



Mon Valley Circles

# The Loop

Thriving Families, Thriving Communities

December 2016

## The Challenge.....

Do you feel like Holiday gift giving has taken control of your life? Are the kids asking for more and more, adding to their list every time a new toy is on TV? Do you worry about 'buy now, pay later', and how the bills are getting paid *this* month?

Enter the "4 Gift Challenge"; an idea from an article Circles Program Coordinator, Erica, read and became enthused about. The author of the Challenge article tells of giving her children dozens of gifts each Christmas. The children also received dozens of gifts from grandparents, aunts and uncles. The author states that "All of a sudden, my kids were up to their ears in gifts! And the worst part is...if you asked them what they got for Christmas...they couldn't even remember any of the gifts!". She decided to end the craziness by putting a limit on presents. Each child would receive 4 gifts, one from each of the following categories. Here are her suggestions:

1. Something they want
2. Something they need
3. Something to wear
4. Something to read

She states that this works surprisingly well. It makes each gift more special, and allows for more family time rather than cleaning up a ton of gift wrap.

Erica has challenged the Circles group to take the "4 Gift Challenge". You might want to try it, too!

## *Fa la la la la...*

Tis the season to "be jolly", and join Circles participants, staff, volunteers and guests at Circles Annual Holiday Party. As usual, the table will groan under sumptuous dishes, and an evening of merry feasting and visiting will take place.



Where: The Salvation Army on 821 Walnut Street,  
McKeesport, PA 15132

When: December 19<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 5:00 pm  
*There will be no childcare available at the party*

Any questions, call Rose @ 412-385-7119  
or Erica @ 412-385-7532



*la la la la !*

## “Impact” .....

Channel 11 viewers may be familiar with this Public Affairs spot that airs immediately after the noon news. This segment showcases organizations and events that make an ‘impact’ on our community. Circles has been selected to appear on Tuesday, December 13, at 11:55, so tune in and watch! Coordinators Erica Maloney from Mon Valley Circles and Tammy Thompson from Circles East Liberty will be the guests.

## Jeramiah’s Place.....

The holiday season should be a joyful time, but sometimes unplanned circumstances can push a family into a crisis situation, be it a medical emergency, or violent situation in the home. Jeramiah’s Place offers a safe refuge for children under six while the family regroups. You can trust your little ones to caregivers who are compassionate and supportive, and will provide your child with safe, emergency care for up to 72 hours. Children leave with a backpack of items that may have been left behind ...pajamas, a stuffed toy, a blanket, toothbrush and toothpaste.

Jeramiah’s place was founded in 2014, through the efforts of Physicians Lynne L. Williams and Tammy Murdock who realized the need for emergency childcare in the East End area that they serviced. The childcare services are free, and have served over 250 families from all over the area. They determined that 98% of the families they serviced were headed by low-income single women. Their challenges were far greater than just emergency childcare, including food insecurity, unemployment, partner-related violence and mental health issues. Recently acquired grant money has enabled Jeramiah’s Place to extend their services and connect these families with the resources they need to resolve the situation that brought them to the center. These can include job counseling, transportation assistance, companionship and support from other families in crisis.



### Programs supported by Jeramiah’s Place

1. Crisis nursery - a crisis nursery is a place where families can leave children ages 6 and younger in the moment that the family is experiencing a "crisis" or a very stressful situation. It is free to families in need.
2. Parenting classes -we will offer classes available to all caregivers about parenting.
3. Community events -we offer family-focused weekly events. These might include pot-luck dinners, art classes, fitness, dance and music opportunities.
4. Mentor program - we will connect families who use the crisis nursery to other local families in the community for support and guidance.
5. Adults and children together against violence (act) - the act against violence: parents raising safe kids program (act) program is designed to help educate parents, guardians, and caregivers about the effects of violence on children's development and how to utilize non-violent, or positive, parenting skills.



## AROUND THE CIRCLE.....

Hey, Circle participants, this is your page! Share your favorite recipes, poems, artwork, and accomplishments. And don't forget family birthdays, and other special events. Email items to [dmwalter5555@gmail.com](mailto:dmwalter5555@gmail.com) or give them to Rose, Erica, or Dee on Circles night.

