interacting with the National Union of the Homeless inspired her. She reflected that her experience with poverty has shown her how desperation leads to violence and drug use and that she is tired of losing friends to addiction with no resources to turn to. How do we connect these issues to our healthcare struggle?

"Now, it is definitely a good point to look at how the SNAP cuts, holds, freezes, and whatever they keep doing, are leading people to use funds they need to pay rent and heating and all other costs to keep from starving, which SNAP should be covering. In these colder months, people's clothes are worn and tattered and cost money to replace. So many are homeless or near-homeless and we need to be uniting with them."

Every year we participate in the National Union of the Homeless Winter Offensive as an organization, and this year we can bring that to the Central Appalachia region. Our health starts with our homes and our food."

We've had a lot of growth centered in Oakhurst, where we have in-person meetings. What do you think about the in-person meetings and the structure of repeated neighborhood outreach has assisted us in our growth there?

"Consistency, first and foremost. I've been active since 2022, and Nijmie said our first door-knocking there was in 2019! The consistency to show that we are still here, meeting and talking to people. I took an interest in organizing a whole community because it is a garden full of gold! And these seeds we have been planting are sprouting. In-person helps us make people feel heard because they see each others' reactions and they feel the empathy."

What have you learned about our class by digging deep into one place over time?

"The people who have been consistent have diverse histories and personalities, but are coming together because we want a change in this system that's hurting our brothers and sisters, siblings and neighbors. I'm not from Johnstown originally, and moving here and knowing people that have lived here their whole lives or transplanted like me can find family and community with our neighbors when we organize. When we organize our communities, our neighbors become family." ▶

[Click here to see photos from the Oakhurst Justice Jam!](#)



Regional Reflection

Southwest PA Uniting Across the Urban/Rural Divide in 2025

Barbara W. | SWPA HRC



The Southwest PA Healthcare Rights Committee (SWPA HRC) had a full year of base building—getting out there in our communities and talking to people on or unfairly excluded from Medicaid, all while developing our own leadership. We went to food distributions, knocked on doors, held People's Clinics; we made calls to Congress, joined a town hall, and organized our Day of Action event. Here are some highlights from our year:

Uniontown, Fayette County

In April, SWPA HRC members traveled to a food distribution at Bierer's Wood public housing in Uniontown, Fayette County, to ask people about how the coming cuts to Medicaid may affect them. The people waiting for food, many elderly or disabled, began to line up an hour or two in advance in their cars for the food boxes. When we visited with them, we learned most were on Medicaid, Medicare, Tricare (former military), or some combination of these. Several were very concerned and angry, and asked to send a message to their legislators, while others took a "wait and see" approach.

We had long conversations with a few people who had already been cut off from Medicaid in previous rounds of cuts, learning how their lives had changed when they lost the care that had allowed them to recover from surgery, or earned a bit too much money to qualify for Medicaid. All of these folks had worked as much as they could, were either disabled, unemployed or caring for someone who is disabled. What will happen to them when there are further Medicaid cuts?

Crawford Village

We went to Crawford Village, a public housing complex in McKeesport, Allegheny County, three times over the base building season, holding a People's Clinic and organizing people around the cuts to Medicaid and SNAP.

In July we attended their Community Day, where we joined lots of people enjoying bouncy houses for the kids, a barbecue and prize giveaways. We talked to a new mother who smiled and said, "I just had a baby, I'm on Medicaid, everything's good." We spoke with others who needed help getting the care they need. We were also joined by a group of elders who sat under the shade of our tent and greeted community members as they joined the Community Day.

Justice Jam

In August, the SWPA HRC held a [Justice Jam](#) at the Tripoli Street Community Center in Pittsburgh. We partnered with two community leaders: Rev. Leeann, a spiritual leader and pastor of Cityview Church, and Sam of Our Streets Collective and Pittsburgh National Union of the Homeless. We're very grateful for their solidarity and support to continue our work to find and organize leaders to end poverty. There was a job for everyone, from newcomers to seasoned members: leading songs and political education, serving food, setting up the space, taking pictures, keeping us on schedule, greeting newcomers and gathering contact information. Many shared their heartfelt stories of struggle about healthcare and housing.



Thanksgiving Food Distribution

In November, our HRC was at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center during the [2025 Thanksgiving Food Distribution](#). We had members in force to speak to people about Medicaid and SNAP cuts. Due to the current cuts to our welfare rights, we organized around healthcare, housing and food as Human Rights. We had a very productive day, with amazing conversations about the concerns of poor working class people in our community. We are growing our base and coming together to protect our class. Our politically independent, member-led, people-funded organization

 is agitating the working class and poor to fight for basic human rights that are being gutted by billionaires. We are getting stronger. We know the politicians won't save us, we have to save ourselves. 



South Central PA Kairos Tour & Battle for the Bible

Tammy R. | SCPA HRC



This year in South Central PA (SCPA) we organized a series of events that built off of each other, our years of organizing here, and our understanding of this region's history and dynamic terrain. These events brought together those we've met over the years to build a Projects of Survival network—an "Underground Railroad" in the movement to abolish poverty!

Coming out of the 2024 Winter Offensive Organizing Drive, in May movement leaders in the region organized two tour stops with the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice and their newly released book *Lessons from the Movement to End Poverty: You Only Get What You're Organized To Take* by Rev. Liz Theoharis and Noam Sandweiss-Back. The book tour stops were organized to coincide with the National Union of the Homeless (NUH) Membership Development Committee retreat; they included public talks with the authors as well as smaller organizing meetings beforehand. We were joined by other member organizations of the PA Poor People's Campaign and other community organizations; we invited faith and community leaders, and others we've met through our organizing over the years, especially in our fight against University of Pittsburgh Medical Center's (UPMC) closing of St Joseph Hospital in Lancaster in 2019.



At the [first stop, in Harrisburg](#), Pastor Matt Best gave us a tour of Christ Lutheran Church and their health ministry. Then we had an organizing meeting where we ate together, discussed the political terrain and the potential to build partnerships among our organizations. We then set up the space together for the public event where we engaged in a community discussion about the conditions facing our society and who has the power to change it!

The [next book tour stop was in Lancaster](#), where a group of us met for lunch to debrief the activities in Harrisburg and shared some People's History of the region. We toured the Lancaster County Chooses Love Resource Center in Lititz, then gathered at St. John's Episcopal Church in Lancaster City for an organizing meeting, followed by a public event much like the one we had in Harrisburg.

At each of these organizing meetings ahead of the public events we discussed the potential for building a modern day "Underground Railroad" as a Projects of Survival network and the need for us to engage further in the Battle for the Bible in Pennsylvania's Bible Belt. During the public events community members shared about the struggles and conditions they, their families and neighbors are facing and many went away feeling empowered, energized and excited about next steps!!!

We invited everyone present at the book tour stops to our ["Songs & Celebration: Art, Singout & Speak Out!"](#) event in

June, where we made art, shared testimonies, and sang movement songs. We celebrated the release of one of our members from Lancaster County Prison, birthdays, and the growing poverty abolitionist movement rising in South Central Pennsylvania! Over the next few months we deepened our relationships with one another, had many organizing conversations with each other and partnered on community events.



All of this, in conjunction with Matthew and I being commissioned ministers with Freedom Church of the Poor through the Kairos Center, has led to the rebirth of the Lancaster County Homeless Union Chapter of the National Union of the Homeless, a food pantry in partnership with Pastor Mark Harris of the Historic Salem United Church of Christ in Columbia, PA and other community leaders, and the possibility of the first on the ground satellite Freedom Church of the Poor!



Who has the power to lead this nation to the changes in society we need!?

The poor and dispossessed!!!!
Join us in our movement to abolish poverty!



Northeast PA From Uncertain Observer to Committed and Competent Leader



Nichole H. | NEPA HRC

I've been involved with the Northeast PA Healthcare Rights Committee (NEPA HRC) in Put People First! PA for over two years. I've grown from an uncertain observer to a committed competent leader who continues to work on my clarity and connection with my community. Everything that we do organizing with Put People First! PA (PPF-PA) is centered around building leadership within us and others as well as connecting with our base.

I had an opportunity to speak at a No Kings Rally this past summer after a day of door-knocking and base building with the NEPA HRC. Initially I was uncertain and was questioning, would I be just another voice among the speakers, or could I put out our theory of change and program in a way that would foster a connection with people in my community? With support from my HRC, I decided to speak at the rally. Building my leadership skills as a speaker, I was agitational in demanding the end of the genocide in Gaza, Medicaid for All and the accountability of profiteers and power holders who continue to choose to not meet our basic human needs. In my practice as a Nurse Practitioner, I witness firsthand the inhumane and deadly outcomes of a system that puts profits over people!

Although there were claps at times, silence at times and perhaps some uncomfortable murmurs, the most important reactions and conversations occurred after the speech.

Our HRC met for lunch afterwards to debrief about our day and reviewed how the rally and participants impacted our landscape assessment. We discussed things that went well, we reviewed PPF-PA actions and how they are similar and different compared to the organizers of this rally. We shared how we individually were impacted, not only by my speech, but by the words of other speakers. Not only did I grow as a leader, but our HRC grew our leadership individually and as a group.

