

Bridging the Community meeting was held at Kennett Library 320 E. State St. Kennett Square, PA 19348 on **Wednesday, January 14, 2026** from 7:00pm to 8:30pm. This is our 164th meeting with 28 attendees.

Our next meeting will be on March 11, 2026, at Friends Meeting, 125 W. Sickle St., Kennett Square, PA 19348

Minutes of Bridging meetings are posted on the web site: www.bridgingthecommunity.org and there will be a copy of the minutes at Kennett Library in the Bayard Taylor Room. Bridging the Community meetings are held at different sites every time---to provide exposure to all segments of the community.

Kate Wickersham facilitated the meeting with **Jeanne Searer**. Kate shared the framework and Jeanne the guiding principles. Attendees especially resonated with the idea of building community through making “bridges” and coming from the heart as essentially starting from love.

Guiding Principles:

- We will come from the heart----not an obligation
- We will work for community---not personal agendas
- We will focus on the potential side----not the issue side
- We will keep it a process---not a program with infrastructure
- We will value each person’s contribution; each has a role to play--not focused on hierarchy

The group then engaged a Moment of Silence.

Kate Wickersham opened the meeting with a hearty HAPPY NEW YEAR!

She then introduced the Core Team volunteers: Kate Wickersham, Joan Holiday, Jeanne Searer, Tom Hoehle, Lou Florence. Said farewell and thank you to Lou Florence who will be moving out of state soon. They are looking for someone to take over recording minutes. Minutes are emailed to everyone on the email list and posted on the Bridging the Community website. Hard copies are kept in a binder located in the Bayard Taylor Room of Kennett Library.

Carol Crane ccrane@kennettlibrary.org introduced the Kennett Library and the upcoming Volunteer Fair in March. We are growing and always have need for volunteers. If anyone is interested in reserving a room they can go to the website. For program ideas the public can fill out a newly designed form on the library website. Programming is now done three months in advance so most things will not be actualized immediately.

We then took a moment of silence to reflect on good things

Kate introduced the vision of Bridging and introduced our new mascot BRIDGE-IT.

She then opened the floor for newcomers to introduce themselves.

New Attendees Introduced themselves and made their requests or shared their offerings:

NAME: Monique Giroux

Affiliated/describe: Kennett Amateur Theatrical Society (KATS) puts on a Panto production every year and this year's production, Robin Hood and his Merry Men, is happening in one week on Jan. 23 & 24. They are looking for volunteers to help with stage management. Also, anyone who auditions will get a part in the Panto (no matter their experience)! Purchase tickets at callKats.org. The performance is at Kennett High School auditorium.

Email: moniquegiroux@gmail.com

NAME: Juniper Sloat

Affiliated/describe: KHS student 10th grade. She is in many clubs and loves to do things in the community. She will share information about Bridging and other opportunities to volunteer.

Email: 206229@bluedemons.org

NAME: Janelle Benson

Affiliated/describe: E AFC

Introduced the farm (located on the Spar Hill Preserve in Kennett Township) and its mission of growing food and sharing it with locals and the participants. The farm grows food and shares with various food banks and organizations working to feed people. The farm is lots of fun for people and their kids. They can work together to get the garden going for the spring and learn techniques if new to growing food. All are welcome.

Email: EAFCCollective@gmail.com

NAME: Kat Michael

Affiliated/describe: Emergent Abundance Farming Collective (E AFC)

Offered an invitation to come learn about how to grow food and be in the dirt, learn to compost, help grow a dye garden, and many other opportunities to engage in farming and community support. Great way for young and old to share time. New members are always welcome--You can become a member and participate as you wish. You can also bring your own interests to the project. Information for the farm is at www.EAFCCollective.com.

Email: katherinemichael@gmail.com

NAME: Virginia Smith

Affiliated/describe: member of the Human Relations Commission of the Borough of Kennett Square. They are there for the community around issues of needs discrimination and to support equity for all residents. They are looking for new members to join the Commission. Members meet monthly to review any issues brought to the Commission. More information is available on the Borough of Kennett Square website at @kennettsq.org.

Email: virginiasmith173@gmail.com

NAME: Dr. Wanda Davis, professor emeritus SUNY, Buffalo State

Affiliated/describe: (RAD) Robert A. Davis Memorial Scholarship Fund:
<https://radmemorial.com/>

Wanda is a retired professor, recently relocated back to Kennett Square where she originates from. The RAD scholarship seeks to keep the legacy of Robert A. Davis who was the first soldier to be mortally wounded in the Vietnam War. The fund works in many areas, including a literacy project in partnership with the Oxford Education Foundation. They are looking for applicants for scholarship interested in careers in agriculture. Wanda is wanting to reconnect to the community again after many years away. The RAD is looking for potential students to award scholarships to advance farming and community and “Bobby’s” legacy.

Email: sydonia06@gmail.com

Regular members shared their current projects and information:

NAME: Joan Holliday

Affiliated/describe: This Sunday there will be an interfaith event featuring a performance of the Martin Luther King choir. On Monday there will be the annual MLK breakfast held at the Kennett High School. MLK Breakfast for tickets at www.mlkcommunity.org. A speaker will be featured. The event starts at 9:15am for breakfast and speaker at 10:30am. Other non-profits will be there to meet the public. The program includes breakfast, a keynote address, performances, and the presentation of the Mabel Latta Thompson Community Service Award. Keynote Speaker: [Dr. Karsonya Wise Whitehead](#), National President of the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History will speak that evening.

