

# THRESHOLDS IN DELAWARE COUNTY 2016 ANNUAL REPORT



**Thresholds Board of Directors**  
**2015-2016**

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President—Joanne Matteucci  
Vice President—Jerry Nowell  
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**MEMBERS AT LARGE**

Maggie Arbuckle  
Joan Joseph  
Paulina Michaud  
Robin Thomas

***Awards for Outstanding Service to Thresholds in 2016***

**2016 Thresholds Volunteer of the Year**  
Bill Vernon

**Volunteers of the Year for George W. Hill**  
Roy Isen & John McAndrews

**Volunteer of the Year for SCI-Chester**  
Inez Jones

**Volunteer of the Year for Juvenile Detention Ctr.**  
Jerry Nowell

**Fran Cook New Volunteer Award**  
Judith Scheffler

**Terri McKay Award**  
Elek Fenyes

**Thresholds in Delaware County 2016 Volunteers**



Clint Amos  
Maggie Arbuckle  
Patricia Bakey  
Gloria Beam  
Heather Berardinelli  
Mary Lu Bartorillo  
Laurie Bass  
Fran Battista  
Leif Beck  
Georgia Beli  
Sharon Black  
Laura Blenman  
Byrin Bratcher  
Nadine Bratcher  
Melissa Ciesielski  
Carol Colombo  
Jim Coyne  
Michal Curry  
Andrea Damm  
Michael DeVacchio  
Dave Dietrich  
Robyn Dooley  
Delores Dunbar  
Mary Dwyer  
Elek Fenyes  
Melissa Finnegan  
Conrad Fullmer  
Bonnie George  
Charlotte Giblin  
Mary Ellen Goldfarb  
Carol Henn  
Sandi Hollie  
Roy Isen  
Inez Jones  
Thomas Jones  
Tom Kane  
Joan Josephs

Brenda Kucirka  
Joanne Matteucci  
John McAndrews  
Paulina Michaud  
Bill Murphy  
Linda Nicholl  
Jerry Nowell  
Maureen O'Dea  
Mary Ann Pezick  
Joanne Prazenica  
Mike Prentice  
Debbie Quagliarello  
Gale Rankowski  
Bob Rieck  
Megan Rutkowski  
William Ryan  
Judy Scheffler  
Joshua Schrier  
Frances Schultz  
Kristina Sladek  
Arthur Strawbridge  
Christina (Tina) Stanton  
Michael Stapf  
Fred Struckmeyer  
Robin Thomas  
Marie Torrey  
Bill Vernon



**President’s Report**  
By Joanne Matteucci

Greetings to our friends, supporters and volunteers!

2016 has been a very busy year for Thresholds! We have experienced some unforeseen events and forged new paths over the past 12 months. We are excited and grateful for the continued support of all of our constituents and the clients that seek out our program in record numbers. The leaders of the facilities that we serve appreciate Thresholds and we are appreciative of their willingness to let us serve the men and women in their care.

As you will read in this issue, the women’s program at George W. Hill Correctional Facility has had new life breathed into it after many years of being stagnant. Much of the credit goes to our coordinator, Fran Battista as well as Elek Fenyes, for the Women’s Program being so successful recently. Be sure to read Jerry Nowell’s article highlighting their impressive efforts!

We have a new coordinator, Bill Vernon, at the Hill replacing our long time, dedicated coordinator Elek Fenyes who had to step down this year for personal reasons. Elek was and is an amazing supporter of Thresholds and we wish him well!

SCI Chester continues to thrive with many inmates wanting to participate in Thresholds. The wait for these gentlemen is often quite long due to our need for more volunteers for this facility. If you would be interested in volunteering in Chester, I am sure Tina Stanton would love to speak with you!

Pathway Forward, the college entrance initiative by Delaware County Community College continues to work with Thresholds graduates. Matt Brophy was kind enough to send me an update on their work, please be sure to check it.

If you are able to contribute financially to the work we are doing it would be so very much appreciated!

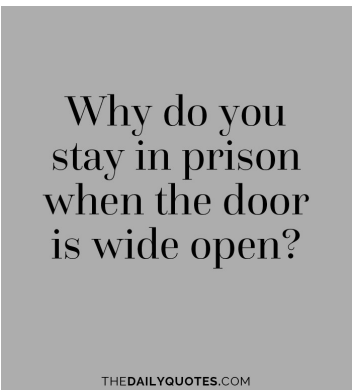
Thank you all for all you do to make our program the success it is—we cannot do it alone!

