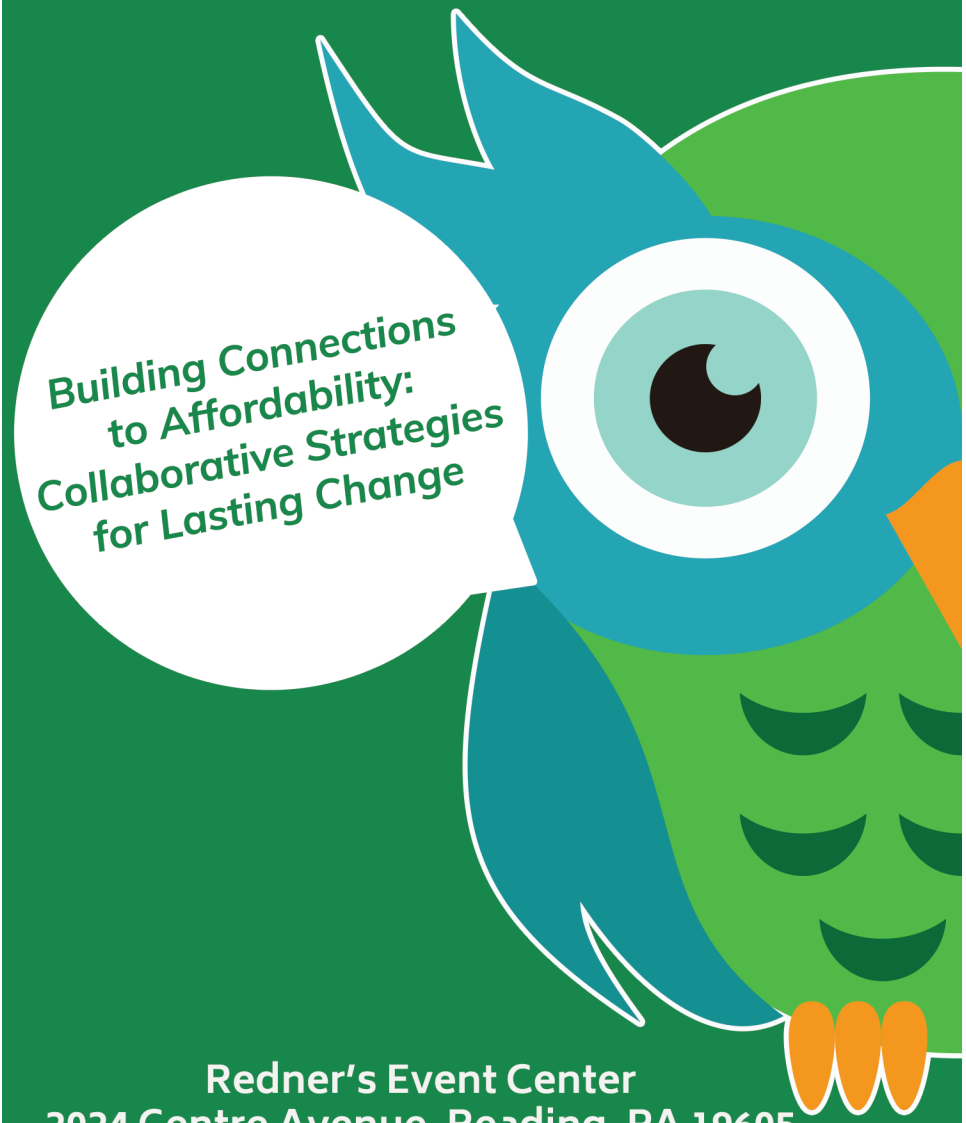
BeWise

BERKS COUNTY

2026

Building Connections to Affordability: Collaborative Strategies for Lasting Change



Redner's Event Center
2024 Centre Avenue, Reading, PA 19605

Building Connections to Affordability: Collaborative Strategies for Lasting Change

Registration & Breakfast
8:30 - 9 a.m. | Main Room

Welcome
9 - 9:15 a.m. | Main Room

Building Connections to Affordability
9:15 - 10:45 a.m. | Main Room

Break
10:45 - 11 a.m.

