



## Growing Our Gardens: Join us to sow seeds of goodness

Norb Kowalski has precious memories of learning how to garden from his grandfather, a pastime he's grown to love his whole life.

Shortly after retiring three years ago, Norb read a bulletin

"SHIM's community gardens are a unique way to help address hunger in the South Hills," says Courtney Macurak, SHIM's director of programs. "While summer means fun and relaxation to many, it's harder on families whose kids are home from school every day

where he's lovingly known as "Farmer Norb."

"There is a special satisfaction to working in the garden. I enjoy working with other SHIM volunteers. If you want to get dirt underneath your fingernails,



announcement asking for volunteers to help start a new SHIM community garden at Hamilton Presbyterian Church in Bethel Park. Encouraged by his wife, he signed up.

Our 15 community gardens provide fresh, healthy produce to our three food pantries, which serve 2,600 South Hills neighbors annually. As need continues to grow in our neighborhoods, volunteers like Norb are more important than ever to ensure people have quality ingredients to prepare healthy meals.

as they must provide more food for their families. As the program grows each year, we're not only feeding more people during a time of critical need, but building a robust community of neighbors helping neighbors."

Norb began by leading a small group of volunteers to build what has become one of the largest and most bountiful of our community gardens. Since then, he has welcomed youth organizations, volunteer groups and even students from Hamilton Presbyterian's preschool program,

enjoy a new experience and help feed your neighbors, this is the thing to do," Norb said. "It's not one person's success. It's based on many people who help it to multiply."

*We need volunteers at various times throughout the growing season at all 15 community gardens. To learn more or sign up, please contact Becca Cornell, SHIM's volunteer manager, at 412-854-9120 x106 or [bcornell@shimcares.org](mailto:bcornell@shimcares.org)*

# South Hills community celebrates success, generosity

Generous support, kind gestures, and community engagement were overflowing on May 17, during our annual Celebrate the South Hills with SHIM event.

Three-hundred-seventy neighbors – including congregations, groups, families, workplaces, partners and more – gathered at the Hilton Garden Inn Pittsburgh – Southpointe to celebrate the great work accomplished throughout the South Hills, and contribute to another year of progress.

Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, ticket buyers, and auction bidders, it was a record-breaking year. This support demonstrates our community's belief in SHIM's vital work and helps us serve more than



4,000 South Hills neighbors by helping them meet basic needs, achieve self-sufficiency and build community.

“Because of this great community support, SHIM is able to grow and expand to tackle our community's most pressing needs, serve more people

and address the impact of increasing suburban poverty in the South Hills,” says Jim Guffey, executive director, SHIM.

During the event, we were proud to honor Suzy and Jim Broadhurst of Eat'n Park Hospitality Group as this year's South Hills Champions. They embody the spirit of the South Hills and have shown a long-time dedication to our community through food, education, and employment. For this, and so much more, we are truly thankful.

As SHIM enters our 50th year, we are more proud than ever to serve the South Hills community, and we look forward to building an even stronger community for everyone.

Check out photos from the event at [shimcares.org/celebrate](http://shimcares.org/celebrate).

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### Paper or electronic? Summer Cleaning at SHIM

Like getting mail? Prefer receiving emails to save paper and postage? We're working hard to update our database to ensure your contact information is correct, and we're communicating with you in the way you prefer. Please take a few minutes to fill out a brief survey – [www.surveymonkey.com/r/SHIMupdate](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SHIMupdate). Thank you!

# 'Two Cultures, One Me' exhibit debuts



Fifteen remarkable teenagers share their stories of culture and identity in a powerful exhibit, 'Two Cultures, One Me,' which made its debut at Celebrate the South Hills with SHIM. The project, funded by The Sprout Fund's 100 Days of US project, gives a voice to local refugee teens involved with SHIM's Youth Mentoring Program, who worked with journalist Stephanie Hacke and photographer, Terry Clark, to develop a powerful exhibit. Through the lens of these teens, we experience the joy, sorrow and beauty of their journeys. To host this exhibit, please contact Ilene Cohen at [icohen@shimcares.org](mailto:icohen@shimcares.org) or 412-854-9120 x112.

## NEW WEB SERIES: Meet your neighbors

### Forced from Home: The journey of a SHIM refugee family

“Where can I go? How can I survive?” These are questions that ten-year-old Saraswati and her family faced after being forced from their home in Bhutan nearly thirty years ago.

When the Bhutanese government pounded on Saraswati's door, the family had only moments to gather their most precious belongings and leave their home, farm, and country to seek refuge elsewhere.

“My parents were crying. My little brother was crying,” Saraswati remembered. “It was very scary. We did not get beaten—but others did.”

They started on their journey to Nepal with a group of neighbors and friends who were also forced to leave. When they arrived in Nepal, at an area that had not yet been developed, Saraswati's group felt it looked like a place to build a community.

“We cut down the trees and cleared space,” Saraswati explained. “We had brought some bamboo, but collected more, and built shelter.”

Saraswati, her parents and five siblings would go on to live in this one-room bamboo shelter for 18 years. The community they started became a populated refugee camp called Beldangi.

Life was not easy. Food from United Nations High Commission for Refugees was scarce and rationed. Getting water was a three-hour endeavor. Often times heat was hard to handle, and winters were even more brutal. Fires broke



out frequently throughout the camp, and thieves would reach through the bamboo walls of shelters to steal people's belongings while they slept.

But during this time, life went on. Saraswati attended a school that developed within the camp through a program called Caritas Nepal, and married her husband, Yadu, at the age of 23. She and Yadu gave birth to their first son, Saroj. The refugees within the camp became family, celebrating holidays, birthdays and weddings together.

For 18 years, Saraswati's family looked for ways to return to Bhutan—home. They were still not allowed, so to escape the harsh life, they looked for refuge in the United States.

*Saraswati and her family are part of our SHIM Prospect Park Family Center community. To follow their brave journey to a new life, read more at [shimcares.org/meetyourneighbors](http://shimcares.org/meetyourneighbors).*

## Join us: It's not too soon to plan for back-to-school.

Again this year, we're collecting items to help local students start the school year ready to succeed. Thanks to the generosity of CentiMark Corporation, we will be distributing more than 700 new JanSport® backpacks to local students. We're counting on you to help fill them up with new school supplies such as binders, pocket folders, colored pencils, pens, combination locks, and more. Please consider supporting or hosting a local supply drive, or making a cash donation. Donations will be

collected until August 7.





If you know a family who could use some help getting ready to send their kids back to school, please invite them to participate. All K – 12 students, regardless of income, living in the following districts are eligible to receive backpacks and supplies: Baldwin-Whitehall, Bethel Park, Keystone Oaks, Mt. Lebanon, South Park, and Upper St. Clair.

Learn more at [shimcares.org/backtoschool](http://shimcares.org/backtoschool).



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