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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Dementia-Friendly Lehigh Valley Coalition Debuts**

*As a newly inducted member of Dementia Friendly America, the Lehigh Valley aims to become friendlier and more inclusive towards individuals and families experiencing Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.*

**Allentown, PA, February 5, 2020** – Pennsylvania is one of the most rapidly aging states, with more 17% of its population being over the age of 65. That's why United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley, Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley, YWCA of Bethlehem and a steering committee of committed volunteers and advocates who provide leadership for this effort have joined forces to develop a Dementia-Friendly Lehigh Valley coalition (DFLV). In December, after a comprehensive application process, the Lehigh Valley was accepted to be part of the National Dementia Friendly America initiative.

DFLV aims to make the Lehigh Valley a place where people who are living with dementia and their caregivers are empowered, supported and included in society. The purpose of the steering committee is to:

- identify the resources and tools needed to create awareness
- provide education and outreach
- and gain support from individuals, emergency responders, businesses and community-based organizations throughout the Lehigh Valley.

To date, DFLV has a 2020 work plan that identifies specific work groups to achieve the goals, created resources for healthcare education, developed a DFLV brand identity, and secured grant funding for a website, among other accomplishments. The steering committee plans to host a community kickoff event in early summer for those who would like to get involved or learn more.

Most importantly, the Lehigh Valley is now privy to the resources provided by Dementia Friendly America. "It looks like you have excellent partners at the table working together to make Lehigh Valley more dementia friendly, and clearly have a track record of success," stated Meredith Hanley, Director of Community Capacity Building for the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, in a letter of member acceptance.

The framework for Dementia Friendly Lehigh Valley (DFLV) began in 2013 as a team convened by the Phoebe Ministries Center for Excellence in Dementia Care and as an



outgrowth of the Phoebe Institute on Aging (PIA), with the goal of raising awareness and reducing stigma about Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders (ADRD) among community members. The team also encouraged the Lehigh Valley community to become more accessible and supportive for individuals affected by ADRD and their caregivers.

In summer 2018, a three-part community forum brought together key players in the Greater Lehigh Valley in order to further the cause of building a Dementia-Friendly community. Three sessions facilitated by Michelle Barclay, who was essential in initiating Minnesota's state-wide Dementia-Friendly initiative, focused on uniting local organizations and institutions from diverse disciplines for a mutual cause. At the conclusion of the forums, Dementia-Friendly Lehigh Valley was accepted under the United Way's robust Healthy Aging initiative Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley, with support from the YWCA of Bethlehem and a steering committee comprised of various community stakeholders, including Lehigh and Northampton County Health Departments, St Luke's University Health Network, Lehigh Valley Health Network, the Alzheimer Association and local senior service providers such as Phoebe Ministries, Morningstar Living and Acts Retirement-Life Communities.

To learn more about the goals of DFLV, or to get involved, please email [info@dementiafriendlylv.org](mailto:info@dementiafriendlylv.org) or visit [www.unitedwayglv.org/dflv](http://www.unitedwayglv.org/dflv).

### **Member Organizations\* of DFLV**

Abington Manor  
Acts Retirement-Life Communities  
Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley  
Alzheimer's Association - Delaware Valley Chapter  
City of Allentown Health Department  
City of Bethlehem Health Department  
Fellowship Community  
Frederick Living  
Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Health Network  
Lehigh County Aging and Adult Services  
Lehigh Valley Health Network  
Morningstar Living  
Northampton County Area Agency on Aging  
PA LINK  
Phoebe Ministries  
State Senator Pat Browne's Office  
State Senator Pat Toomey's Office  
St Lukes University Health Network  
United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley  
YWCA of Bethlehem

\*And several retired community volunteers

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### **Mission of Dementia Friendly Lehigh Valley**

The mission of DFLV is to raise awareness and reduce stigma related to Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders (ADRD) among community members and encourage the Lehigh Valley community to become more accessible and supportive for individuals affected by ADRD and their caregivers.

### **Mission of United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley**

The mission of United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley is to provide the leadership, convene the partnerships, and develop the resources and solutions that improve our community. We remain committed to these goals and sincerely appreciate the continued support of partners, program providers and donors throughout the Lehigh Valley.

[www.UnitedWayGLV.org](http://www.UnitedWayGLV.org)