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2026 PA Lifesharing Conference

The Sheraton Harrisburg Hershey | October 18 – 20

Welcome to the 14th Annual PA Lifesharing Conference

Conference Program

PA LIFESHARING COALITION

Hosted by the PA Lifesharing Coalition, the 2026 Lifesharing Conference is supported by the PA Department of Human Services, Office of Developmental Programs

CONFERENCE APP

Download the conference app on your mobile device to get up-to-date information about the conference, access copies of session presentations, and view the conference program.

Install on your mobile device

1. On your smartphone, visit https://my.yapp.us/2026LIFE or use the QR code

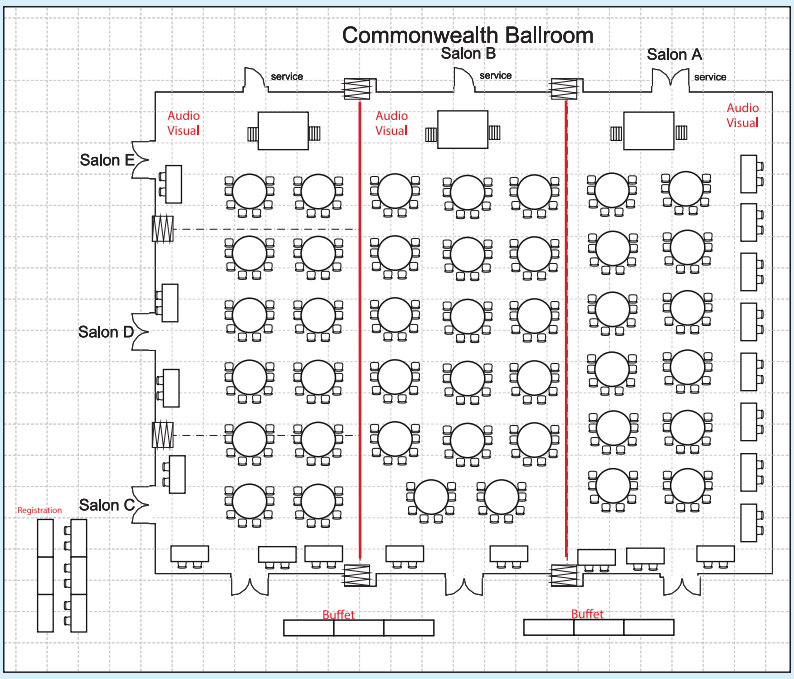
2. Follow the instructions on screen (it's a quick, two step process)

Already have the Yapp App installed?

1. Tap "Add an Existing Yapp" or the green "+" button (top right)
2. When asked for the Yapp ID, enter: 2026LIFE
3. Press the device keyboard's enter button, or tap "Next"

BREAKOUT ROOM LOCATIONS

Commonwealth Ballroom is being used for meals and general sessions. The air walls will be pulled to divide the room into 3 sections for breakouts (see diagram below). You may want to check where your breakout will be and sit in that section for meals.



PA LIFESHARING COALITION



Welcome to the 2026 Lifesharing Conference! We hope this year's educational sessions and exhibit hall provide you with valuable and useful information.

We also hope that you will consider becoming more involved as a volunteer with the PA Lifesharing Coalition. We have some open leadership positions for several regions. We also need volunteers to serve on the 2027 Conference Planning Committee.

Please talk to any of the Coalition Leadership team and let us know of your interest or include it on your evaluation form.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Visit Our Exhibitors and Sponsors: Don't miss the opportunity to thank our exhibitors and sponsors for supporting the conference. Stop by each booth and spend a few minutes with each exhibitor to learn more about their resources.

Safety: We encourage you to take whatever precautions make you comfortable, including masking and distancing.

Evaluations/Certificates: Please complete the evaluation form in order to receive your certificate of attendance. Return the evaluation form to the registration desk at the end of the day you will be departing. Certificates will be emailed within two weeks after the Conference.