In reflecting on taking the chance to speak at a rally, I am amazed by the ripple effect my words have had on many people. For many individuals it allowed them to share their own stories and experiences because they did not feel alone. These initial conversations have allowed for ongoing connections with people who attended the rally. I continue to grow in my leadership; my clarity, commitment, communication and connections are dynamic and supported by the many mentors in PPF-PA. I am grateful to have opportunities to share our theory of change and to be a part of a community that fights for Medicaid for all. ▽



[Click here to watch
Nichole's speech at the
No Kings Rally!](#)

#MEDICAID MONDAYS

Every Monday, our members share why we need Medicaid on social media. What's your story?

Ed

Southeast PA



"I'm homeless and couldn't cover the surcharge for my medications for a hereditary condition. I was denied a wheelchair after losing my toes to frostbite."

"If I didn't have Medicaid, I would not have been able to have my kids. The bill sent in the mail was crazy. Thankfully I was covered by Medicaid."

Keisha

Central Appalachia PA



Ned & Natalie

Northeast PA

Ned and Natalie are both 18 and on CHIP. Ned went 3 years without their glasses prescription. Natalie has struggled to get the dental care she needs. Both of them are worried about how to get healthcare as adults.

Visit Facebook.com/PutPeopleFirstPA to see more. 

#MEDICAID MONDAYS



Joe

Southwest PA

"I have been on Medicaid for a year and it has saved me several times! I was on a bicycle, hit by a car, and in the hospital for 4 days with a concussion! I had to go to urgent care when I had an allergic reaction to MSG and swelled like a balloon. I was diagnosed with osteoarthritis of the spine and get physical therapy for it."

“I don’t have a PCP and rely on my school’s health center. My health needs go unmet when I’m not in school. Healthcare as a human right would mean having access to healthcare and not feel anxious after graduating.”

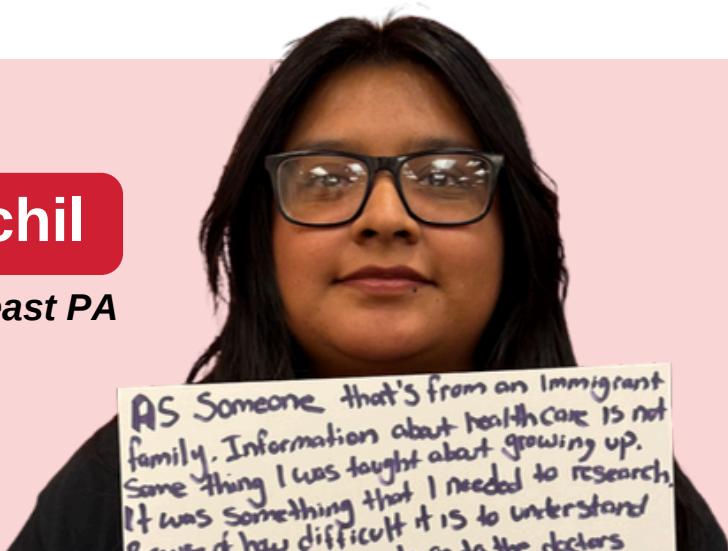


Stacey

Massachusetts NVMA

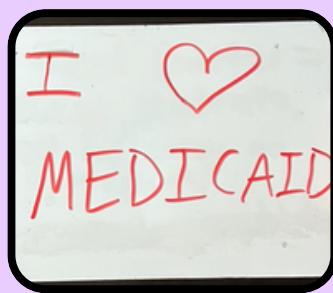
Xochil

Southeast PA



"As someone that's from an immigrant family, information about healthcare is not something I was taught about growing up. It was something that I needed to research.

Because of how difficult it is to understand, I have not been able to go to the doctors since I was 15."



Member Reflection

Medicaid is the best insurance I've ever had

LT | Southeast PA Healthcare Rights Committee

I don't feel scared when I get sick. I can go to a doctor, get blood work, an X-ray, an MRI. I can go to a specialist and get my biologic medication that works to manage my autoimmune disorder and chronic pain. All this with no copay, no referral, nothing. And with my pain under control I can work my job providing healthcare to others, and pay my bills, I can help my cousin with childcare, and take my niblings to playgrounds and museums, I can go fishing with my dad and bring my neighbors back fresh flounder. The fact that I've been able to access medical care has made my life more fun and vibrant, and has enabled me to care for my family and my community.

It's so simple that when your basic needs are met you are able to be a better person. Everybody deserves this. Everybody deserves to be able to get treatment for their health issues, and even get preventative care so that small issues can get caught early! We all deserve the chance to live robust lives, to be the best aunts and neighbors and coworkers as we can. Everybody deserves this, just for being a human, regardless of any arbitrary eligibility requirements, without hoops to jump through.

When the government cuts our healthcare, the way they are doing to millions of people across the state of Pennsylvania and beyond, they are saying that it does not matter to them if we are in pain. It does not matter to them if we can get medicine we need to be able to function in the world. It doesn't matter to them if we die and our families are left to grieve.

If I get cut off from my Medicaid it doesn't just affect me, it affects my whole family and my whole community. Cutting millions people off Medicaid affects all of their communities, this will be felt by many many more people. It is cruel and truly DEMONIC to put us through this when the means of providing for all of our basic needs are available, demonic to put profit over people's lives. A world exists where we can all meet our basic needs, and thrive as our best selves. It is within our reach. ▶



These words were originally a speech given in 2023 about the great Medicaid purge under President Biden. [Check out this piece](#) also by LT from the same time about these bipartisan attack on our healthcares. Put People First! PA has fought back regardless of what party is in power!



Our Response to the Rise of AI

Day of Action Speech

[Click here or scan to read the full article.](#)



Rebecca R. | Northeast PA Healthcare Rights Committee

We believe the health of our bodies is inseparable from the health of the land we live on. Governor Shapiro has repeatedly stated that building AI data centers will bring “economic prosperity” to Pennsylvania. Politicians are scrambling to change zoning ordinances to allow this to happen. Emergency Town Hall meetings are being held left and right as powerholders attempt to steamroll over the will of the People. Notably, these efforts have been bipartisan.

After all of these AI data centers are built, will we say it was worth the destruction of our natural landscape to further enrich the already unfathomably wealthy like Jeff Bezos? These data centers will steal hundreds of thousands of gallons from our water table. Will our local farmers say this was an “economic windfall” when their land cannot support the crops we need to survive?

We are all too familiar with the false promises of big business that destroy our beautiful woodlands for their own profit. The natural gas industry, the lumber barons, and big king coal, ALL promised to lift hardworking Pennsylvanians out of poverty. Each time it was a lie, each time the only reward for our hard work was ecological devastation. These bloated profiteers abandoned our communities the second there was no more money to be made, leaving us to live with polluted waterways, deforestation, black lung, and crushing poverty.

Funny how these politicians wanna try to sell us lines about “good jobs.” AI does not create jobs. It is LABOR-REPLACING technology. A McKinsey report projects that by 2030, 30% of current U.S. jobs could be automated, with 60% significantly altered by AI tools. That’s 50 million jobs that the ruling class projects they will be able to wipe out in the next four years.

Will we still be saying that we are “winning the AI war” when more and more healthcare decisions are made by AI? I personally don’t want to see a future where algorithms deny healthcare... but that is already happening. Many states are going to start using AI to process Medicare claims. The big tech companies who run it will be paid kickbacks for each rejected claim that their AI justifies. At the Heritage Springs personal care home out by the abandoned Lycoming Mall, they have started integrating AI to watch the residents while they sleep. This is happening right in our backyards, not some far-off place.

In 1967 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.” With the rise of the labor-replacing technology like AI, his call to action is more urgent than ever before. We must acknowledge the personhood of each human being. We are on the cusp of a technological revolution that has the potential to reshape work as we know it. That should be a cause for celebration, not worry about how we will provide for our families. The fruits of our increased productivity should be shared by all, not hoarded by a handful of billionaires. ▽

National Union of the Homeless Membership Development Gathering

Max R., Gann H., Kristin C. & Tammy R. |
National Union of the Homeless

May 1, 2025 marked the 35th anniversary of *Takeover*—the film that movement filmmakers produced about the taking over of homes that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) had promised to provide to homeless people in America. The National Union of the Homeless (NUH) celebrated this anniversary in Philadelphia with the first in-person gathering of the NUH's Membership Development Committee since NUH formally relaunched in 2020, consolidating local organizing efforts that began with Salinas, California in 2016.



NUH Membership Development Committee members traveled to Philadelphia from Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, New York, North Carolina, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania for a three-day in-person gathering to strengthen our “4 C’s” of political leadership: Clarity, Connection, Commitment and Competence. Members of the committee also joined via Zoom from Illinois, Massachusetts and California. We gathered with Put People First! PA (PPF-PA) members to watch the *Takeover* film with the filmmaker Peter Kinoy. We celebrated and honored his work over the decades and reflected on how *Takeover* illustrates the NUH slogans “You only get what you’re organized to take” and “Homeless not Helpless.”



[Click here to read NUH's 2025 Winter Offensive statement!](#)

Throughout the weekend we had opportunities to connect to the history of the NUH. Leaders who were part of the original Homeless Union took us to the church at 22nd and Spring Garden in Philly (now turned into condos!) in which the first chapter of the original Homeless Union formed, and then took us on a virtual tour of our history at other sites around Philly and the U.S. We learned about the idea of a “tissue issue”—an issue that agitates the base and inspires people to take collective action and organize—which comes from our history in Chicago, Illinois. There, people staying in shelters had to line up every morning to get the five squares of toilet tissue they were allotted for the day, and that became a rallying point around which leaders helped people to take action, organize and build a local union in Chicago.

