

What Are You Doing with What You've Been Given?

A Story on Nancy Pia and Her Family



Photo Caption (L to R): Abby, Nancy, Sawyer, Cohen in front of Sawyer, Evie, Tyler, Louie, and Mike. October 2019.

“Mimi, you have to do something. There are so many people who are hungry,” said 9-year old Evie to her grandmother, Nancy.

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, Nancy Pia of Kennett Square was learning from Evie about food insecurity in Southern Chester County. After hearing of the November fire at Kennett Area Community Service (KACS), Evie and her third-grade peers from Westtown School organized a school-wide drive, collecting 1200 lbs. of food. Evie and her mother delivered the collection to KACS, and learned first-hand of the needs of the underserved. KACS is only 2 blocks from where Nancy grew up and the thought of her neighbors in distress, and her granddaughter’s call to action, caused her to act.

KACS has been connecting neighbors in need with food, for more than 60 years. Today, as COVID-19 causes job losses, sickness, and new obstacles for citizens, KACS is a lifeline for hundreds. Their mission is to strengthen the community in Southern Chester County through food, housing, and crisis services. With the help of supporters like the Pia family, KACS can continue to operate during the crisis to meet growing demands.

Before the pandemic, there were 550 families (900 children) registered for a 5-7 day supply of food KACS provided once a month. 90% of what was distributed before COVID19 were donations KACS secured weekly. COVID-19 forced KACS to suspend their 75 volunteers to protect their safety and no donations were made because stores had nothing to donate.

Since March 13th, the staff at KACS has provided over 1,000 families with meat, produce, dairy, and non-perishable food for a 5-7 day supply (according to family size). All of the perishables are being purchased by KACS at costs of about \$4-5,000 a week. In addition, KACS Emergency Assistance program has provided over \$70,000 in rent, mortgage, and utility payments to help many families impacted by COVID-19's devastating economic fallout. Currently, KACS is processing 100 more requests for emergency assistance.



Photo Caption (L to R): Sawyer, Tyler, Evie, Abby, Cohen in front of Abby, and Louie. October 2019.

Nancy's six grandchildren range in age from 3 to 9 years old. They are learning from their grandmother during the pandemic in so many ways. To raise money to support KACS and other organizations that are helping the community, Evie (9) is finger knitting rugs and selling them. Three of the other grandchildren, Abby (8), Tyler (6) and Sawyer (5), who are unable to visit their great-grandmother in her nursing home, are making cards and letters for her as well as the other residents to cheer them up. In addition, Nancy and her husband Mike have stepped up to make two major financial contributions to KACS. They have also made significant gifts to Family Promise of Southern Chester County and La Comunidad Hispana to help them meet the unprecedented needs caused by COVID-19. Nancy says, "We had to do something. This is our town, and these are our people."

In addition to learning together through giving back, Nancy is enriching the lives of her grandchildren by connecting at a safe distance and over Facetime. Evie and Nancy are writing a book together, from which all the proceeds will go to charity. Sawyer is a budding artist, and she and Nancy have art classes together once a week. Abby and Tyler are interested in music. Nancy bought them instruments for their recent birthdays, and they've been having fun with their weekly sing-alongs and dance parties.

The "lessons" go both ways. Nancy can teach the younger generation and in return, learn about what is happening in the world from their perspective. Nancy says, "It's all about staying connected during these sheltered times."

Nancy credits her mother for her compassionate attitude. “My dad passed away when he was 32. My mother raised her 4 children as a single working mom. She taught us the impact of service to others and to always do good with what you have.” Nancy and Mike’s 4 children share in that belief and have learned the benefits of philanthropy through them.

In 2002, the Pias founded the Michael and Nancy Pia Foundation. The Foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of children, and supports organizations and programs focused in those areas. Last year they established a fund at the Chester County Community Foundation in order to formalize their charitable giving.

In 2018, Nancy introduced a mindfulness program to 7 local schools to help students better manage their emotions and calm their minds. She later created the Living Kindness Program. This initiative provides funding for West Chester University and Sanford School students to take action by giving back to their communities through service projects they are passionate about.

Nancy instills in her grandchildren that we all have the opportunity and responsibility to make the world a better place. She hopes they will grow to be kind and compassionate individuals with a sense of duty to those in need. Her message is strong, “What are you doing with what you’ve been given?”



Photo Caption (L to R): Nancy and Mike Pia of Kennett Square