Gift Baskets Drawing: Join us at 3:30 pm on Tuesday. You'll receive your raffle ticket at the door and be entered in the drawing for one of the marvelous gift baskets! Must be present to win!

Thanks to the 2026 Conference Planning Committee!

Tayo Akinyemi, Hope for Living LLC

Greg Aston, Achieva

Tim Bailey, L'Arche Erie

Joy Davies, Applied Counseling & Consulting Services

Emma Doyle, Community Interactions, Inc.

Barb Dyer, Citizen Care

Kristen Fritzinger, KenCrest

La'Tashia Gatling, Barber Institute

Christina Knighten, Keystone

Stephanie Krajci, Mainstay

Becky Kreischer, Bold, Inc. - Awards Program Chair

Cory Layton, Achieva

Christopher Lynn, Community Interactions, Inc.

Lindsey Marshall, Mainstay

Kristi Mentzer, Mercer Co. BHC

Phil Orinko, EHCA

Stephanie Scott, KenCrest

Amber Shomper, KenCrest

Jamie Weissman, HRC

Lauren Williams, Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services

Wendy Williams, PPhiladelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services

Special thanks to Barb Dyer for her logo designs and La'Tashia Gatling for organizing the Activity Room.

AGENDA

Sunday, October 18, 2026

11 am – 5 pm: Registration Open (Near Commonwealth Ballroom)
1 – 5 pm: Mental Health First Aid Class-part 1 (pre-registration required) (Elm/Fir Room)
Noon to 7 pm: Exhibitor Set-Up
5 – 7 pm: Arriving Sunday night? Join us for light refreshments, networking and lots of fun with Music Trivia and Karaoke presented by Joy and Lloyd Davies (and prizes!) (Commonwealth Ballroom Salon B)

MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2026 – BREAKFAST & MORNING PLENARY SESSION

7:00 AM Commonwealth	**Registration Open** **Exhibitor Set-Up**
8:00 – 9:15 AM Commonwealth	**Hot Buffet Breakfast Available**
9:00 – Noon Elm/Fir	**Mental Health First Aid Class (pre-registration required); part 2, continuation from Sunday** **Shemiah Cooper and Victoria Wilmore** ***Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services*** We think of First Aid as something administered to people in need of physical health intervention. What about people who need immediate assistance for their mental health? The Mental Health First Aid course teaches the skills needed to identify, understand, and respond to signs of behavioral health challenges or crises. Once a certified aider, you will be able to recognize behavioral health signs and administer aid until appropriate treatment and supports are received, or until the crisis is resolved
9:15 AM Hemlock	**Activity Room Open**
9:15 AM Commonwealth	***Welcome from PA Lifesharing Coalition***
9:30 AM Commonwealth	**KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Building Resilience in the Face of Stress: Harnessing Psychological Capital** ***Chris Dubble, CEO, The Pursuit of Discovery*** In today's demanding work and life environments, stress is unavoidable–but burnout doesn't have to be. This interactive workshop will equip you with evidence-based strategies to strengthen your Psychological Capital, the powerful combination of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism that fuels personal and professional well-being. In this workshop, you will learn how to reframe challenges, sustain motivation, and bounce back stronger from setbacks. Whether facing daily pressures or major life changes, you'll leave with practical tools to build inner resources, improve coping, and be resilient in the face of stress.
10:30 AM Commonwealth	**Break and Visit Exhibitors**