Concurrent Sessions
11 - 11:45 a.m.

Are You Getting What You Pay For?
Main Room

The Algorithm of Appearance: Social Media & Eating Disorders
Breakout Room

Lunch
11:45 a.m. - 12:45 p.m. | Main Room

Yoga for Mental Wellness: Where the Body Meets the Mind
12:45 - 1:30 p.m. | Main Room

Break
1:30 - 1:45 p.m.

SNAP Benefits & Helping Harvest
1:45 - 2:30 p.m. | Main Room

Break
2:30 - 2:45 p.m.

A Road Map to Accessing Berks County Behavior Health Services
2:45 - 3:30 p.m. | Main Room

Door Prizes & Surveys
3:30 - 3:45 p.m. | Main Room

AGENDA

8:30 - 9 a.m. **Registration & Breakfast**

9 - 9:15 a.m. **Welcome**

Shari Williams, Sr. Communications Specialist, PAPUC
Anita D. Miller, Program Manager, Project Peace/Community Prevention Partnership/CHOR Youth & Family Services (CHORYFS)

9:15 - 10:45 a.m. **Building Connections to Affordability**

Moderator: **Shari Williams**, PAPUC
Panelists: **Dan Mumford**, PAPUC
Jessica Rice, Pennsylvania American Water
Shadia V. Lao, FirstEnergy
Brian Shuttlesworth, UGI
Robin Miley Johnson, DHS

A collaborative opening session connecting community members and professionals with practical affordability resources. Topics include winter energy pricing and regulatory updates; utility imposters and service-termination rules; expected winter heating costs and rising electricity prices; and utility assistance, weatherization, and LIHEAP eligibility, applications, and benefit updates. An interactive question-and-answer activity will reinforce key information.

10:45 - 11 a.m. **Break**

11 - 11:45 a.m. **Concurrent Sessions**

Are You Getting What You Pay For?
Main Room

Mary Bach, AARP Pennsylvania Volunteer, Chair Consumer Issues Task Force

Do you ever feel "ripped off" when shopping? Do you understand Pennsylvania's amusing and confusing sales tax applications? When you fill your tank with a gallon of gas, how can you be sure that's what you received? Have you noticed that product packaging seems to be shrinking while prices stay the same? Do you find yourself hunting for prices while shopping, or have you ever been overcharged at a checkout scanner? Your shopping trips will never be the same after this entertaining and educational presentation packed with important consumer information.

Join us for an engaging and informative presentation, this session promises to be both entertaining and enlightening!

The Algorithm of Appearance: Social Media and Eating Disorders
Breakout Room

Erica Butler, Blue Ridge Eating Disorders Care Center

Explore the relationship between social media and eating-disorder risk, including body dissatisfaction, comparison, weight stigma, and disordered eating behaviors. The session will identify harmful patterns and offer strategies for clinicians, caregivers, educators, and individuals to recognize and interrupt them.

11:45 a.m. - 12:45 p.m. Lunch

Christian Leinbach, Commissioner, County of Berks
Kimberly Barrow, Vice Chair, PAPUC

12:45 - 1:30 p.m. Yoga for Mental Wellness: Where the Body Meets the Mind

Kathleen M. Epler, Betterview Counseling and Trauma Recovery

Explore breathwork, simple asana, and mindfulness practices that can help release stress, decrease anxiety, and support overall well-being. This guided, trauma-aware session offers a safe approach to reconnecting with the body and authentic self.

1:30 - 1:45 p.m. Break

1:45 - 2:30 p.m. SNAP Benefits and Helping Harvest

Melissa Beltran Del Rio, Helping Harvest

Learn about SNAP eligibility, updated work requirements, and the application process. Helping Harvest will also share information about local food-assistance resources and access to nutritious food throughout the community.