Remember to check out our website ([thresholdsdelco.org](http://thresholdsdelco.org)) that has a fresh new look thanks to Russell Torrey , the spouse of one of our new volunteers, Marie Torrey. Also, please like our page on Facebook—Thresholds in Delaware County!

Be well!

Joanne Matteucci

Board President



*Never lose hope.*

**“We all make choices, but in the end our choices make us.”**

**Fran Battista Brings Thresholds to Women at the Hill  
By Jerry Nowell**

Fran Battista completed her Thresholds training in February 2014. When she arrived to teach at the George W. Hill Correctional Facility in Thornton, Elek Fenyes was the Thresholds coordinator there. He was making a major effort to reinstate the Women's Program, which had been dormant for many years. Fran agreed to be the first new volunteer to teach the women. She did an excellent job, and for the first time in years, women graduated from the Thresholds program. Her accomplishments gained her the G. W. HILL Volunteer of the Year award for 2014.

However, Fran was upset "*That nobody wanted to teach the women.*" She felt a more congenial place to teach was needed, and with Elek's help, got permission to use a classroom on the Women's Block. This went well until other groups wanted to use the same room. Fran resisted, was accused of "harassment" and told to get out.

Now she was really angry. She objected, made suggestions and persisted until, miraculously, she was given permission, for the first time ever, to teach right on the Women's Block.

With this accomplished Fran was able to recruit a few more volunteers, and worked hard to match teachers with clients who had similar interests. This helped to improve rapport and increased the teachers' availability.

Elek was supportive from the beginning, and Fran credits him with helping to grow the program. He suggested that there be a Women's Coordinator at the Hill. So, in the summer of 2015, the Board established this position, elected Fran to fill it and made her a member of the Board. She continued her dedicated efforts, and increased the number of women graduated in 2015 to twenty-two. At our Annual Dinner, she received the Thresholds Teacher of the Year Award.

Next, Fran felt that the women had been deprived of Macro (group) classes for long enough. So, she asked some experienced teachers to organize them, and the first Women's Macro classes were held, on three consecutive Saturdays in February 2016. Eleven women graduated, with the intention of then having Micro classes later as teachers became available. This worked so well that 25 women attended the next Macro classes held in September and others, unfortunately, had to be turned away. This is indicative of how much these women have come to love Fran and respect what she is doing for them.

Fran is most appreciative of the support she has gotten from the Correction Offices. She knows most of their names and what's going on in their lives. Recently, Lieutenant Turner, Commander on the Women's block, asked Fran about Thresholds and was given a copy of our Guide. She was so impressed that she asked for additional copies for the CO's to read. Having prison staff members understand what Thresholds is all about, helps them relate better to both our teachers and their clients.

This may be one reason Fran has been given such ready access to the female inmates. For example, last December Fran was able to go from cell to cell with Thresholds applications and got twenty-three women signed up, during a prison lock-down!

One of Fran's greatest challenges was an inmate named Inez (not her real name), who was rather disruptive during a Macro Class. Shortly thereafter, Inez was sent to lock up (the "hole"). Fran obtained permission to teach her there – unprecedented! Within weeks Inez was not only out of the "hole" but also out of the prison!

What Fran has done for the Women's' Program at the Hill, in just two years, is nothing short of miraculous! She tripled the number of teachers; initiated Macro Classes for the first time; and increased the number of graduates from seven to fifty-three! Recently Fran persuaded the congregation at her church to provide scholarships allowing four women church members to take the Thresholds Volunteer Training and then, hopefully teach women at the Hill. This is but one more way in which Fran touches the hearts and minds of the women inmates in need of help!

**Interview with Jerry Nowell—The Man/The Legend!****By Judy Scheffler**

I had the pleasure of interviewing longtime Thresholds in Delaware County member Jerry Nowell on February 2, 2017. Jerry is a past President and a current, active Board member. He is very familiar to Thresholds members, including new Thresholds volunteers, who meet him at their training sessions. Thresholds clients, who have benefitted from his warmth and wisdom over the years at SCI Chester, the Juvenile Detention Center, and George Hill, are too numerous to count. Below are his responses to some questions I asked him.