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

11:00 AM Commonwealth Salon B	**Lifesharing 101, Part I** ***Lifesharing Coalition Leadership: Stephanie Farrow, Kathy Trumbore, Joe Karpinskie, Amy Ricglane-Rush*** This session provides a practical framework for building and sustaining high-quality Life Sharing programs. Participants will explore key components including host family recruitment and screening, person-centered matching, program oversight, and the use of substitute care and respite. The content focuses on real-world strategies that balance regulatory compliance with relationship-based support to improve placement stability and host family retention. Participants will be able to: - Develop effective recruitment and screening processes for Life Sharing host families - Apply structured, person-centered matching practices - Implement appropriate oversight and staffing models - Distinguish and operationalize substitute care vs. respite - Use best practices to improve program quality and provider retention
11:00 AM Commonwealth Salons C/D/E	**Compassionate Care for Individuals with ID Experiencing Grief (Part 1)** ***Mary S. Barrett, MSN, BSN, RN*** This session examines the unique challenges individuals with intellectual disabilities may face when grieving the loss of a family member, friend, or caregiver. Attendees will be introduced to a practical training framework designed for families, caregivers, and agency or facility staff to strengthen everyday support for people experiencing grief. The presentation will highlight strategies, tools, and compassionate approaches that can help supporters respond more effectively while building a stronger foundation for grief-informed care.
11:00 AM Commonwealth Salons A	**Pediatric Complex Care Resource Center: Bridging Gaps Beyond Waiver Services** ***Jennifer Harniman-Crangle and Katie Freeman, PCCRC*** This session provides an overview of the Pediatric Complex Care Resource Center (PCCRC) and its role in supporting families of medically complex children both during service gaps and throughout ongoing care. PCCRCs provide non-medical support, education, and care coordination to help families and caregiver teams navigate complex systems and resources. Participants will learn how the PCCRC model strengthens communication across care teams, connects families to community and system-based resources, and provides coaching and guidance to improve stability and reduce the risk of escalation. The session will include real-world examples of how PCCRCs support families during interim periods and alongside existing services.
11:00 AM Hemlock	**Activity Room Open**

LUNCH

12:00 – 1:15 PM Commonwealth	**Lunch and Visit with Exhibitors** ***Excellence in Lifesharing Awards Presented by Kathy Trumbore, Coalition Leadership and Kristin Ahrens, Deputy Secretary, ODP, PA DHS***

AFTERNOON PLENARY SESSION 1

1:15 – 2:15 PM Commonwealth	**ODP Updates** ***Kristin Ahrens, Deputy Secretary, ODP, PA DHS and ODP Staff***

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

2:45 PM **Commonwealth Salon B**	**Empowerment through Employment: Enhancing Lifesharing Journeys** ***Francine Hogan, Director, PA Family Network*** This presentation explores how meaningful employment opportunities can enrich the lives of individuals with disabilities living in Lifesharing arrangements. We'll highlight the personal growth, community inclusion, and sense of purpose that employment fosters, creating a stronger foundation for a fulfilling life. This session will: 1) Clarify the services and pathways offered by ODP and OVR to support individuals in Lifesharing to achieve employment goals. 2) Equip Lifesharing families and providers with practical knowledge on accessing ODP/OVR employment supports. 3) Deepen the audience's understanding of how employment, within Pennsylvania's disability support systems, fosters inclusion, purpose, and quality of life in Lifesharing.
2:45 PM **Commonwealth Salon A**	**MCC Life Sharing and the Dreaded Age Out** ***Michele Bruce, Medical Coordinator; Cyndi Grimm, Life Sharing Nurse; Jessie Neal-Soska, Life Sharing Coordinator/Specialist; Barbara Dyer, Director of Life Sharing; Citizen Care*** People with medically complex conditions in Life Sharing homes often rely on intensive nursing supports funded through Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) services until their 21st birthday. When a child ages out of EPSDT, provider organizations must rapidly shift to new models of nursing oversight that ensure continuity of care, regulatory compliance, and ongoing health and safety. Often this comes with fewer guaranteed nursing hours and increased reliance on community-based caregivers. Citizen Care's Life Sharing team will share how we didn't know what we didn't know when the first person in Pennsylvania aged out of EPSDT nursing. Our team will outline our experience with the ODP Needs Exception Allowance process as well as detail the steps we took to manage the learning curve for developing a nursing oversight plan that ensures continuity of care and safety. The session will also address building effective nurse training including competency, emergency preparedness, and monitoring changes in medical acuity. Participants will gain real world guidance on coordinating with home health and temporary nursing agencies, including on boarding expectations, communication standards, coverage planning, and maintaining consistency during staffing shortages. Attendees will leave with tools to build sustainable nursing oversight models in Life Sharing programs.
2:45 PM **Commonwealth Salons C/D/E**	**Compassionate Care for Individuals with ID Experiencing Grief (Part 2)** ***Mary S. Barrett, MSN, BSN, RN*** This session examines the unique challenges individuals with intellectual disabilities may face when grieving the loss of a family member, friend, or caregiver. Attendees will be introduced to a practical training framework designed for families, caregivers, and agency or facility staff to strengthen everyday support for people experiencing grief. The presentation will highlight strategies, tools, and compassionate approaches that can help supporters respond more effectively while building a stronger foundation for grief-informed care.
2:45 PM **Elm / Fir**	**Leveraging Grants to Empower Low-Income Homeowners: Strategies for Successful Partnerships and Programs for Affordable Housing** ***Kevin Huwe and Christina Kraemer, Disability Options Network*** The intersection of race, disability and gender with homeownership and property maintenance has a major influence on access to stable housing. Panelists will outline key assistance programs, including USDA, PHARE, LIHEAP and others, designed to support low- and very-low-income households in funding essential home repair and modifications. They will also examine the Innovative Hemp House project in New Castle – a pioneering renovation of an existing home using sustainable hemp-based building materials to promote affordable, accessible, and environmentally friendly housing solutions.