In addition to learning about our history and the political economy of our current moment, leaders shared regional updates about the growth of local Homeless Union chapters. They also met in working groups to focus on building media, base building/Projects of Survival, mission, and political education committees. These committees have continued to work throughout the summer and fall, preparing for the NUH's Winter Offensive with media, toolkits and political education leading up to our winter of organizing. Thank you Put People First! PA Southeast PA for joining us during the weekend. 🗳



Nonviolent Medicaid Army National Day of Action for Medicaid Highlights

The Nonviolent Medicaid Army (NVMA) of the poor is a growing, united and politically independent national force of the poor and dispossessed. The NVMA is united across identities, regions, races, generations, political affiliations and issues across the country, and is modeled after Martin Luther King's "nonviolent army of the poor" from the first Poor People's Campaign of 1968. Those who are on or excluded from Medicaid represent the diversity of the entire working class and are impacted by every single front of struggle—the fight for housing, living wages, food, education, freedom from debt, freedom of migration, and freedom from criminalization and incarceration.

In September, the NVMA held coordinated actions across more than 12 states to fight back against Medicaid cuts and hospital closures, including four actions in Pennsylvania. The actions began with these words:

Today, September 6, 2025, we are taking action together as the national Nonviolent Medicaid Army in more than 12 states across the South, Midwest, Appalachia and the Northeast to declare: Medicaid cuts = policy murder! We are exposing the violence of ongoing attacks on healthcare, the harm caused to our communities and how we're coming together for support, survival and strategy. Healthcare is a human right!

This crisis didn't start with this administration. One third of our people don't have a primary doctor. Nearly half of us delay or don't get care because of costs. Our working and housing conditions, the industrial food we eat, and the contamination of our air and water are making us sick. Further Medicaid cuts will result in hospital closures, impacting both rural, suburban, and urban communities while health care companies put profit before people's lives. Millions more losing their healthcare and hundreds of hospitals on the chopping block is a national emergency in the richest country in the history of the world.



People on Medicaid are not the cause of skyrocketing healthcare costs. Those who are making millions – billions – off our sickness are the cause...

[Read the full statement and highlights here!](#)

Highlights from the Day of Action for Medicaid:

- [Rally](#) for Medicaid and our hospitals in Newport, Vermont & [press round up!](#)
- Hoosier Motorcade for Medicaid caravan through [Indiana](#)
- Wisconsin NVMA & Poor People's Campaign take action in [Monroe](#)
- NY NVMA speaks out in front of a shuttered hospital in [NYC](#) & in [Albany](#)
- Ohio NVMA takes their first collective action at Summa Hospital in Akron
- United Workers in Maryland rally across the urban and [rural](#) divide
- Southern Story Share brings leaders together across geography on zoom
- Mass NVMA demands more in [Greenfield](#) at at-risk hospital, Baystate Franklin Medical Center

[Watch all the action in ONE video here!](#)



Healthcare YES! Data centers NO!

The Northeast PA Healthcare Rights Committee (NEPA HRC) took action outside of Berwick Hospital, which closed permanently nearly three years ago. The HRC lifted up the current dire situation and how much worse things will become with the construction of a new data center nearby.

"We have not forgotten how this century-old community hospital was gutted and abruptly closed by healthcare profiteers. Hospital closures are an epidemic in Pennsylvania and across the country. Seventy-eight hospitals have fully or partially closed over the past 25 years in our state, one third of those in rural counties.

We took action on September 6 to say: Keep our Hospitals Open. The ongoing and deepening attacks on Medicaid will force more hospitals to close. There is growing agreement in both parties that poor people no longer need or deserve hospitals.

We reject a system that abandons our community hospitals while giving millions in tax breaks to Amazon in order to build labor-replacing, environmentally—devastating technology in our backyards."

[Click here or go to page 17](#) to read NEPA leader Rebecca's speech about the effects of Data Centers. 



Take Back our Hospitals: Collective Action for Crozer

In Southeast PA (SEPA), healthcare workers, local residents and community organizations rallied peacefully on September 8 at Crozer-Chester Medical Center in Upland, PA. Fifty people, including former patients and workers, protested outside of the hospital, while eight people engaged in nonviolent civil disobedience, sitting along the side of the lobby. Simultaneously, leaders dropped a large banner hung from the parking garage, visible from the highway nearby broadcasting,

**“Take back our hospitals!
Seize Crozer for Delco.”**



[Click here for photos from the Day of Action.](#)

Southeast PA Member Heather Isbell Schumacher reflects on the action & getting involved in PPF-PA:

This is my first year working with PPF-PA. I've lived in Delaware County for 14 years, and I come to this work after years of organizing around local prison reform. During that time I helped deprivatize the only for-profit prison in the state. What draws me to this healthcare fight is the same thing that drew me to prison abolition work: Every human being deserves to live with dignity and care.



After years of following PPF-PA's work from the sidelines, I knew I wanted to get more involved. I started off by joining the statewide calls, and then later my Southeast Pennsylvania regional meetings. Almost immediately, I felt like I'd found my people: folks committed to the struggle, and to each other, for the long haul.

Shortly after I joined PPF-PA, Crozer-Chester Medical Center closed when Prospect Holdings, a private equity firm, abandoned the property.

Since moving to Delaware County, this is the fourth local hospital I've seen closed. Crozer-Chester has always been our hospital for emergencies such as the time my newborn was running a dangerously high fever on a Friday night or when my husband got sick and needed to be seen quickly.

Like many of my neighbors, I felt the impact of Crozer's closure almost immediately. In April, I had an abnormal mammogram and needed to schedule a follow-up scan. Even under normal circumstances, that would have been stressful. Just a few years ago, I watched my mom go through surgery, radiation and chemotherapy for breast cancer. But with Crozer imaging locations shutting down and their futures uncertain, I couldn't find any appointments within an hour of my home for weeks. This continues to be a challenge, as I now need scans every six months for preventative care.



SEPA Day of Action Reflection

In September, during PPF-PA's Week of Action, our SEPA HRC organized a nonviolent demonstration at the site of Crozer-Chester. Serving as media liaison, I worked with the press to answer questions about why we were there and to state our demands clearly:

1. That Delaware County, supported by the Governor's office, **should utilize its power of eminent domain to take back Crozer from Wall Street** and return it to the people as a public hospital
2. The state should **create a Public Healthcare Advocate** office to ensure the people's rights are always heard.

Throughout the event and in the weeks since, PPF-PA has supported the #Crozer8, our members who were arrested for their nonviolent demonstration. The event represents a major step in our evolution as leaders and organizers in our community.

I'm still reflecting on the inspiration of the #Crozer8—their strength, discipline and solidarity stood out, especially when they invited the police to join them, recognizing that they too are affected by the healthcare closures. The significance of the site where we gathered added even more weight to the moment: just across the street is the seminary where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once studied.

Years ago, I was fortunate to hear PPF-PA's Nijmie Dzurinko define the working class: if you have to sell your labor to live, you are working class. That definition resonated deeply with me. I had always seen myself as struggling, but perhaps appearing to be part of the "middle class"—what Nijmie described as the "bribed part of the working class." Since then, I've felt a strong sense of solidarity and purpose in uniting us all.

Crozer's closure has only deepened that feeling. In my community, it doesn't matter whether you're on Medicaid or have employer-based insurance—we're all struggling to access care. Across the country, from healthcare to public transportation, the ruling class continues to dismantle what should belong to the public. But if we can continue to unite as a class, across our differences, we won't let them.

The moment feels ripe for change. 



[PRESS ROUND UP!](#)

BONUS: Watch IG action videos!

[Steph](#)

[Tony](#)



[Nicole](#)



“Our Hospitals Are Being Erased” Medicaid Army in McKees Rocks

In Southwest PA, members rallied outside of recently shuttered Heritage Valley Kennedy in McKees Rocks, PA. Lezlee, who helped organize the action, has been an active member of the Southwest PA Healthcare Rights Committee (SWPA HRC) for the last year. She posted this powerful agitation the day after the action:

This day of action I went to yesterday with the Put People First! PA Southwest Healthcare Rights Committee was energizing and grounding!

Our Hospitals Are Being Erased. Our Communities Are Paying the Price. 10 hospitals. Gone. In just 5 years, 10 pillars of community health have fully or partially closed across Pennsylvania. This isn't just a trend; it's policy violence. When a rural hospital closes, death rates rise. It's that simple. It's a life sentence for residents left without emergency care, without critical services, without a lifeline.

Take the Ohio Valley Hospital. For 130 years—since 1890—it stood as a guardian of this community. Then, Heritage Valley Health system bought it, not to save it, but to shutter it. They didn't see a vital institution; they saw a line on a balance sheet.

Healthcare is a human right, not a luxury for those who can afford it or a privilege for those who live in the right zip code. We all benefit when we fight for the principle that everyone deserves care. Why should our health be sacrificed on the altar of Wall Street's profits? We refuse to accept that our lives are not profitable enough to save. It's time to ORGANIZE to fight back.

Policy Violence: When budgets matter more than heartbeats. Healthcare is a human right, not a Wall Street commodity!



Lezlee reflects on her development:

The protest was a powerful lesson in what material change requires. It's not enough to be angry; you need a clear, common goal that everyone can unite behind. Organizing against Pennsylvania's hospital closures makes this clear. People from all walks of life are uniting because we see the same truth: when a hospital closes, it's an attack on our community. One person who attended the rally shared that she works with the elderly in the area and they were expressing to her, where are they going to go now for healthcare? Our fight for our human rights is what binds us together.