**How long have you been with Thresholds in Delaware County, and how did you get interested in the program?**

Jerry began to work with Thresholds in Delaware County in 1989, the year he retired, after seeing a notice in a bulletin at the Episcopal church in Media. The Thresholds program was attractive to him because it combined two things that he likes to do: teach and reduce recidivism.

Jerry grew up in Rose Tree, near Media. He attended the School in Rose Valley, and graduated from Swarthmore High on D Day (the invasion of Europe) June 6, 1944. He joined the Navy, and served in the Pacific aboard a troop transport. His ship took soldiers to Okinawa and the Philippines, and he saw Hiroshima shortly after the A bomb was dropped. Upon returning home he attended Temple University, where he has earned three degrees. He has been an educator his entire life. Beginning as a teacher in South Philadelphia, he moved into school administration as a vice principal and then as a principal in Philadelphia. Later he came to the Rose Tree Media School District as a vice principal and a principal. So volunteering with Thresholds offered an opportunity to return to teaching, which he loves, and hadn't done for 50 years.

**What sort of work do you do with Thresholds?**

Jerry has done "about everything" with the Thresholds program. He began teaching 1-1 at George Hill. When SCI Chester opened, he went with a group of teachers to meet with many men to explain the program to them, and then taught Macros there for 15 years, mainly with Fran Cook. A couple of years after beginning to work at SCI Chester, he had an opportunity to teach at the Juvenile Detention Center, where he coordinated the Thresholds program until a couple of years ago, when Maggie Arbuckle took over. In 2016 he came back to George Hill, where he has been teaching the women's Macro classes set up by Fran Battista, and this January he began teaching 1-1 with a client.

**What do you find rewarding about your work with Thresholds? Could you give any specific examples?**

"People--in one word," is how Jerry describes what he finds most rewarding about working with Thresholds. "The clients have been great. I really enjoy teaching. I've learned so many things. Also the other teachers." Jerry describes his fellow Thresholds teachers as "a wonderful and unique group of people who volunteer." Jerry's first client was a Viet Nam vet, who had become cross-addicted because of his experiences as the last survivor of his battle group. After coming home and getting clean, he went to work at DuPont as an engineer--but he was also a member of a motorcycle gang and he went on to use his skills to manufacture "angel dust." Then there was a female client, Angel, who learned to be a pilot but also joined her boyfriend in robbery. Also "Tee" Jones, a lifer at SCI Chester, who was convicted of murder and spent six years on death row. Finally he taught Emmett at the Juvenile Detention Center. He was a refugee from the civil war in Lebanon, one of 26 children of his father, who had four wives.

**What do you find to be the most challenging part of working with Thresholds? Could you give any specific examples?**

Jerry finds the administrative tasks to be the most challenging part of working with Thresholds. He recalls, for example, all the preparation he had to do in order to ensure that the operation went smoothly when he served as Coordinator at the Juvenile Detention Center. Another challenge was teaching training sessions for groups wanting to start Thresholds chapters. Teachers from Thresholds in Delaware County traveled to Connecticut, Virginia, New York City, New Jersey, Indiana and Florida, introducing the program. For about three years there was a flurry of activity. Jerry "misses that." He says, "It was exciting and very rewarding." Finally, the greatest challenge was re-writing the Guide (originally called a workbook) and the Teacher's Manual. Mickey's original materials were being used when Jerry joined Thresholds. He headed a curriculum committee, which updated these books several times. Guides were also written for women, juveniles, and those not in prison.

**Have you encountered any clients who had notable stories or insights as they learned the Thresholds decision-making program?**

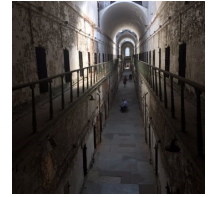
Jerry recalls several clients who responded positively to the knowledge and skills they gained through the Thresholds program. One client, for example, wrote a very positive letter to the teachers of the Macro class at SCI Chester. Jerry finds that clients' comments on the "gift cards" give positive reinforcement of the program's effectiveness. Finally, the "reflections" at each final Macro class are always overwhelmingly positive, and remind teachers why we teach Thresholds.

**Do you have any ideas or suggestions for the Thresholds in Delaware County program?**

The "main thing," Jerry noted, was restarting the women's program at George Hill, and he is "so proud of the job Fran has done." He would also like to see Thresholds at the Juvenile Detention Center reestablished on a more regular basis. However, he honestly believes that "Thresholds in Delaware County is the most successful chapter ever!"