2:45 PM Hemlock	**Activity Room Open**
3:45 – 5:30 PM Commonwealth	**Networking And Visit Exhibitors**

Excellence in Lifesharing Awards Ceremony

Every year we like to acknowledge a few families from the differeent regions throughout Pennsylvania that not only represent but exemplify the true spirit of Lifesharing. Nominations are collected across the state and reviewed by the Coalition's Leadership Committee who is also tasked with designating four winners from across the state (one from each region).

Presented by:
Kathy Trumbore, PA Lifesharing Coalition Leadership • Kristin Ahrens, Deputy Secretary, PA DHS ODP

Congratulations to the Recipients of the 2026 Excellence in Lifesharing Award!

CENTRAL REGION RECIPIENT – Bryan and Sandy Lytle-nominated by Thomas Cox from Skills of Central PA
WESTERN REGION RECIPIENT – Laura Baker-nominated by Tim Bailey from L'arche Erie
SOUTHEAST REGION RECIPIENT – Cheryl Golembowski-nominated by Sally Welsh from Community Services Group
NORTHEAST REGION RECIPIENT – Kathy Ayres and John Kutt-nominated by Kimberly Dotter from Futures Community Support Services

Congratulations to All of the 2026 Nominees!

- Vernel Alleyne - Keystone Human Services
- Heather Arak - Community Services Group
- Lamont Bates - SPIN Inc.
- Felicia Dash - Sevita Health
- Beatrice Davis - KenCrest
- Wanda Evans - KenCrest
- Shirley Flemming - RHD Lifesharing
- Marlene Gray - Fayette County Behavioral Health Administration
- Tina Heckler - KenCrest
- Beth Hyser - Penn Mar Human Services
- Tina Iyare - KenCrest
- Elana Jones - KenCrest
- Deb Kerestan - Skills of Central PA
- Hope Kirkland - Keystone Human Services
- Keenia Ladouceur - Quality Progressions
- Jeannie Long - Community Services Group
- Sharron Myers - Sevita Health
- Alexa Paro - Human Resources Center
- Melissa Petersheim - Community Services Group
- Robert Reiss - Brian's House
- Emma Schmidt - Citizen Care
- Rebecca Stokes - KenCrest
- Bernard and Kaisha Williams - Human Resources Center Inc.
- Aicha Yassine - Community Services Group

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2026 – MORNING PLENARY SESSION & BREAKOUTS