### Circles Holiday Schedule

December 5<sup>th</sup>: Group at 5pm

December 12<sup>th</sup>: Group at 5pm  
**Holiday Dinner Drawing**

December 19<sup>th</sup> Group at 5pm:  
**Holiday Celebration Night**

**December 26<sup>th</sup> - No group**  
**January 2<sup>nd</sup> - No group**

January 9<sup>th</sup> - group resumes @ 5pm

Here's a fun recipe you may want to try with the little bakers in your family.

### Potato Chipper Cookies

1 cup white sugar  
½ cup shortening – room temperature  
½ cup of butter – room temperature  
2 eggs  
2 tsp. vanilla  
2 ½ cups flour  
½ tsp salt  
1 ½ cups crushed potato chips – any flavor  
½ cup chopped pecans or chocolate chips

### Guest.....

On December 12th, the McKeesport group will welcome Michael Yonas of the Pittsburgh Foundation.

This is one of the oldest community foundations in the nation, founded in 1945. The Pittsburgh Foundation is one of Circles' supporters, and we look forward to having him visit Circles and see how our program works to move families forward.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Beat together the sugar, shortening and butter, until creamy. Stir in the eggs and vanilla. Add the flour and salt. Blend well. Mix in the chips and nuts.

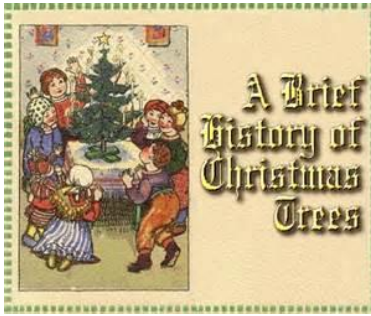
Drop the dough by teaspoonful unto a baking sheet, about 4 inches apart and bake for 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool in the pan for 3 minutes, then transfer to a cooling rack to cool completely. Makes about 4 dozen.



### Christmas around the world

Celebrate the season by visiting the Nationality Rooms at the University of Pittsburgh. Each classroom will be decked in the holiday décor of that country through Jan. 13, 2017. Daily tours, including audio-guided tours, are available to the general public on Sundays from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. as well as 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays. All weekday tours end at 4 p.m. Tours are \$4 for adults and \$2 for children. No tours will be held on Dec. 24-26, 2016, or on Jan. 1, 2017.

For more information, visit [www.nationalityrooms.pitt.edu](http://www.nationalityrooms.pitt.edu) or call 412-624-6000.



The Christmas tree is a well-known symbol of this joyful season. We love seeing them in our favorite stores, gloriously rich with color coordinated glass ornaments, ribbons and sparkly lights. We sympathize with Charlie Brown and Snoopy, as we watch their holiday special on TV. And we reminisce over our own trees, as we hang the ornaments lovingly made by childish hands, or given to mark a special occasion.

This tradition originated in Germany in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, where trees were decked out in apples, fruits and nuts, and candles that were wired unto the branches. Here in America, however, it was looked upon as a heathen practice by early Puritan settlers, along with caroling and any joyful expression that would mar the sacredness of the true meaning of Christmas. In 1659, a law was actually passed that allowed penalties to be given to anyone who even hung a Yule decoration.

However, some 200 years later, in 1846, popular British royals, Queen Victoria and her German husband, Prince Phillip appeared in a newspaper sketch, gathered as a family around a Christmas tree. Victoria was a trendsetter, and soon trees were popping up as far as the American East Coast, in the homes of the fashionably savvy.

By 1890, beautiful glass ornaments were available in America, although those of German descent still preferred fruits, popcorn and fancy cookies as decorations. Once electricity became available for the home, tree lights allowed for a more festive experience, and trees gained greater popularity.

Today, fresh trees are available in pine, spruce and fir varieties, and are preferred by many for their fresh look and scent. However, artificial trees come in many sizes, styles and choice of colors. Whether you favor fresh, fuchsia or 'Charlie Brown' style, you can find it somewhere!



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AND A SPECIAL THANKS TO  
ALL OUR CIRCLES LEADERS AND VOLUNTEERS