2:30 - 2:45 p.m. Break

2:45 - 3:30 p.m. A Road Map to Accessing Berks County Behavioral Health Services

Melanie Will, Berks Counseling Center
Yvonne Stroman, COCA
Stephanie Earle, KidsPeace Berks Campus
Kristy Baynes, TRS
Elizabeth Heffner, Tower Behavioral Health

Gain a better understanding of behavioral health and substance-use-disorder intervention and treatment services, levels of care, and how to navigate available resources so individuals and families can connect with the support they need.

3:30 - 3:45 p.m. Door Prizes and Surveys

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HHKMN9P

Please complete your evaluation.
Your feedback is important to us!

Guest Speaker

MARY BACH



Mary Bach is a long-time, nationally recognized, independent Consumer Advocate. As a volunteer, she is also Chair of the AARP Pennsylvania Consumer Issues Task Force.

A former high school teacher, Mary was elected Murrysville Councilwoman for four years, and then elected Franklin Regional School Board Member for eight years. She has numerous television and radio credits, including appearances on the "Today Show," "Good Morning America," "Donahue," and "Dateline," as well as many segments on local TV programs and talk-radio shows. She has been a featured speaker or workshop presenter at numerous state, national, and international conferences on a wide variety of consumer issues. She appears monthly on ABC27's "GoodDayPA" in Harrisburg, PA, providing the FraudWatch segments, and weekends doing the "FraudWatch Minute." She is also a frequent guest on "Focus on Aging Adults" on PCN-TV.

Mary has been on the forefront of telemarketing issues, from the consumer's perspective. She is Vice President of the Scanning Certification Advisory Board, helping to set industry standards for retail pricing accuracy at the checkout. She has had Governor's appointments to three statewide committees. She is now in her third term as a member of the PUC's Consumer Advisory Council, representing the general public. She was honored as 1999 National Consumer of the Year at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., and also has received the Jefferson Award Bronze Medal. In 2004, she was awarded AARP's prestigious Andres Award, the organization's highest honor for community service. In 2006, the Pennsylvania Association of Weights and Measures named their annual consumer award after her, "The Mary Bach Consumer of the Year Award," for her efforts in promoting marketplace fairness. In 2016, she received the AARP "Ethel Award for Community Outreach." In 2018, she was honored by AARP nationally as one of 12 "Superstar Volunteers" and was the recipient of the AARP 2018 National Trailblazer Award. In 2019, she was honored with the Westinghouse SURE Lifetime Achievement Award. Mary is the mother of two, and the grandmother of four. She resides in Murrysville, PA.

BeWise BERKS COUNTY

Committee Members

Anita Miller, Community Prevention Partnership, *Committee County Chair*
Christina Chase-Pettis, PAPUC, *Co-Chair & Organizer*
Shari A. Williams, PAPUC, *Co-Chair & Organizer*
Carol Bailey, Berks Counseling Center
Erin Leight, RHA Health Services
Lori Brightbill, FirstEnergy
Aimee M. Bucca, Berks County Mental Health
Hector Cruz, Berks Community Action Program
Elizabeth Fortuner, Berks Counseling Center
Gregory Gerdeman, County of Berks
Sophie Himlin, Community Prevention Partnership
Shadia M. Lao, FirstEnergy
Jessica E. Rice, Pennsylvania American Water
Abby B. Scott, UGI Utilities
Hailey Sowers, RHA Health Services
Madison Spence-Moore, United Way of Berks County
Adalbys Ventura, Berks County Community Health Center
Alyson Warke, Tower Behavioral Health

Special Thanks to Our Generous Partners and Supporters

PAPUC Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
Berks County Liberty Independence Numbers Counties MH/DD Program
UGI Energy to do more®
Pennsylvania American Water WE KEEP LIFE FLOWING®
FirstEnergy
BCAP EOC
United Way Berks County
Tower Behavioral Health Advancing Health. Transforming Lives.
CHOR
RHA Health Services Previously Salisbury Behavioral Health
Berks Counseling Center
PAPowerSwitch Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
PAGasSwitch Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission