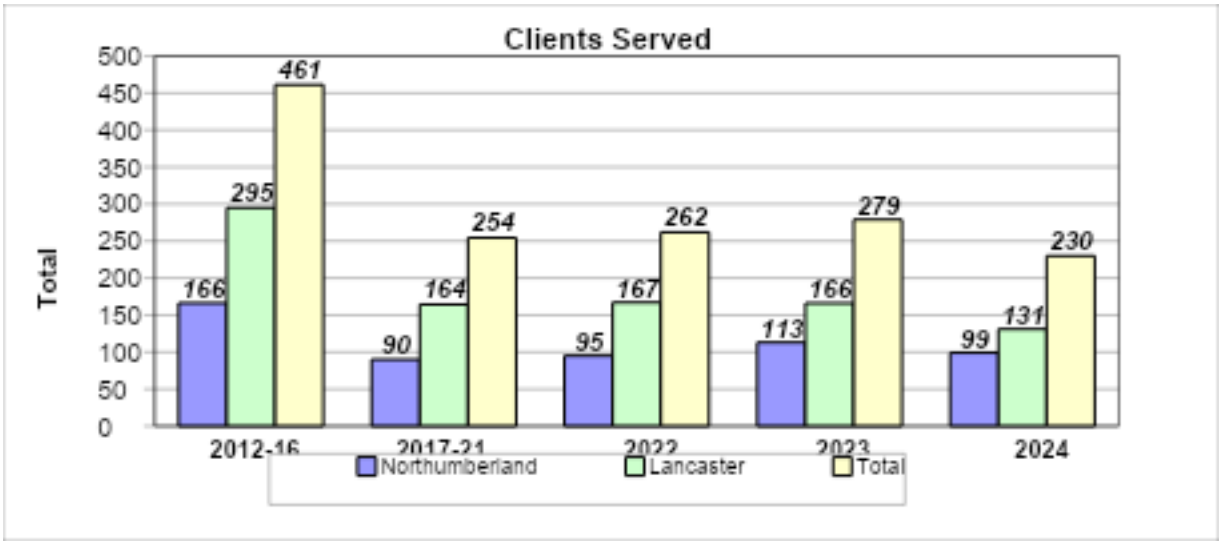
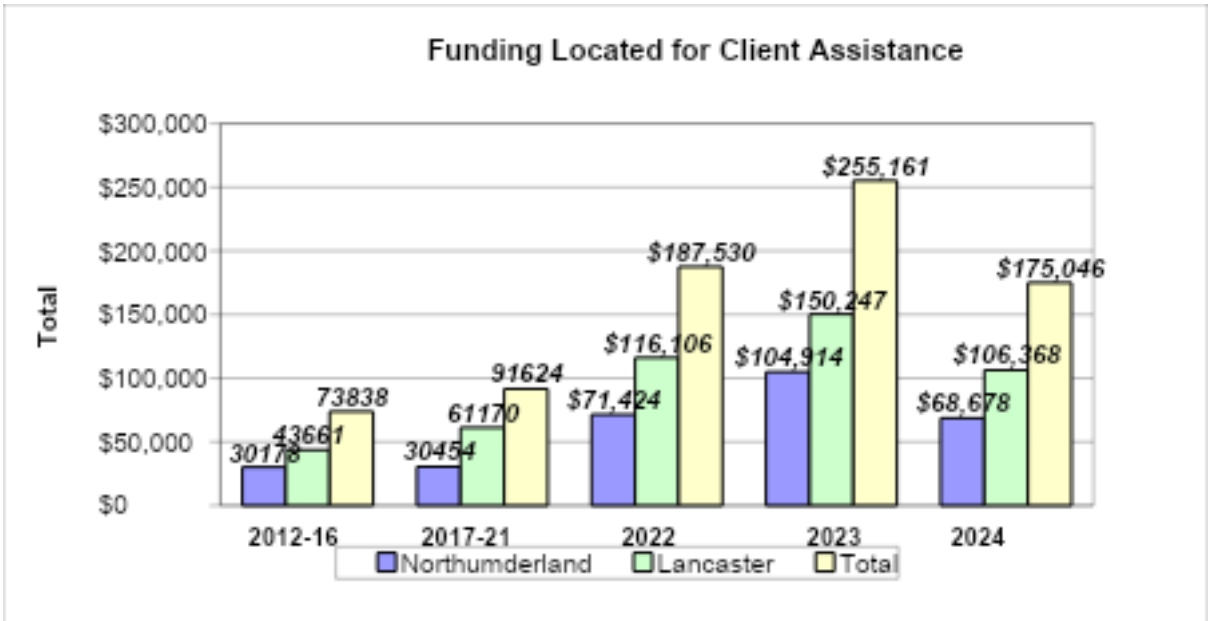
The President's Report for 2024

EMERGENCY SERVICES

- ✔ During 2023, our staff and volunteers helped 230 families (representing 631 individuals). 131 (57%) were from Lancaster and 99 (43%) were from Northumberland.
- ✔ Since its inception, the Link has assisted 4349 families. Of that total 738 (16.9%) were repeat clients (that is, those who have sought help more than once in an 18-month period).