**Recent Events & Outings  
By Judy Scheffler****Visit to Philadelphia Eastern State Penitentiary**

Thresholds in Delaware County outing on October 16 included a one-hour guided adult tour of Eastern State Penitentiary, in the Fairmount section of Philadelphia. This social and educational outing “highlighted Eastern States’ 142-year history, revolutionary architecture, notorious inmates and world-wide influence.”

**Prison Visiting at Eastern State Penitentiary: A Long Tradition in Philadelphia**

As teachers of the Thresholds program, members of Thresholds in Delaware County continue a long tradition of prison visiting by community volunteers in the Philadelphia area. When Eastern State Penitentiary opened in 1829, its innovative Pennsylvania System of separate confinement with labor became internationally celebrated. Because this system required prisoners to be housed in individual cells, where they were strictly prohibited from contacting each other, a system of inspections and visits by people from the community was necessary in order to ensure humane treatment of prisoners. The Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons (which became today’s Pennsylvania Prison Society), was mandated by Pennsylvania law to visit Eastern State Penitentiary regularly in order to fulfill this important function. The Female Prison Association of Friends in Philadelphia, a sort of women’s auxiliary of this all-male Philadelphia Society, visited women incarcerated at Eastern State. Members of these societies were generally Quakers and other religiously-minded citizens of Philadelphia. They were people of some means, whose keen sense of civic and moral responsibility compelled them to use their wealth and leisure to address social problems they saw in the growing urban environment.

Visits to Eastern State Penitentiary were generally conducted weekly, and the Philadelphia Society and the women’s association recorded the number of visits in regular reports. Because maintaining the principle of prisoner anonymity and separation was a priority, visitors went directly into the cells, where they talked with men and women, read the Bible, and taught those who were illiterate to read.

In reports throughout the nineteenth century, the Philadelphia Society noted that discharged prisoners faced practical employment and housing difficulties, which they addressed by providing financial assistance and some job referrals. They believed separation of those who had been incarcerated from each other must continue to be maintained on the outside. Only the female association, recognizing that discharged women faced particularly difficult obstacles in reentering society, took the major step to open a sort of halfway house, the Howard Home. Here, discharged women lived together, received training in domestic tasks, and were finally placed with families, usually in the country.

Almost two hundred years ago, visitors reached out a helping hand to incarcerated men and women, even in a prison as formidable as Eastern State Penitentiary. Thresholds in Delaware County continues this area’s long tradition of offering to its clients assistance and support for positive change.

**Holiday Get Together**

Thresholds in Delaware County held a casual holiday get together on December 19 at the Fellowship House in Media. Attended by approximately 30 members and their guests, it was a festive event with lots of opportunity to meet new people and catch up with friends. Plenty of delicious dishes and holiday treats, contributed by those who attended, ensured that everyone had a good time. The get together has been a holiday event for volunteers for about the last five years.

**Security Training for Volunteers at George Hill**

On Saturday, November 19, 2016, twenty Thresholds in Delaware County volunteers met at the training center at George Hill Correctional Facility to receive security training. This training is required yearly to update volunteers’ credentials to meet with clients at the Hill. The session was led by a training instructor from the prison.

After completing the session, volunteers received a Certificate of Completion for the volunteer refresher course, a Certificate of Appreciation from George Hill, and an updated visitor pass, good until December 31, 2017. Twelve additional volunteers, who were unable to attend the November meeting, received security training at a session on December 10.

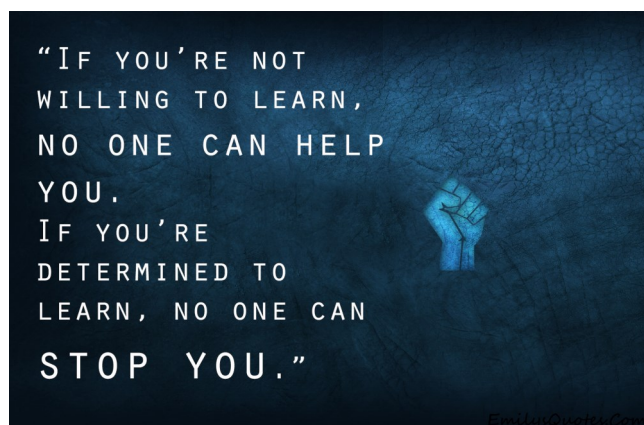
**WE WILL BE PLANNING MORE OUTINGS AND SOCIAL GATHERINGS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR!  
STAY TUNED!**

**Pathway Forward**  
**By Matt Brophy, Professor at DCCC**

For the past three years, Delaware County Community College has been partnering with Thresholds in Delaware County to inspire returning citizens from the George W. Hill Correctional Facility to consider pursuing a college education. Thresholds graduates who have a high school diploma or GED have a chance to meet with Darren Lipscomb (Assistant Director of Admissions at DCCC) and myself to inquire about our wide variety of associate's degree programs and job training certificate programs. Students learn about their options for financial aid and often complete a college application immediately, right there in the visitation room, prior to their release!