As a new organizer, this protest clarified the core of our work. This fight exposes that our healthcare system is not just broken; it is a form of social murder, and we are here to hold the profiteers accountable. My leadership is developing around this clarity—learning to hold that hard truth and use it to forge a united front that can finally demand justice.

I am learning to measure my impact by the practical steps we take—the new contacts, the next actions planned, and the concrete growth of our base, one person at a time. We only get what we are organized to take!



[Click here for action photos and testimony of a community member who was born at the hospital!](#)

The Nonviolent Medicaid Army Awakening in Armstrong County

In Armstrong County, community members gathered at a local faith based organization to pray and to share stories of struggling to survive in this death dealing healthcare system. Nonviolent Medicaid Army leader, Sally Simpson, shares about Armstrong County, her personal story and their September 6 Day of Action.

Armstrong County sits in the heart of Southwestern Pennsylvania's Rust Belt, a place where the ghosts of industry still linger in shuttered factories and quiet main streets. For generations, this was coal mining country, where men descended into the earth each day and entire communities rose and fell with the fortunes of the mines. Pittsburgh Plate Glass once provided steady work and good wages, anchoring the local economy until it closed its doors, leaving hundreds without jobs and a community struggling to find its footing. What remained was a landscape of economic hardship in a rural, conservative county where the residents value self-reliance but increasingly find themselves dependent on the very government programs they once viewed with suspicion.

Today, Armstrong County still has a hospital, though it's small and survives primarily on Medicaid reimbursements. It's the only facility in the county with a maternity ward, a lifeline for expectant mothers who would otherwise face long drives to deliver their babies. The reality is that many people here are on Medicaid, not by choice, but by necessity. This is what poverty looks like in modern America; working families and former middle-class professionals alike, all struggling to access basic healthcare in an area where good jobs disappeared decades ago.



I know this struggle intimately. Nineteen years ago, I was diagnosed with brain cancer, and the disease eventually claimed not just my health but my career and the insurance that came with it. When my cancer returned five years ago for the second time, I found myself on Medicaid, joining the ranks of my neighbors in a system I never imagined I'd need. For years, I've advocated for a universal healthcare system, but it wasn't until I discovered the Nonviolent Medicaid Army that I found others who shared both my vision and my desperation. For the past several months, I've worked alongside people who understand what it means to choose between medication and groceries, who know the fear of losing access to lifesaving care. In this community of necessity, I've found purpose, fighting not just for myself, but for all of us.

On September 6, a day marked by solidarity and shared struggle, a small but determined group came together in Armstrong County under the banner of the Nonviolent Medicaid Army to speak about their experiences navigating America's for profit healthcare system. The gathering, held at a local faith-based organization known for its commitment to community meals and service, brought together voices often unheard, including members of the unhoused community alongside other local residents. We were all united by the common thread of healthcare challenges.



[Click here to watch the video from the Day of Action in Armstrong!](#)

Armstrong County Day of Action Reflection Continued

Central to the day's spirit was the community meal that brought everyone to the same table, literally and figuratively. Breaking bread together, participants from different walks of life found common ground in their shared humanity and shared struggles. The meal wasn't just about nourishment for the body; it was about feeding the soul of a movement that refuses to accept that quality healthcare should be a privilege rather than a right.

This gathering represents more than just one day of action. It was part of a growing movement demanding that healthcare be treated as a human right, not a commodity. By creating space for vulnerable community members to share their stories and by building solidarity across social divides, the Nonviolent Medicaid Army is planting seeds of change, one shared meal and one shared story at a time. ▽/▽

Ohio NVMA Day of Action Reflection

Report from Ohio NVMA Day of Action

We held a speakout in front of the Summa Hospital in Akron, until the cops told us to get off their sidewalk. Summa Health system was sold to private equity last year, despite protests from the community. The Ohio Attorney General approved the terms of the sale a few months ago.

The Ohio NVMA came together for the first time in-person after some months of online calls to congress, political education & sharing our healthcare stories. We were also joined by another Akronite—and trichair of the Ohio Poor People's Campaign!

We spoke out against the many ways that healthcare profiteers harm our rights & our health as poor and dispossessed people. We soaked up the connection to each other and with people on the street, and declared "it does not have to be like this!"

We firmly believe, as Willie Baptist says, that movements begin with the telling of untold stories. We are excited to begin developing our first major base building project: a healthcare & housing survey to be used as an accessible and ongoing organizing tool that allows us to have conversations, build relationships with individuals and groups, and to identify and develop leaders. ▽/▽



Hoosiers Join the Motorcade for Medicaid: Organizing for the Right to Health in Indiana

On Saturday, September 6, organizers and community members from across Indiana and beyond joined the **Motorcade for Medicaid: Highway 27 Rural Hospital Tour**, an 80-mile caravan from Richmond to Decatur calling attention to the urgent threat of rural hospital closures caused by Medicaid cuts and healthcare privatization.

The action was organized by the Nonviolent Medicaid Army and the Richmond Housing & Health Rights Coalition, part of a growing movement uniting poor and working-class people to defend and expand Medicaid and demand the full right to health.

The day began in Richmond, where participants gathered to send off the caravan with song, prayer, and reflection. Community leaders offered words of strength and solidarity, reminding those assembled that every person—rural or urban, Black or White, across color lines—has a right to live and to care. Along the route, the motorcade connected with community members in Berne, including local faith and community groups, for shared food and conversation about what it will take to build power to stop hospital closures and win healthcare for all.

Participants included members of local Quaker meetings and Mennonite communities and others from across Indiana who have been organizing around healthcare and housing justice. Their involvement reflected the broadening base of the Nonviolent Medicaid Army—a movement of people directly impacted by poverty, illness, and abandonment who are coming together across lines of geography, race, and faith to fight for the right to health.

The Motorcade for Medicaid was part of the NVMA National Day of Action, during which communities across the country declared:

"Medicaid Cuts = Death."
"Rural Hospital Closures = Death and Abandonment."

Through testimonies, stories, and shared commitment, participants in Indiana affirmed that we will not abandon one another. We are organizing—town by town, hospital by hospital—to ensure that healthcare, dignity, and life itself are treated not as privileges, but as rights.



Thank you to Pat and Meg Hustmyer for these brilliant motorcade flags



The journey begins.



Candace and Doug from Farmland, IN joined us in Winchester and shared powerful testimony

Network Reflection

New York Nonviolent Medicaid Army



Kelly S. | NY NVMA

The Nonviolent Medicaid Army Week of Action has played a large part in the development of the New York Nonviolent Medicaid Army state formation. Not only did the 2024 Week of Action mark the official launch of our group, this year's Day of Action went a long way in consolidating and developing a strong group of leaders to carry out this work. This past September's actions in front of the closed Mt. Sinai Beth Israel Hospital in New York City, and near Albany Medical Center in Albany, further strengthened and energized our statewide organizing efforts.

With that experience and given the current attacks on SNAP and the implementation of work requirements starting November 1, our NYC team recently launched a multi-week SNAP organizing drive. By holding drives every weekend in a different community, we hope to better understand our base, educate folks on the cruel work requirements that began November 1 and the exemptions to those requirements, and build a growing and powerful movement of the poor. For us as still a relatively young formation, the goal to do (most) every weekend between now and January 1 is daunting but so are the challenges facing our communities. This is not a time to let fear get in the way.



We kicked the SNAP organizing drive off in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, at a spot connected to the Tompkins Square Food Distro. We found almost immediately that asking about SNAP sparked great organizing conversations. One 72 year-old gentleman talked about how he worked his whole life and had hoped at some point he would be able to stop and not stand in food lines. Another gentleman said he has been trying to find a job for over a year but asked how he is supposed to get one when he doesn't have stable housing and doesn't have food to eat.

The following weekend, we went to Harlem. We did an organizing conversation training, practiced with each other and then headed out into the street. In our training, we emphasized how we are not here to take the place of social workers or case managers; we are here to support people, cut through isolation, and to help navigate the arduous system that puts stumbling block after stumbling block in folks' way as they try and get the food and healthcare they and their families need to just survive.

People are clear when we talk to them. They know the system is broken and has been for a long time. Or perhaps it's working as intended, allowing millions to suffer while the millionaires and billionaires get richer and richer. We know it doesn't have to be this way. We know the richest nation in the history of the world has **MORE THAN ENOUGH** to provide healthcare, food and housing to all. We know these things are human rights and so we will continue to talk, share, support and organize, organize, organize!!! [Read the full article on our blog.](#)



Nonviolent Medicaid Army Songbook Tour

Jacob B. | Southeast PA Healthcare Rights Committee

I think one of the most important and special tasks we can take up as leaders in the movement is to get out of our own backyards and travel somewhere else in the state or country where our class is building its unity and organization. I've been fortunate this past year to be able to travel across some parts of the country for the Nonviolent Medicaid Army (NVMA), in pursuit of a creative project: an NVMA songbook. I went on tour to different parts of the country where the NVMA is building, connecting with leaders and recording them singing, in order to advance our cultural organizing and the artistic identity of the NVMA. These are just a few highlights from my experiences.