- ✔ $175,046.39 was located to assist client requests. Of the total, $140,496.50 was given by partner churches, Interfaith Service Council, and DSS. The remaining $34,549.89 was provided by the Homelessness Prevention Fund ($33,411.69) and the Living Water Lutheran Employment Assistance Fund ($1138.20), both of which are administered by The Link. The Homelessness Prevention Fund is underwritten by private donations, as well as grants from the duPont Fund/River Counties Community Foundation and the Emergency Food and Shelter Program of the United Way. The Employment Assistance Fund is underwritten by gifts from Living Water Lutheran Church and private donors.



EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE INITIATED

- ✔ In 2022, a steering committee of a dozen representatives from The Link and Living Water Lutheran Church created a new staff position, the **Employment Specialist**. This came from the increasing numbers of clients asking for jobs or better jobs. The Board has approved it, and the first part of 2023 was devoted to seeking a person to do it. Joan Perry was selected, and she began her work in June.
- ✔ Also, the Board approved the guidelines for the **Living Water Lutheran Church Employment Assistance Fund**. This special fund, made possible by seed money from the Living Water Lutheran Church, is available for clients who need help in finding or upgrading their employment.

HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE CONTINUES

- ✔ Tracy Hayden of The Link and Christy Smith of Interfaith Service Council have worked together for several years handling clients who are **homeless**. They generally house clients at local motels for a few days while next steps are formulated. In 2022, there were 12 cases that required some 55 days of motel rental, costing approximately $4900. The numbers grew to about 16 cases in 2023. These numbers do not include the assistance that individual churches and the Departments of Social Services may have also given.

  This past year we directly assisted 3 homeless clients and referred several more to Bay Aging, which has become the main resource in the local area to help homeless persons find what they need.

  We were also blessed in 20214 to partner with Donna Harcum of Let Us Talk Ministries. Donna and her husband have a 501(c)(3) ministry that gives direct aid and comfort to homeless persons. She has also become an active and enthusiastic Advisory Council member for The Link.

VOLUNTEERS

- ✔ I continue to be very impressed by the compassion and dedication of the people who make The Link so special, especially in the trying circumstances precipitated by the recent pandemic. Without them we are nothing, but with them we are able to work caringly and fruitfully with our neighbors in need. Special thanks go to our salaried staff (Stacey Evans, Tracy Hayden, Joan Perry), and our case work volunteers (Edna Mason, Carole Sutton, Judy Thomson, Roger Donaldson). And this year we welcomed to Steve Cunningham of Northumberland County. He provides office assistance each Tuesday.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND ADVISORY COUNCIL

- ✔ We are blessed with Directors and Council members who are not only loyal but also perceptive and wise. I am grateful to current Directors, Vashti Jones, John O'Keefe, Bob Raiford, Judy Thomson, and Shanice Yerby, and to Advisory Council members Lee Capps, Donna Harcum, Jim Lamb, and Susan Thomas for their remarkable service.

- ✔ And we need especially to note the many years that John O'Keefe has given to the work of The Link. He officially retired from leadership at the end of 2024, having been active in the financial work of The Link from its beginning. Thank you, John. Well done, good and faithful servant!

AN EVENING OF HOPE

The Board felt that the time had come for the Link to develop a signature event to raise funds and spread the word about its work. Brad & Joan Perry, Vashti Jones, Susan Thomas and I organized a celebration entitled "An Evening of Hope."