Once these prospective students return to their homes and communities, Darren or I reach out to them to see if they are still interested in registering for classes. If so, we invite them to campus and walk them through the first steps of financial aid and registration. Once they begin classes, we connect them with a counselor who will check in with them periodically and help them meet any personal, cultural, or academic challenges they may be facing.

We are grateful to Thresholds for helping us connect with this population of prospective students, and we are committed to helping them meet their educational goals.





**Treasurer’s Report 2016**  
By Bill Murphy

This year our revenue stream was not near what was anticipated, mainly due to lacking the Charitable Foundation Grants that we had budgeted. During 2017 one of our key goals will be re-establishing previous Foundations’ support and exploring new potential sources. It is significant and reassuring to note that over 30% of our income was from our dedicated individual volunteers!

On the expense side, we continue to be frugal and prudent with our expenditures. Part of this results from efficiencies of both our Program Coordinators and our Officers.

A capsule look at our financial activity for 2016 follows:

Revenue	
Foundations	\$ 5,675
Churches	\$ 4,619
Individuals	\$ 7,596
Other	\$ 1,971
	<hr/>
Total Revenue	\$ 19,861
Expenses	
Coordinators	\$ 24,048
Administration	\$ 2,428
Office Supplies, Printing	\$ 861
Volunteer Trainings, Recognition	\$ 664
Audit, Insurance	\$ 1,001
Other	\$ 1,745
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Total Expenses	\$ 28,319
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Deficit	\$ (8,458)
Assets	
Capital One	\$ 10,890
Bryn Mawr Trust	\$ 40,343
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Total	\$ 51,233

**George W Hill Correctional Facility**

By Bill Vernon

**Men's Program**

Some of the ongoing challenges cited in last year's report are ingrained in the nature of a county correctional facility. Ours is primarily a pre-trial and/or pre-sentencing population. Following sentencing, those serving more than a 23 month term are transferred to a state facility. Those acquitted at trial or sentenced to probation are discharged. On average, 15-20% of each starting class is lost to these circumstances. We have addressed this problem by shortening the length of the cycle by 1 week without sacrificing content. We are also now able to complete the turnaround in 4 days rather than the previous 2 weeks. Seventy two men were graduates of our program this year!

**Women's Program.**

In 2015 we created a part time Womens Coordinator's position, and Fran Battista answered the call. Fran has become known for her unorthodox recruiting methods. Every Friday she walks onto the Women' Unit, and signs up clients on the spot. She leaves Thresholds workbooks on tables near where she's working and when she gets a nibble she reels them in. She has worked to secure the Unit classroom one Saturday each month for Macro classes, and we are now permitted to meet with women in the Visitation Room, thereby creating less conflict over limited space. Fifty three women were graduates of our program this year!

These advances have enabled us to bring Thresholds to a previously under served portion of our clientele. We look forward to growing this program in 2017 to meet the demands of this expanding population.

**Pathway Forward**

We are entering the 3rd year of a joint venture with Delaware County Community College. Upon release, clients that have completed high school or earned their GED while incarcerated, and have completed the Thresholds program can be enrolled in a special "returning citizens" program that handles financial aid as well as integration into college life. This extraordinary program will undoubtedly prove to be the single greatest deterrent to recidivism.



## SCI CHESTER

By Tina Stanton

In 2016, 40 men completed the Threshold Program at SCI-Chester and received graduation certificates! We had 145 new requests, interviewed approximately 80 men to participate, had 14 volunteers from the community teaching Micro and Macro sessions, and also had 5 men serving life sentences teaching Thresholds.