In June, I joined the growing Massachusetts NVMA for a Songs & Stories event in an after-hours queer bar that local leader, Nat, works at. There were a number of new folks there, some at their very first event with the NVMA. I was deeply moved by how the space really opened; Stacey Z. led everyone in sharing their story and she and other more experienced leaders kicked us off, modeling with a real vulnerability and power. No one in the circle that gathered refused to really open up—I remember one woman who was new joked about her surprise that she was sharing so much. The evening continued with education and song, moving people from the plight into our fight and insight as the NVMA, and the need for the politically independent self-organization of the Poor and Dispossessed.

Heading further North, with the Vermont Workers Center, I took folks through a song leading workshop, split equally between theory and practice. Detroit labor leader General Baker said, ***"Our task is to turn thinkers into fighters and fighters into thinkers."***



I offered the play on that key wisdom that we must work to turn ***organizers into singers and singers into organizers***. After all, songleading is a form of organizing. The movement of the Poor and Dispossessed needs to be a singing movement, as much as it also needs to be militant, studious, dedicated, tireless. It must have its own creative expression and I really felt that in that church basement in beautiful Vermont, surrounded by incredible leaders and received with gifts, warm embraces, full hearts, and stirring voices.

In August, Griffin from the Massachusetts NVMA joined me for the Midwest tour. In Madison, Wisconsin, we set up in Megan's church for another evening of singing and sharing about the NVMA. We finished the night with a list of contacts to follow up with and an eagerness for what lay ahead. Before we left the church, I was moved by Sally who declared with determination that they would have to sing these songs for their Day of Action themselves, whether or not they could find a musician to lend their skills to the action, if they were serious about this work.

Back at Megan's, we stayed up late yet again, speaking late into the night about the struggles of organizing ourselves and our class, as if we were old friends and not folks who had only met in the flesh that morning. While for various reasons I had started this tour crushed to earth, I was at this point feeling like a star. There are people everywhere, ready to make the struggle every day. ▽



Songbook Tour Stops in Wisconsin: Singing, Connecting & Learning

Bruce G., Megan B-L, Joyce F., Susan A. | Wisconsin NVMA

Wisconsin songbook tour stops took place Monday evening, August 18 at Payne's CoffeeHaus in Monroe and Tuesday evening, August 19 at James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Church in Madison.

In Monroe, Jacob and Griffin created a warm, welcoming space for the dozen or so participants, including a couple of restaurant patrons who decided to join in. We did some singing and a lot of heartfelt sharing of our healthcare stories. The event felt deep and connecting and several people were inspired to help organize the Sept. 6 National Day of Action in Monroe with us. Bruce Grau commented that "the willingness of complete strangers to tell their story and connect with us" was remarkable.

Megan, one of the lead organizers of the Madison event shared that "we hosted a sing along in a small local congregation. We invited connected organizers and impacted folks to a dinner before the event that allowed us to get to know each other better and then we had about a dozen community members join us for the sing along. We shared our stories and sang songs together with Jacob and Griffin. We have stayed connected with many of the folks who participated in both parts of the event."

Megan agreed that "having people share, and their willingness to do so, was impressive. I think it felt like a safe space, and I think our leaders got more comfortable with the idea of song leading. Success!"

Joyce added, on a personal note, "Jacob's event came at a hard time for me. I was still dealing with my parents' death and Tony [Joyce's husband] had recently had a minor brain bleed. But while I was at that event everything seemed under control and at peace. I'm not that good a singer. Originally, I went to the event because I wanted to see people but Jacob made me feel like I was a great singer. The sense of community was wonderful. I also learned some songs. But mainly I learned what a community at its best can feel like."

Susan added, "Jacob and Griffin brought big hearts and helpful organizing experience, not to mention the great songs and banjo-playing. I think they helped us recognize that we don't have to wait to be 'perfect' before being leaders. We can learn as we lead and we have each other and many great leaders in the movement to provide guidance and solidarity along the way. It was also fun to host Jacob and Griffin and get to know them. So grateful!" ▽



13th

Annual Membership Assembly

The 13th Annual Membership Assembly kicked off in sunny State College, Pennsylvania, on October 17, 2025. This was Put People First! PA's largest Membership Assembly to date with over 160 adults and 40 youth in person as well as 13 participants attending on zoom. A third of those in the room were leaders from our network, the Nonviolent Medicaid Army, which made this weekend not only a crucial moment for our organizing in Pennsylvania but for our whole country, as we continue to build politically independent, poverty abolitionist movement led by the poor and dispossessed united across all lines of division.

The Membership Assembly is a key moment every year where a huge number of people experience first hand the Community Agreement "Everyone is responsible for the success of the space." From housing to Audio/Visual to childcare, the weekend was planned by a 19 member team, who in turn incorporated nearly all participants at the Assembly into "Base Groups" to support both community building and carrying out these divisions of labor over the weekend. [Click here for PHOTOS & detailed reporting by the Documentation Basegroup!](#)

Saturday morning began with participants collectively building a movement altar. Leaders from Pennsylvania, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Montana, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, Vermont, Wisconsin, and California as well as international partners from Cuba and Brazil, shared an object that reflected their local history of struggle and led the group in a chant.

Assembly content kicked off with a session on Hospital Closures & the Political Economy of Healthcare. This was followed by workshops on Political Storytelling, People's Clinics, Medicaid Sign-ups and Appeals and Songleading. Saturday night ended as it always does with Arts & Culture Night with nearly 50 participants of all ages sharing stories, songs, visual art, jokes and more.

Sunday opened with informal discussion space for participants to come together to strategize our response to SNAP cuts—collectively and individually, what we need to know to keep our food stamps in the face of work requirements—as well as for regions and formations to reflect on the weekend. The next block of workshops focused on how we embody our key political principle of Leadership across Difference in the Battle for the Bible, Unity Across Language and Housing and Healthcare.

We ended the 13th Assembly with a closing, bringing us all together in song, appreciation for the space and one another, and an agitation for how we bring forward what we learned from the weekend to make the struggle every day.



[PHOTOS &
Reporting from
the weekend](#)



[Watch the
Battle for the
Bible panel!](#)



[Watch the NVMA
Housing &
Healthcare panel!](#)



[Watch Hospital
Closures & the Pol
Economy of
Healthcare Panel!](#)

Wendy, Southwest PA

I was a bit apprehensive on the days leading up to the Assembly. I have been mostly isolated, with my daughter, since before COVID. I have trust issues that run deep and yet I'm as friendly as anyone can be. Once I arrived and got started I was amazed at all the kindness and talent in attendance and excited to be part of it all. I'm almost positive my dopamine levels rose higher than they have been in a long time. I got to meet most of my Health & Safety Buddies, who I was assigned to check in with as part of the Health & Safety team.

I even got to get acquainted with my Spanish speaking buddy. I caught up with her on the closing day. She was at a table with other Spanish speaking attendees. I introduced myself and told her how happy I was to meet her and that I hoped she enjoyed her time with us in Pennsylvania. I currently only speak a few words in Spanish. I've decided that I'm going to make a strong conscious attempt to learn more. I started out apprehensive, became excited, ended on amazed, impressed and now I can't wait until next year!



Cameron, Northeast PA

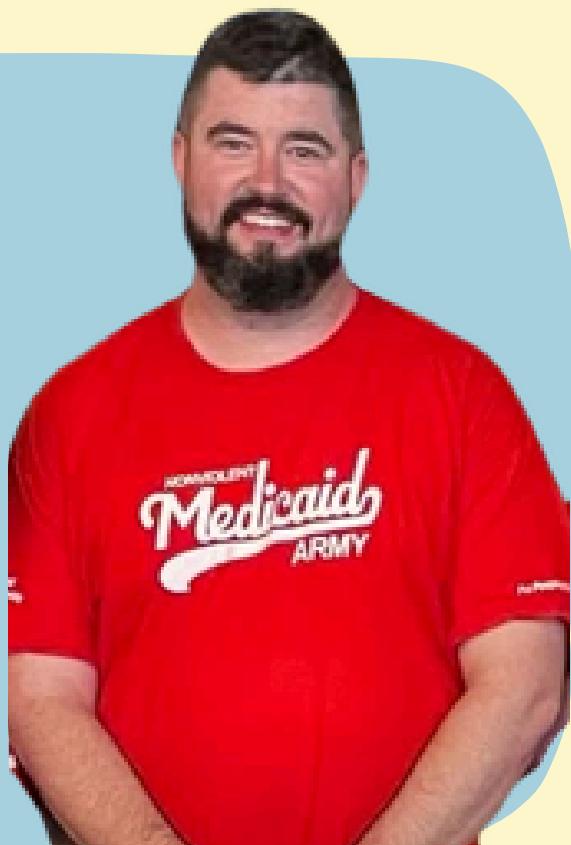
This was a year of firsts for me. I have been a member of Put People First! PA and the Nonviolent Medicaid Army for a little over a year. This was my first time attending the Annual Membership

Assembly, and this was my first time being a member of the Planning Team. Harrison and I co-led the Tech and A/V basegroup.

The Tech and A/V group came together against some pretty big challenges. We were able to work through them all and solve them.

It was a testament of one person not necessarily knowing everything, but together we all knew something.

The altar that was built was a stark reminder that this battle is far from over and has been going on a long time. Movement leader Willie Baptist reminded us of that when he spoke about his time during the 1965 Watts Uprising. We also need to remember that this movement does not just need to take place in the United States, it needs to take place around the world. Leaders from sister organizations in Brazil and Cuba were there to remind us of this. I was overwhelmed by the power that the working class can have when we come together. This is something I keep thinking about and will continue to remind people about. I look forward to many more assemblies to come!