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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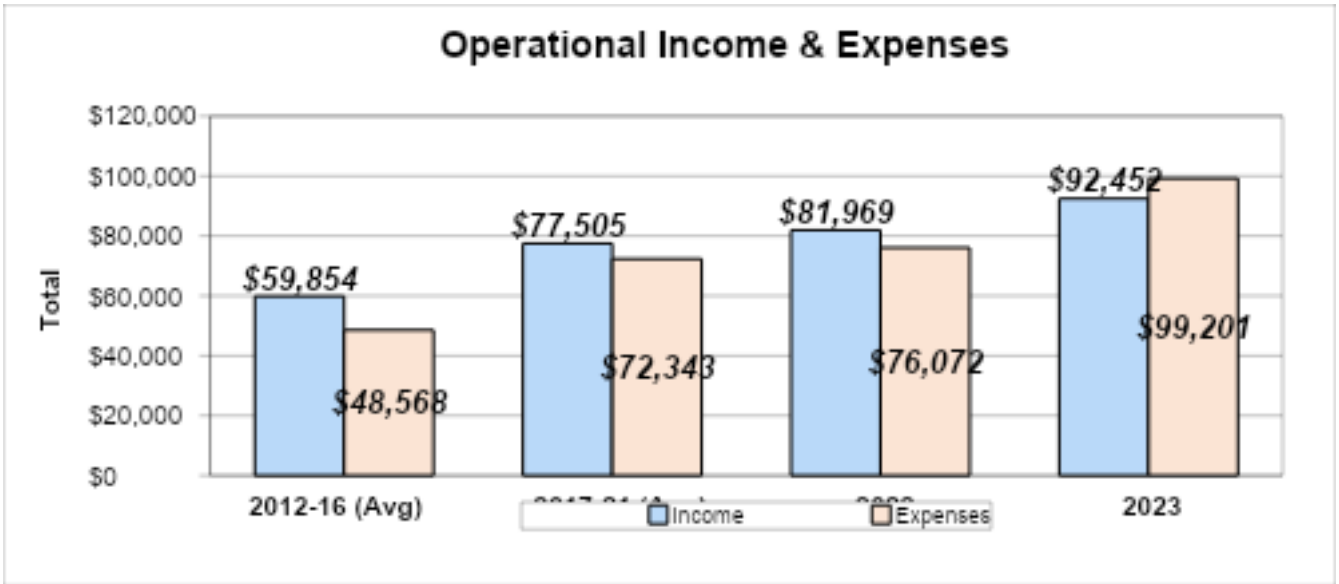
FUNDING

- ✔ Here is the overall picture for The Link's funding.



- ✔ 2023 witnessed strong support from all of The Link's partners.

PARTNERS	2022	2023
Agencies	$ 0	$ 0
Businesses	$ 52	$ 0
Churches	$ 24,015	$ 30,017
Foundations	$ 29,575	$ 29,450
Individuals/Families	$ 28,325	$ 30,544
Organizations	$ 0	$ 300
Other	$ 2	$ 2,141

	$ 81,969	$ 92,452

- ✔ Major grants in 2023 have come through the Amica Foundation, the Brent Family Foundation, the Cole Charitable Trust, the Jesse Ball duPont Fund, the KIWS Rotary Foundation, the Robert B. Lantz Foundation, and the River Counties Community Foundation.

PUBLICITY

- ✔ Thanks to Director Judy Thomson we continue to publish bi-monthly issues of the Constant Contact Newsletter “Think Link” as well as occasional news releases throughout the year.

WHAT IS AHEAD

- ✔ The first steps have been taken to **distribute the responsibilities** I have been performing for the leadership of The Link. We now have a professional bookkeeper handling the payroll and the Operating Fund. We also have gained the volunteer services of Roger Donaldson, who is bookkeeping for the Homelessness Prevention Fund.
- ✔ Director Bob Raiford has assumed leadership for this strategic planning and is working on fulillment of its goals.

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST … A SUCCESS STORY!

(With special thanks to Joan Perry and Tracy Hayden for sharing this with us.)

Very soon after Joan Perry began her work as The Link’s Employment Specialist, she was made aware of a 70-year old homeless client. We will call him Jim for purposes of this story. Jim came to The Link when he was turned out by his family. Though he had some income from a government program, he did not have enough to rent a room or buy a car. Tracy Hayden secured a room for him at a local motel. He then was screened at The Link. When he revealed he was willing to work, he was referred to Joan. She remembers coaching and exhorting him. He knew he needed a job to be able to return to his family. Jim did everything Joan asked of him to ensure success. With her help he found a job in Kilmarnock and was steady in showing up each day. However, it soon became clear that the income from the job, even when combined with the modest government support, was not enough to secure a place to stay or a car to drive. Joan and Tracy then worked with the GUEST homeless ministry to help him plan his next steps. GUEST was able to find him rooming and a job in the Gloucester area. He then relocated there, ready to make a new start.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Coye