It is always rewarding teaching men at SCI-Chester, and Thresholds is much appreciated by our clients and much of the prison staff. The prison also has a new superintendent who knows us by sight and we will be working on teaching her more about Thresholds. Prison administration and requirements at time may cause frustration, but many rules are there for our and others' safety. A big change for us has been that Mr. Jack Booth, who we worked with for many years as staff person to help us set up and run our classes took on a higher level position and can no longer work with us. So we have been working with Chaplain Akrong, who is supportive and helpful. Chaplain Akrong is charged with overseeing all volunteer programs as well as religious activities. Although he may not have the time to do everything Mr. Booth did for Thresholds, he has been a great resource to me and to the program. Many thanks to Mr. Booth for his generosity and support of Thresholds through the years!

We are experiencing a shortage of volunteers this year. We would love to have more volunteers to help at SCI Chester! Two of our inside teachers who received life sentences when they were under age eighteen should be getting out soon with the change in the law, and that is very good news.

Although we may not reach as many men at the Correctional Institution in Chester as we would like, Thresholds remains a very strong and consistent presence there. Both volunteers and clients get much out of the experience. We are looking for new volunteers from the community, and hoping that some of our former clients will be joining us as teachers in the future as well.

*“The past does not have to be your prison. You have a voice in your destiny. You have a say in your life. You have a choice in the path you take.”*

- Max Lucado -

OkDay.com

## Juvenile Detention Center

By Maggie Arbuckle & Jerry Nowell

This past year, five dedicated teachers graduated 13 children at the Delaware County Juvenile Detention Center. The JDC continues to house 30% less children than they have in the past. Gale Rankowski has graciously agreed to spearhead the Juvenile Program and hopefully make it accessible to more youth in 2017.

Hearing about an exciting new Juvenile program that our colleagues in Chester County have been using, our team tried the program in November. Our teachers thought this new version presented some new and exciting ways for teachers to learn more about their client, and for the young people to better understand themselves. We plan to include some of their exercises like, Who Am I? This asked for background information much like we do with our adult clients. Other activities which will enhance our program are A Deeper Look (which helps the clients better define their values), Tough Decisions Ahead, and The Spotlight Test.

Although we haven't taught as frequently as in the past, the sessions we've had have been enjoyable and productive. For example, our most recent weekend was with five girls who were a joy to teach. All had major problems but were willing to listen and participate, and seemed to really want to avoid being locked up again.

One of the girls was a sixteen-year-old named Cloie (not her real name). She has been doing drugs for two years and has anger management problems. She's been incarcerated four times and enrolled in five different "treatment" programs. During this time, she has yet to have a clean urine test.

Cloie is very smart, realistic, and now, for the first time seems optimistic. She knows she is the only one who can change her behavior, and thinks Thresholds came along at just the right time. Recently she met her new best friend in rehab. This girl had done "every drug in the book", but is now clean. Cloie believes, with the change of friends, and a clear goal ahead, this time she'll make it!

**Gifts from Foundations, Churches & Associations in 2016**

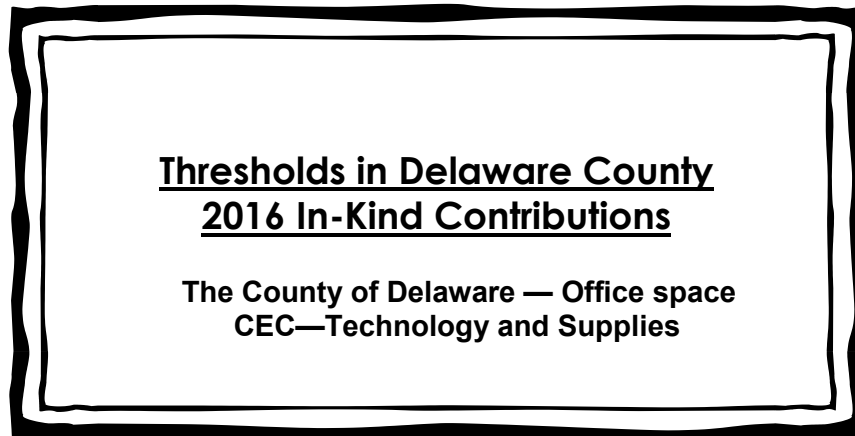
Boeing Volunteer Gift Match

Chester Monthly Meeting of Friends

Patricia Kind Foundation

St. Christopher's Church, Gladwyne

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Delaware County



We wish to sincerely thank each and every individual Contributor for their generous donations as well! As stated earlier in this report 38% of our funds come from individual supporters!

***Working together we have made and continue to make changes in the lives of our clients and our community!***