Massachusetts NVMA Delegation

MA
Reflections

The Massachusetts Nonviolent Medicaid Army (NVMA) is a two-year-old state formation, started when a former Put People First! PA (PPF-PA) leader moved to Massachusetts. A small core of leaders cohered in Eastern and Western Mass by reconnecting with existing leaders and with new leaders drawn to the clarity of the NVMA. The state formation was further strengthened when two leaders from the Vermont Workers' Center moved to Boston last year. We have been building out two regional committees in West and East while systemizing basebuilding cycles in each region, developing new leaders in the process. This is the second year the Mass NVMA sent a delegation to the PPF-PA Membership Assembly.

Stacey

Through co-leading a delegation from Massachusetts, I developed better understanding and skills in the small components of leadership, like organizing a debrief, supporting new leaders, and paying attention to details. The experience helped me feel more confident in taking on leads and developing new leaders through our basebuilding activities in Western Mass.



[Read the full Mass NVMA reflection here!](#)

Taka

Due to the increasingly precarious survival of the poor and dispossessed as well as our own efforts, our two-year-old Eastern regional committee is at a potential point of significant growth. By learning the history of how the Maryland United Workers grew with fits and starts from a local to a statewide movement, I was reminded that leadership development is a slow and steady process through organizing cycles and campaigns. Building solid leadership to take on growth is a prerequisite to successfully harnessing such growing interest (to not let gold pass through the sieve). I believe we are starting to do that!

Allie

The quote about a leader needing to be able to lead a meeting, scrub a toilet, etc. really rang true to me and showed me that versatility and adaptability are important traits in leadership. I tried to challenge myself to be like this by saying yes to new things even if I found it scary or uncomfortable. I allowed myself to help with songleading in ways that scared me. As a musician, it is hard for me to separate performance from making music for organizing, so I wanted to put myself out of my comfort zone by saying yes to helping with musical aspects of the Assembly and beyond back in MA. I did this to check my ego and allow music to be used in organizing contexts without thinking about how I sound.

Bassima

"Leadership is when your thoughts govern your actions," Nijmie explained in the closing ceremony of the Membership Assembly. To really be a 4 C's leader (Clear, Competent, Committed, and Connected), you have to work on closing the gap between what you think and what you do. At the PPF-PA Membership Assembly, I saw many leaders moving in ways that clearly embodied their thoughts and feelings. Looking back through snippets of memories from that powerful weekend, I finally had the rubric with which to process that ineffable magical love I see in this community. There is no magic here. We are ordinary people who are actively committing to each other and ourselves, committing to the laborious day-to-day struggle of building up our community, educating ourselves, learning from each other, learning from our mistakes. Committing to match our actions to our thoughts, today and every day.

Melissa, United Workers, Cumberland, MD

MA
Reflections

My goal going into the Membership Assembly was to learn something new and bring back ideas that we can use towards our organizing in Maryland. Throughout the weekend I made new friends both nearby and from other states.

It was my first time traveling outside of the state representing United Workers and I was nervous as heck! I was asked to co-facilitate a workshop and share my knowledge on how we manage our Medicaid Monday posts. For someone who still struggles with stage fright, that was a big step but I said yes. And I'm so glad I did. I was proud to share how our Maryland team has improved organizing our Medicaid Monday photos. That's been essential for helping everyone recognize members across the different regions. I learned a lot from other regions about how they organize their media teams, train new members, and handle equipment. I have to say my group from UW had a blast and I couldn't be happier with the outcome of the trip.



Eva, Movement of Immigrant Leaders in PA (MILPA)

A happy return home and with lots of spirit of struggle and motivation to not give up on the path to equality and dignity. We are in the same fight, it doesn't matter what color shirt we wear, we share the same heart to fight for change. And if we unite our strengths and ideals, we will be stronger. Unity makes strength.

Ofelia, East LA Tenants Union

A lot of information was put into context, as I never imagined the situation that many people in Pennsylvania, and other states, with or without papers, are facing. Seeing the closure of hospitals and the lack of clinics where women can receive prenatal care is infuriating, seeing how the government system operates, that while human beings work and contribute, they treat us like machines. But if you stop working, they discard you because you're no longer useful. It's the same problem for every human being: if you don't have good physical, mental, emotional, and psychological health, you can't have a good job, much less housing. Therefore, many people end up living on the streets, or dead. The health of human beings is very important, just as we here are fighting for decent housing because everything is connected, and thanks to each of you, it was a learning experience for me to bring this and share it with the committees we have here in East Los Angeles.



Dayanis,

Centro Memorial Martin Luther King, Havana, Cuba

One of the International guests, Dayanis, from the Centro Memorial Martin Luther King (Martin Luther King Memorial Center) in Havana, Cuba, shares on her first trip to the U.S.:

“Terrified” is the word—it wasn’t my first trip abroad, nor was it my first experience going alone, but I had been spending my nights sleeping very little. I was anxious.

In the end, everything went simpler than expected, and even though the customs official (clearly of Latina ancestry) saw herself reflected in me, and thought that I had come seeking the American dream, she let me enter the United States. In that moment, I thought about my siblings, about so many Cubans who have lost their lives seeking entry into “paradise,” and I felt overwhelmed because I wasn’t here to stay. I felt that I was taking up a space that wasn’t meant for me, that I had stolen the opportunity from someone else.

From here on out, the real learning began. I was there thanks to Put People First! PA, that organization full of beautiful, courageous people, people who have more than they think and who struggle to transform their society from within it (as it should be), diverse people full of humility who in three days showed me another face of the USA—the face of the forgotten, the dispossessed, or as Galeano would say: the nobodies. These “nobodies” who are giants and fight every day from their communities for the most universal human rights: access to health, housing, education and dignified work. They taught me how, in the wealthiest country in the world, which spends millions and millions of dollars on wars, every year there are more people without medical care or a roof over their heads. How it is not only the “land of opportunity” but also the land of the greatest contrasts.

In those three days, I saw an organization without bosses but full of leaders, every one with their mission, nobody left without a job to do. From a place of respect and shared responsibility they organized themselves, stuck to the schedule, gave everyone the chance to speak, and kept in mind the particular needs of every person. And although maybe I should tell you about what I learned about healthcare in the USA, really the greatest lesson was all of you. Thank you for the honor of meeting you, thank you for raising your voice, for putting the people first. Thank you for seeing Cuba as a sister country and for your solidarity.





Eva, Movimiento de Inmigrantes Líderes en Pensilvania (MILPA)

Un feliz regreso a casa y con mucho espíritu de lucha motivación para no rendirse en el camino a un cambio de igualdad y dignidad. No importa el color de camisa estamos en el mismo corazón de luchar por un cambio. Y si unimos nuestras fuerzas e ideales seremos más fuertes. La unión hace la fuerza.

Ofelia, Sindicato de Inquilinos del Este de los Ángeles

En la Asamblea fue mucha información que se puso en contexto ya que yo nunca me imaginé la situación que vive mucha gente en Filadelfia y en Pensilvania y en otros estados con o sin papeles. Al ver el cierre de hospitales y al no haber clínicas donde la mujer pueda recibir atención médica prenatal es una impotencia al ver que de cualquier forma el sistema del gobierno como lo manejan mientras que el ser humano trabaja y contribuye y nos ven como máquina. Pero si dejas de trabajar te desechan porque ya no les sirves. Entonces es el mismo problema para todo ser humano, si no tienes una buena salud física, mental, emocional y psicológica no puedes tener un buen trabajo menos una vivienda. Por lo tanto termina mucha gente en la calle viviendo o muerta.

Es un claro ejemplo del trabajo que ustedes están haciendo, y como explicaron, sobre las medicaciones y las negligencias médicas que lleva a muchos jóvenes a la muerte. Es muy importante la salud del ser humano, al igual que nosotros aquí estamos luchando por tener una vivienda digna, ya que todo está conectado. Y gracias a cada uno de ustedes fue un aprendizaje para mí traerlo y compartirlo a los comités que tenemos aquí en el este de Los Ángeles.



Dayanis,

Centro Memorial Martin Luther King, Havana, Cuba

"Aterrada" es la palabra, no era mi primer viaje al extranjero, tampoco mi primera experiencia en solitario, pero llevaba noches durmiendo muy poco, estaba ansiosa.

Al final todo fue más sencillo de lo esperado, aunque el oficial (de evidente ascendencia latina) se vio reflejado en mí, y pensó que iba buscando el sueño americano, me permitió ingresar a los Estados Unidos.

En ese momento pensé en mi hermanos, en tantos cubanos que han perdido la vida persiguiendo la entrada al "paraíso" y me abrumé pues yo no iba para quedarme, sentí que yo estaba ocupado un lugar que no era para mí, que había robado la oportunidad de otro.

A partir de ahí comenzó el verdadero aprendizaje. Gracias a PPF-PA yo estaba ahí, esa organización llena de gente linda, con coraje, gente que tiene más de lo que cree y lucha desde dentro (como debe ser), gente diversa y llena de humildad que en 3 días me mostró otra cara de USA, la cara de los olvidados, los desposeídos, como diría Galeano: los nadies. Esos nadies que son gigantes y cada día luchan desde su comunidad por los derechos humanos más universales, el acceso a una salud, vivienda, educación y trabajo digno. Me enseñaron cómo desde el país más rico del mundo que gasta millones y millones de dólares en guerras, cada año hay más personas sin atención médica o un techo sobre sus cabezas. Como no solo es el "país de las oportunidades" sino el de los mayores contrastes.