Email: dochollisv@aol.com

NAME: Cathy Brison

Affiliated/describe: representing the MLK Community and encouraged people to share information about upcoming event and that tickets for MLK breakfast are available at website: www.mlkcommunity.org

Email: cabrisonmm@aol.com

NAME: Jessie Cocks

Affiliated/describe: Jessie wears many hats. She wanted to introduce the Southern Chester County Rapid Response network which is working to respond to actions of ICE against local residents. Training is offered/required to participate—the next one is virtual on Feb. 24th. She has a sign up if interested. Jessie was also representing the Kennett Friends Meeting – Seeds of Peace Committee and shared that there will be a workshop called Introduction to Noncooperation, Nonviolent Strategic Organizing. 9 – 5 on Saturday, February 21 at the Kennett Friends Meeting House....This is free but please register. Freedom Trainers Network (from Phila) will lead the training. Jessie also shared the ongoing effort of Community Rising which meets every 3rd Sunday of the month from 2-4 and is a discussion/conversation group to share and create positive change. Information for all these is available at kennettfriends.org The next

meeting will actually be joining the events of the MLK events. Finally, the Friends for Immigrant Support is also another way to support (through Kennett Friends) has given out more than \$90,000 in aid over the years.

Email: jessiecocks@gmail.com

NAME: Sara Wein

Affiliated/describe: National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) representative. NAMI offers services throughout Chester County and in Kennett Square by partnering with Kennett Library to launch a family support group called Family to Family on the 1st Tuesday of each month from 6:30-8p starting in February. This is a free program for family/friends/supporters who have someone with mental health symptoms. Family to Family is offered at other locations in Chester County as well. Also, Nami offers a program Sharing Hope—a free, safe space for conversations about mental health and wellness focused on Black and African Ancestry people in Chester County. All information is available at info@namichescopa.org This program worked with Coatesville NAACP to produce a guide to resources.

Email: swein@namichescopa.org

NAME: Lou Florence

Affiliated/describe: Kennett Library, Environmental Literacy. Lou shared that it is time to stock the free Seed Library at Kennett Library. We will be packaging seeds to stock the drawers on Sat. 24th 10-3. This is a casual drop-in event and volunteers are asked to repackage seeds into small envelopes and label. Coffee and donuts provided.

Email: lflorence@kennettlibrary.org

NAME: Damaris Nunez

Affiliated/describe: Maternal and Child Health Consortium (MCHC) has expanded their Doula service to anyone who is expecting a baby. Doula's are trained supporters of pregnant people and their families before, during and after delivery. MCHC is also offering Story time at West Grove Library

Email: dnunez@ccmchc.org

NAME: Kathy Hrenko

Affiliated/describe: Longwood Rotary Club – The Longwood Rotary Club is looking for volunteer opportunities in support of community organizations of all kinds. If anyone has a project or need for support they can reach out. Kathy is also an art therapist if anyone is interested in exploring healing through art therapy.

Email: khrenko@comcast.net

NAME: Kate Wickersham

Affiliated/describe: LCH. Kate spoke about services offered. They are partnering with Kennett Library, YMCA of Greater Brandywine, and Downingtown Nutrition to offer a panel discussion

about health and new year goals with experts on nutrition and exercise called Community Conversations: New Year, Healthier Family. This is happening on Jan. 29th 7 at Kennett Library. Free but registration is required – go to Kennett Library events to register.

Email: kwickersham@lchservices.org

NAME: Joan Holliday

Affiliated/describe: Joan spoke as a member of Kennett Community Grocery (KCG) and announced that at long last a store will be opening soon! New members are encouraged to join. KCG will offer great food, most locally sources as well as education and a meeting place. Future Store location (opening Spring 2026): 625 E. Cypress Street, Kennett Square, PA, 19348

Email: info@kennettcommunitygrocer.coop

Email: dochollisv@aol.com

NAME: Jim Mercante

Affiliated/describe: Chester County Digital Alliance if anyone needs assistance with anything internet – phones, computers, anything this initiative is there to assist. Also, if anyone has skills to help with tech related mentoring and want to volunteer please contact Jim or Joan.

Email: vjmercante@gmail.com

BRIDGING:

David Nuttall (Community) asked about vaccines - Kate responded that LCH is still offering vaccines – still check with your healthcare provider first. Vaccines are for clients of LCH and accepting new clients

Kate Wickersham bridged with Rana Sakr about community health projects, Sarah Wien with Nami, and Virginia Smith from the Human Rights Commission/Borough of Kennett Square.

Rana Sakr bridged with Damaris of MCHC about families for Spanish language support for caregivers and families support, and bridged with Kate from LCH

Virginia Smith with Human Relations Commission bridged with Joan and with Rana related to Franco network circle of French speakers and Joan's recent article in The Daily Local, West Chester and SCC Weeklies. about this group

Jeanne Searer bridged with Carol Crane about Casa Guanajuato getting space for volunteers to work on projects.

Janelle Benson bridged with Juniper Sloat and Gustavo Castaneda to come visit EAFC to learn more about the farm and its community efforts

Kathy Hrenko bridged with Rana around support those with mental health challenges. She also bridged with Tina Skinner about volunteer work and with Sarah about mental health support.

Jessie bridged with Sarah and Gustavo about rapid response initiative.

Juniper bridged with Gustavo for potential volunteer opportunities and help with Prom night for students with special needs. She also bridged with Janelle to come to the farm and with Monique about volunteering with KATS. She will bring volunteer opportunities to her students.

Jan 14 2026 SIGN IN LIST:

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Minutes submitted by Lou Florence