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City Lit

Help Mobility-impaired Children, Teens, and Adults Access Our Neighborhood Library

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

The Philadelphia City Institute (PCI), our community branch of the Free Library on Rittenhouse Square, is the third-busiest branch in Philadelphia. The Children's Room, where children's books are housed and storytimes are held, and the Community Room, where adult and teen programs are held, are both located on the lower level, accessible only to those who can walk stairs. Friends of PCI and the Free Library Foundation have collaborated to install a lift and ramp so that mobility-impaired children, teens, and adults can use these facilities.

Picture a handicapped girl whose grandfather used to carry her downstairs so she could participate in storytime and browse the books in the Children's Room. When the girl grew too big for her grandfather to carry, she could no longer join

the other children and listen to the stories or choose books in the Children's Room.

Every day, children come to the Children's Room on the lower level to read, do homework, and select books to borrow. The PCI branch hosts about 12 pre-school storytimes each month in the downstairs Children's Room, each one attended by almost 50 people.

Also on the lower level, the branch hosts over 34 children's and teen's programs each month, each one attended by about 25 people. The PCI branch hosts over 14 events every month for adults in the Community Room on the lower level, each attended by more than 25 people. Attendance at this branch library's programs is the fifth-highest of any branch in the city.

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Lower level. The lift will stop at the Children's Room from which there will be a ramp into the meeting room.

Of the senior population, an estimated 25 percent are mobility-impaired and currently are shut out of programs in the Community Room. Programs include author talks, book clubs, English conversation, movies, panel discussions, musical programs, information sessions, poetry readings, writers' clubs, crafts, and other meetings.

The library wants *all* children, teens, and adults to benefit from these facilities and programs.

Chris Kircher, an architect with Metcalfe Architecture & Design, conducted an assessment of the project, spent many hours measuring the space, considered the rules for public buildings, and coordinated with Jim Pecora, Vice President of Property Management for the Free Library of Philadelphia. The management and condo association of the 220 W. Rittenhouse Square building gave permission to proceed, and the Philadelphia City Institute Board of Managers approved. The lift will be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

We are asking our community to contribute to this campaign. Please open your hearts and your wallets and contribute to this effort. The cost for the project will be \$400,000, and as of the end of July, the first \$100,000 has been collected.

Send a check to Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation/PCI Lift, 1901 Vine Street, Suite 111, Philadelphia PA 19103. <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/support/pci-lift-campaign>

Town Square

Opinion: Hope for Harrisburg

By Judy Wicks, with Katherine Rapin

This fall's elections are crucial in both the fight against climate change and the fight for our democracy. As our federal government continues to unravel the just systems that protect our communities, many are realizing the need to focus attention on our state elections and bring change to Harrisburg.

I'm a member of several political action committees (PACs) working to raise money for progressive state candidates. Because of my concern about climate change and protecting our drinking water and communities from fracking and pipelines, I am chairing the Food & Water Action PAC to specifically fund candidates from across the state who will aggressively challenge the fossil fuel industry in Pennsylvania.

To support the candidates in this work, I've started the grassroots citizens' campaign *Proud Pennsylvania*. We are working towards a positive vision for a state that runs on 100 percent renewable energy; prospers from a network of flourishing regional economies; and is led by politicians who protect our natural resources, seek a resilient and just economy, and defend the integrity of our electoral system.

Since the days of the coal barons and the world's first oil well—drilled in Titusville, PA—the fossil fuel industry has dominated our economy and unduly influenced the government of our state. It's time to elect candidates who refuse to take industry bribes and will work to make Pennsylvania a leader in the world's transition to renewable energy.

Traditional economic development strategies based on increasing global exports and imports and providing corporate subsidies have increased the wealth and power of multinational corporations, while draining capital from our communities. We've become dependent on carbon-intensive, corporate-controlled long-distance shipping routes—vulnerable to disruption by climate chaos—to deliver the goods we need to survive. Building regional economies will reduce the carbons generated by shipping, provide ownership opportunities and meaningful jobs, and prepare our communities for the coming effects of climate change by building local self-reliance.

Our candidates, who have all pledged to refuse contributions from the fossil fuel industry, will support legislation to reach 100 percent renewable energy by 2050, and support an economic development plan to build sustainable regional economies. Many of them are motivated to run by personal experience.

Danielle Friel-Otten, candidate in the 155th district in Chester County, decided to run for office when she heard rumors that the Mariner East Pipeline would cut through her neighbor's yard, just 40 feet from where her two children play. She helped found the Del-Chesco United for Pipeline Safety, working to ensure that Pennsylvania legislators do their job to protect public health and safety, safeguard private property rights, and preserve natural resources, including clean, safe drinking water. Friel-Otten is empowering

Chester County residents to take action in their communities.

Amy Cozze, running for state representative of the 137th district in Northampton County, was inspired to run on behalf of her fellow local merchants. She's experienced the challenges that small-business owners face firsthand, and sees the benefits of supporting a thriving local food system.

Like Friel-Otten and Cozze, many of the leaders we're endorsing did not have previous political ambition. They decided to run because we're in a time of crisis. They're choosing to stand up as protectors of the rights of our communities and the health of our natural environment.

We are Proud Pennsylvanians who will co-create an economy that builds community wealth, increases local self-reliance, and nurtures a natural environment that we can be proud to leave for future generations that make their home in our state.

On **Thursday, September 13th, 5:30-8pm**, we'll present *Hope for Harrisburg* at the beautiful **Academy of Vocal Arts, 1920 Spruce St.** Come enjoy drinks and light bites, hear from the candidates and raise funds for these emerging leaders.

For more information and to RSVP, go to www.proudpennsylvania.org.

For questions, contact Katherine Rapin, Director of Proud Pennsylvania, Katherine@proudpennsylvania.org