En esos 3 días vi una organización sin jefes pero llena de líderes, cada uno con su misión, nadie quedó sin tareas, desde el respeto y la corresponsabilidad se organizaban y cumplían horarios, se daba acceso a la palabra y se tenían en cuenta las peculiaridades de cada persona. Y aunque quizás debería hablarles de lo que aprendí sobre la Salud en USA, realmente el mayor aprendizaje fueron ustedes. Gracias por el honor de conocerlos, gracias por levantar su voz, por poner al pueblo primero. Gracias por ver en Cuba a un país hermano y por la Solidaridad.



Unity Across Language

Spanish & English Speakers Coming Together in the Struggle for Healthcare in PA

Jonah H. | Ohio Nonviolent Medicaid Army

Stacey P. | Put People First! PA

Beginning this summer 2025, Put People First! PA (PPF-PA) started a project to deepen our practice of Unity Across Language (UAL), with a particular focus on Spanish. We have been working to develop a shared political understanding of the strategic importance of UAL, learning from the UAL committee of the University of the Poor. Their committee has declared:

"We reject the idea that providing multilingual spaces is an act of charity conceded by majority language speakers to minority language speakers. It is in the best interest of our whole class, including poor white and monolingual people, to turn language from a barrier and a tool of separation, to a weapon for unity and liberation.

The work of Unity Across Language is not for multilingual or minority language speakers or immigrants to figure out alone. It is the responsibility of movements of the poor and disenfranchised to learn from and build power with each other."

Towards building power with each other, we have been practicing language skills, yes, but also learning more about the specific challenges for immigrant Spanish-speakers in the struggle for healthcare. This builds on our practice over several years of helping leaders in partner organizations apply for and receive emergency Medicaid. We know that not all Spanish-speakers in this country are immigrants, and of course not all immigrants here speak Spanish, but this is where we have had some capacity to start. By making the struggle a school, we know our practice of Unity Across Language will keep expanding!

Our group has been applying what we know and learning more through the practice of UAL. In base building activities, especially in the Southeast PA and Northeast PA Healthcare Rights Committees, we have been connecting more with Spanish-speaking communities through the struggle for healthcare as a human right.

As in the past, we worked to make our Membership Assembly (MA) bilingual in English & Spanish. The 2025 MA was the first time that we have had such a solid crew of members working on UAL! We also led a Spanish-speaking Base Group, including reps from our partner organizations like MILPA (Movement of Immigrant Leaders in PA), Union de Vecinos (part of the LA Tenants Union), el Centro Martin Luther King de Cuba, and the Landless Workers Movement (MST) from Brazil.

At the Assembly, we led a session about our approach to UAL in PPF-PA, where we asked folks to reflect on the following questions. Maybe you can bring these to a 1-on-1 you have soon!

1. **What languages has your family spoken over the generations?**
2. **Have you had access to learning languages beyond English?**
3. **How do those experiences shape how you think about including multiple languages in our movement?**

We shared stories of the poor uniting across language in history, including other efforts some of our members were part of, like the Kensington Welfare Rights Union. Folks from across the Nonviolent Medicaid Army eagerly shared their own stories about figuring out how to base build across languages in the struggle for healthcare in PA and other states. Quoting the UAL team of the UPoor again, "Being fluent in the languages of the poor and dispossessed is invaluable to our movement and although it may take more time to understand one another, the results end in (international) solidarity."



Hablantes de español e inglés se unen en la lucha por la atención médica en Pensilvania

Jonah H. | Ejército No Violento del Medicaid de Ohio

Stacey P. | ¡El Pueblo Primero! PA

A partir de este verano de 2025, ¡El Pueblo Primero! Pensilvania (PPF-PA) inició un proyecto para profundizar nuestra práctica de Unidad en lenguaje (UAL, por sus siglas en inglés), con un enfoque particular en el español. Hemos estado trabajando para desarrollar una comprensión política compartida de la importancia estratégica de la UAL, aprendiendo del comité de la UAL de la Universidad de los Pobres. Su comité ha declarado:

«Rechazamos la idea de que proporcionar espacios multilingües sea un acto de caridad concedido por los hablantes de la lengua mayoritaria a los hablantes de lenguas minoritarias. Redunda en beneficio de toda nuestra clase, incluidas las personas blancas pobres y monolingües, convertir el idioma de una barrera y una herramienta de separación en un arma para la unidad y la liberación.»

Con el fin de fortalecer nuestro poder colectivo, hemos estado practicando nuestras habilidades lingüísticas, sí, pero también aprendiendo más sobre los retos específicos a los que se enfrentan los inmigrantes hispanohablantes en su lucha por acceder a la atención médica. Esto se basa en nuestra experiencia de varios años de ayudar a los líderes de organizaciones hermanas a solicitar y recibir Medicaid de emergencia. Sabemos que no todos los hispanohablantes de este país son inmigrantes y, por supuesto, no todos los inmigrantes hablan español, pero aquí es donde hemos tenido cierta capacidad para empezar. Al convertir la lucha en una escuela, sabemos que nuestra práctica de Unidad en Lenguaje seguirá expandiéndose.

Nuestro grupo ha estado aplicando lo que sabemos y aprendiendo más a través de la práctica de UAL.

En las clínicas del pueblo y otras actividades de construcción de bases, especialmente en los Comités de Derecho a la Salud del Sureste y Noreste de Pensilvania, nos hemos conectado más con las comunidades hispanohablantes a través de la lucha por la salud como un derecho humano.

Hemos trabajado para que nuestra Asamblea de Membresía (MA) sea bilingüe en inglés y español (como hemos hecho con muchas MA en años anteriores). La MA de 2025 fue la primera vez que contamos con un equipo tan sólido de miembros de PPF-PA que trabajaron en UAL. Como parte de la estructura del grupo de base que probamos para esta MA, también lideramos un grupo de base en que participó la mayoría de los participantes hispanohablantes de la MA, incluyendo representantes de nuestras organizaciones hermanas como MILPA (Movimiento de Líderes Inmigrantes en Pensilvania), Unión de Vecinos (Sindicato de Inquilinos de Los Ángeles), el Centro Martín Luther King de Cuba y el Movimiento de los Trabajadores Sin Tierra (MST) de Brasil.

En la Asamblea, lideramos una sesión sobre nuestro enfoque en la UAL en PPF-PA, en la que pedimos a los asistentes que reflexionaran sobre las siguientes preguntas. ¡Quizás puedas plantearlas en una conversación individual con otro líder de este movimiento que tengas próximamente!

- ¿Qué idiomas ha hablado tu familia a lo largo de las generaciones?
- ¿Has tenido acceso a aprender idiomas además del inglés?
- ¿Qué influencia tienen esas experiencias en tu forma de pensar sobre la inclusión de múltiples idiomas en nuestro movimiento?

Compartimos historias de cómo los pobres se han unido a lo largo de la historia más allá de las barreras lingüísticas, incluyendo otras iniciativas en las que han participado algunos de nuestros miembros, como la Kensington Welfare Rights Union. Miembros del Ejército No Violento de Medicaid (Nonviolent Medicaid Army) compartieron con entusiasmo sus propias historias sobre cómo han logrado crear una base multilingüe en la lucha por el derecho a la salud en Pensilvania y en otros estados.

Documentary screening

Healthcare in Cuba: A video about the 2024 NVMA Brigade to Cuba

[Click here
to watch!](#)



[Read the
full report
back!](#)



What if you could get the healthcare you need when you need it without worrying about a bill? Whether dental, medical, wellness, maternity, mental/behavioral, physical therapy, vision or hearing care, glasses or hearing aids, what if you could get it and not have to pay a bill? It would mean healthcare is a respected human right! It would be good, less stressful, you could feel better & live healthier and longer. And that's what a group of Nonviolent Medicaid Army (NVMA) leaders found in Cuba, when we visited in the spring of 2024. We visited with doctors at their offices and at the Martin Luther King Center (CMLK) in Havana, sharing our experiences of healthcare in the U.S. and learning how Cuba delivers healthcare, their current challenges and what they have to share with the rest of the world that can help us build a movement for us to also have healthcare as a right for all.



