

Porter County Aging & Community Services Inc.  
1005 Campbell Street  
Valparaiso, IN 46385

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## A passion for nursing shines through as new Energy Assistance volunteer takes on role

Alexis Brandt knew she wanted to be a nurse at the young age of 3.

“It is a passion. To me nursing is a wonderful profession and I find it fascinating,” she says.

Alexis brings her experience as a nurse and strong communication skills to her role as a volunteer for the Energy Assistance Program.

The program is an income-eligible program that helps individuals and families who are struggling to pay their energy bills. When participants qualify for a determined amount, the payment is electronically paid to the appropriate energy company.

“We work as a clearinghouse to see if someone qualifies for energy assistance working from a list of requirements,” she says. “We want them to come in with all of the paperwork needed so it’s a very smooth process.”

The retired RN volunteers at the PCACS offices one day a week.

She worked for 42 years as a nurse at the local hospital and is board-certified in medical-surgery nursing. She spent seven years in the medical arena, seven years on a surgical unit and the rest of her career in education.

“I was the lead nurse planner for continuing education. I had to prove why we were offering an educational program: what was the deficit and the goal or outcome of the educational activity for the nurses attending the program,” she says.

She is still active in the nursing world through her participation in the Chicago Area of Nursing Staff Development. The organization offers the opportunity to socialize and focuses on current



Alexis Brandt

issues in health care and continuing education. “I received a scholarship last year to attend the national conference in New Orleans and brought back copious notes to share the information with the group,” she says.

Beyond volunteering at PCACS, she also offers her time as an assisting minister at Faith Lutheran Church and spends time with her family: husband Dave and daughter Annaliese.

“I have always believed in giving back to the community. When my daughter was in school, I volunteered at the school whether that was in the classroom or as a Girl Scout leader,” she says.

“As a society, we have to give back.”

One of Alexis’ favorite quotes is: “There are few things more pathetic than those who have lost their curiosity and sense of adventure, and no longer care to learn.” - Gordon B. Hinckley



### PCACS MISSION

PCACS extends a helping hand to seniors, people with disabilities, and the low-income residents by providing compassionate services to improve their quality of life while maintaining their dignity and independence.



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For more information on the services provided by PCACS, contact:  
Bruce Lindner, executive director,  
via phone at 465-7144 or  
via e-mail at [bhlindner@portercountyacs.org](mailto:bhlindner@portercountyacs.org).



PCACS is proud to be a member agency of the United Way of Porter County

# Office space available; SHIP assistance reaches 396 in 2017; Shop AmazonSmile

We have office space available for rent. It includes 2,500 square feet, cubicles, private bathroom, kitchen area, small offices, multiple points of access for the public as well as employees and 11 parking spaces.

If a business or organization is interested, contact Bruce Lindner at 219-464-9736.

## SHIP assistance by the numbers

The SHIP open enrollment period wrapped up in December and the volunteers again assisted numerous community members.

The four State Health Insurance Assistance Program volunteers spent 125 hours with 172 clients. The volunteers had 396 client contacts in 2017, so more than 40 percent were made during the eight-week open enrollment period.

The program is a no-cost and unbiased counseling program provided by the Indiana Department of Insurance for Medicare beneficiaries.

Counseling is available year-round by calling: 219-464-1028.

## Support us while shopping!

PCACS is registered as a charitable organization at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com). When you shop through this Web site, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible purchases to PCACS.

AmazonSmile is a Web site, operated by Amazon, that lets you enjoy the same wide selection of products, low prices, and convenient shopping features that you find on Amazon.com.

On your first visit, you will be prompted to select a charitable organization to receive the donations. Then AmazonSmile will remember your selection and future eligible purchases you make on AmazonSmile will result in a donation to PCACS.

## What's the Buzz?



## Thank you NIPSCO

We are so appreciative of the support that we received from NIPSCO. The company has sponsored our new TV, which will be enjoyed by our clients and utilized by our staff for training.

## Ramp donations sought

We are always accepting applications for those who need a ramp built at their home. For more information visit:

[www.portercountyacs.org/ramp-program](http://www.portercountyacs.org/ramp-program).

We also are always accepting donations to help fund our ramp program today and in the future. To help, visit [www.portercountyacs.org/how-you-can-help](http://www.portercountyacs.org/how-you-can-help).

You can also mail a check payable to PCACS to our office:  
1005 Campbell St., Valparaiso, IN 46385.

# Tax preparation service available; Spirit Awards celebrate volunteers

The United Way of Porter County Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program is now accepting appointments for the 2018 tax season.

This free tax preparation service is open to individuals whose adjusted gross income is \$54,000 or less and is staffed by IRS-certified volunteers that file both federal and state tax returns.

“For many in our community, finding affordable tax preparation assistance can be a daunting task when money is tight,” said Kim Olesker, president and CEO of United Way of Porter County, in a news release.

“This program provides a vital safety net for low-wage earners struggling to make ends meet.”

The program is made possible with support from the IRS and JPMorgan Chase Foundation. The program runs through Monday, April 16. Daytime appointments are available Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and on some Saturdays.

Participants must schedule an appointment to utilize the service.

Beyond meeting the income threshold criteria, additional documents and information is required.

For more information or to make an appointment, visit: <http://www.unitedwaypc.org/VITA>.

## Spirit Awards

Now through Feb. 16, United Way of Porter County is seeking nominations for remarkable volunteers to be honored at their second annual Spirit Awards.

As an initiative of the United Way Regional Volunteer Center program, the Spirit Awards recognizes amazing volunteer activities happening throughout the Region.

“Spirit Awards are about everyday passionate, courageous and self-sacrificing individuals who

## PARTNER ORGANIZATION NEWS



exhibit what it means to live united,” said Kim Olesker, president and CEO of United Way of Porter County, in a news release. “There are some amazing volunteers out there and we want to be sure they are recognized for their hard work.”

In 2017, United Way received 35 nominations



from across the Region with seven winners being chosen: Mike Baranko (Chesterton), Kathy Conn (Valparaiso), Chuck Harris



(Valparaiso), Jeff Meyers (Valparaiso), Eugene and Jeanne Wease (Crown Point), Marilyn Wynn (Gary) and Mark Zimmerman (Valparaiso).

Nominations from throughout Northwest Indiana are welcome. Award recipients will be selected by a committee of

volunteers and winners will be notified the week of Feb. 26.

Winners and nominees will be honored at United Way's Annual Community Celebration on March 22 at the Spa Event Center in Porter. Celebration activities begin at 5:30pm. Tickets are \$25 per person. Spirit Awards winners will receive comped tickets.

To nominate or compliment a volunteer or RSVP for the event, visit <http://www.unitedwaypc.org/AnnualCelebration>.