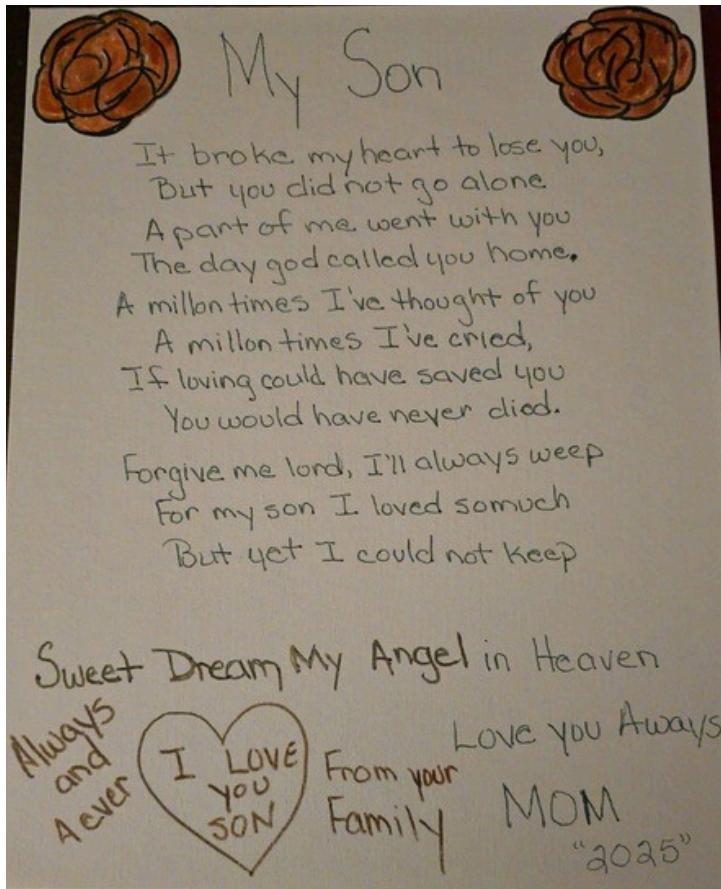
**In Memoriam. Calvin Myles and David Greene at the Museum of the Literacy Campaign,
Havana, Cuba (May 2020) Acrylic on Canvas, 24" x 30"**

As leaders of the Grassroots Literacy Coalition in New York City, David and Calvin Myles were invited to tour literacy programs in Venezuela, Cuba, and Mexico in 2008. Calvin was a leader of Adult Voices United and the National Literacy Coalition. He advocated nationally for adult students to be included in the leadership of campaigns for adult literacy and spoke about the importance of listening to the experiences of adult students in planning literacy programs. He spoke to audiences in cities across America as well as at the United Nations. Calvin learned to read and write as an adult at the age of 39 in New York City, years before he met David. He and David worked and traveled together to advocate for literacy education for nearly 20 years. Calvin's death in 2009 was a great loss to the literacy community and a great personal loss for David.

Celebrations + In memoriam

In memoriam

Jeanette M., Southeast PA HRC Member, writes a poem to her son, Tyrone:



Brandyce is Rica Phillips' (outgoing Southwest PA HRC Co-Coordinator) beloved sister who died November 1. Brandyce died in Rica's arms; she and Rica were like "two peas in a pod," or "double trouble" as Rica said recently. Brandyce is survived by Rica and two sons, Darius and Daevon.



From Joy Hodgson, Central Appalachia HRC Member, in honor of David Beatty:



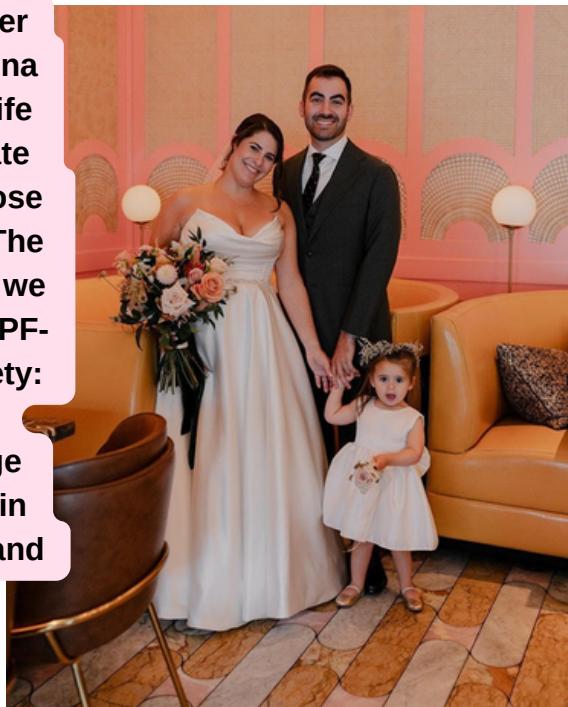
Javier Cotal, 49, passed away in December. Javier was an original member of the York Healthcare Rights Committee. Javier was a fighter for disability justice and LGBTQ rights. Check out [his poem from the 2016 Keystone](#)



Celebrations



Southeast PA Leader **Jacob Hope** & Deanna got married! "My wife and I got to celebrate our love with our close friends and family! The marriage and family we are building is like PPF-PA's vision for society: not corrupted by economic exchange but instead rooted in love, care, joy, fun, and justice!"



Ron Moose: This November we celebrated the first birthday of our daughter **Sophia**. In that time, Sophia has been with me and the members of the CAPA HRC from things like our first Justice Jam, to the re-start of our in-person meetings, and our Membership Assembly this year! These things wouldn't at all be possible without the dedication and organization of the working class members of Put People First! PA. I am excited to see where the years take Sophia down her leadership development path.

Artwork by Xochil

Movement of Immigrant
Leaders in PA



"Line Work," is an ink drawing on an 18x24 Bristol board. It is a portrait of the singer Mitski, drawn using only lines.



This painting is titled "Culture". It is acrylic and thread on an 18x24 canvas. This painting serves as the first installment in a three-part series of my mother, seen through the lens of Mexican culture and my personal experiences in a Mexican household.

Arts & Culture

That Which is Invisible: A poem by Melissa Wiertz

Do you see the person
Who is dealing with mental illness?
Do you know the person
Who hurts to walk?
Do you see that which is invisible?

Do you see the person
Who cannot afford to buy groceries?
Do you know the person
Who needs to get medication but can't?
Do you see that which is invisible?

Do you see the person
Who needs to take each step carefully?
Do you know the person
Who needs help with housing?
Do you see that which is invisible?

Do you see the person
Who is struggling to survive?
Do you know the person
Who is hurting more than they show the world?
Do you see that which is invisible?

Do you see the person
Who wants to walk without pain?
Do you know the person
Who barely made it through the day?
Do you see that which is invisible?

Do you see the person
Who barely makes ends meet?
Do you know the person
Who cannot find the silver lining?
Do you see that which is invisible?

[Read the full poem on the blog.](#)





Song by Zevi K.

I adapted the song “If I Were A Rich Man” from *Fiddler on the Roof*... So many of us learn to believe all our problems would be solved if only we, as individuals, had more money. But really, that won’t save us and we need a bigger understanding of what “wealth” is. This song is me imagining what it could be like to be “rich” in a way that includes all of us....

If I were a rich man
Ya ba dibba dibba dibba dibba dibba dum
All day long, I'd biddy biddy bum
If I were a wealthy man
I wouldn't have to work hard
Ya ba dibba dibba dibba dibba dibba dum
If I were a biddy biddy rich, yidle-diddle-didle-didle man

I'd build a big health clinic with rooms by the dozen
Right in the middle of the town
Doctors, nurses, techs went to school for free
And there'd be workers whose one job is to check
On you if you haven't been around
Co-pays and deductibles are banned!

David painted these people because they are teachers from his own life. They are people who led movements and who have always made room to learn from the people. They are working people who became intellectuals both by studying books from the past and by studying and learning from the world around them to help create new leaders for a better world.

Can you see yourself in this picture?

We'd all have jobs that don't make us want to die
Because they'd value human life
Instead of squeezing profits for billionaires
And we'd find ways to stop destroying the Earth
Because that's a thing we could just do!
Can you feel the breeze of that sweet air...

If I were a rich man...

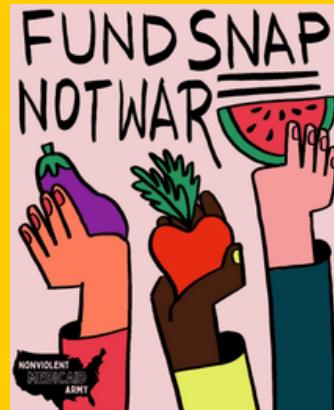
I see my kids, my children, looking like a rich man's kids
With their bellies full of food
Getting the care and attention that they need
I see them putting on plays at cultural centers,
Learning how to cook and how to swim,
Singing, *there's a future still for me...*

The politicians of the land would come to call on us!
They would ask us to advise them
Like Solomon the wise
What do you see, my people?
What do you need, my people?
When they told us we were powerless they lied!
Yabba dee die die.....

[Read the full song on the blog!](#)

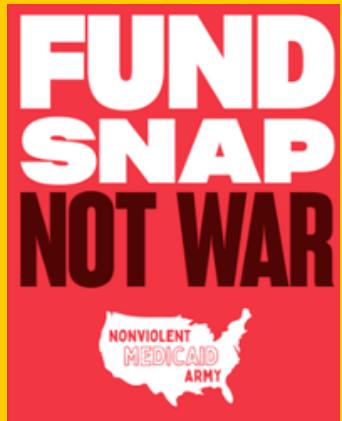


The billionaires just imposed work requirements on food stamps.



Join the Nonviolent Medicaid Army to fight back against cuts to Medicaid and food stamps!

You can keep your food stamps even if you don't work 20+ hours/week if you tell the welfare office that you are:



- Under 18 or over 65 years old
- Getting disability benefits (like SSI, SSD)
- A parent with kids under 14
- Pregnant
- In school or job training (half-time or more)
- Getting unemployment benefits
- Taking care of a sick family member
- In drug or mental health treatment
- Doing community service 20 hours/week
- Going back to work within 60 days
- Experiencing homelessness
- Living with a health condition that makes it hard to work

[Sign up here](#)
to get help with your food stamps



Stay in touch!

Website: www.putpeoplefirstpa.org

Email: info@putpeoplefirstpa.org

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