7:30 AM – 3:00PM Commonwealth	**Registration Desk Open**
8:00 – 9:15AM Commonwealth	**Hot Buffet Breakfast**
8:30 AM Hemlock	**Activity Room Open**
8:30 AM Commonwealth	**Welcome, PA Lifesharing Coalition**
8:35 AM Commonwealth	**Keynote Speaker & Film: Jess Ronne And "Unseen"** Unseen follows Jess and Ryan Ronne, a blended family with 8 children, including Lucas, who has profound disabilities requiring total care. Their situation has gotten more and more challenging as Lucas gets older and stronger. With limited resources and support, caregiving takes a toll on their physical and mental health. **Following the screening of the film, Jess Ronne will join us to share more of her experiences and answer questions.**

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2026 – CONTINUED

10:30 AM **Commonwealth**	**BREAK**
11:00 AM **Commonwealth** **Salon C/D/E**	**LIFESHARING 101, PART 2 (CONTINUED FROM MONDAY)** ***Lifesharing Coalition Leadership: Stephanie Farrow, Kathy Trumbore, Joe Karpinskie, Amy Ricglane-Rush*** This session provides a practical framework for building and sustaining high-quality Life Sharing programs. Participants will explore key components including host family recruitment and screening, person-centered matching, program oversight, and the use of substitute care and respite. The content focuses on real-world strategies that balance regulatory compliance with relationship-based support to improve placement stability and host family retention. Participants will be able to: - Develop effective recruitment and screening processes for Life Sharing host families - Apply structured, person-centered matching practices - Implement appropriate oversight and staffing models - Distinguish and operationalize substitute care vs. respite - Use best practices to improve program quality and provider retention
11:00 AM **Commonwealth** **Salon A**	**Nothing About Us Without Us: Advocacy in Action** ***Katie Herman, Life Sharing Coordinator, Citizen Care; Peggy Walsh, Life Sharing Coordinator, Citizen Care; Tyler Dayton, Advocate; Sue Dayton, Life Sharer*** Advocacy is a vital part of the disability experience. Helping people supported, caregivers, and family members find their voice to ensure they achieve an Everyday Life and have access to the good things of life everyone deserves is essential to promoting choice, inclusion, and quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities and autism (IDA). This session emphasizes a shift from "doing for" to "supporting with." We'll explore advocacy across a range of contexts, from navigating daily life in a life sharing home (such as expressing preferences, making choices about daily routines, house rules, relationships, medical care, and long-term goals) to how people supported, family members, and caregivers engage with legislators to help shape and improve the service system. Participants will leave with practical tips and a list of resources to begin their advocacy journey or strengthen their ongoing advocacy efforts. The presenters bring a blend of professional expertise in the IDA field and lived experience as advocates and/or family members. Together, they share a strong commitment to advancing self-determination and fostering inclusive communities.
11:00 AM **Commonwealth** **Salon B**	**Lifesharing and the Needs Exception Allowance (NEA) process** ***Kiernan Gladman, Fiscal & Grants Manager, ODP*** This session will review the Needs Exception Allowance (NEA) process for Lifesharing individuals with needs beyond the Department-established fee rates. Key topics will include how the process works with Lifesharing, how and when to submit a NEA request, the NEA cost report form, DP-1087 Regulatory Waiver Request form, and the ODP review process. Participants will gain insights into the Needs Group requirements, 6100.481 (Departmental Rates & Classification) and 6100.571 (Fee Schedule Rates), and best practices when completing and submitting a NEA request to ODP.
11:00 AM **Hemlock**	**Activity Room Open**

12:00 – 1:00 PM: LUNCH AND VISIT EXHIBITORS w/ MUSIC BY BAND TOGETHER PITTSBURGH (exhibitors depart at 1 pm)

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2026 – AFTERNOON CONCURRENT BREAKOUTS

1:15 PM Commonwealth Salons C/D/E	**Tools For Your Toolbox: Bridging the Gap Between the Autism Community and Law Enforcement/First Responders** ***Cheryl Stehle (CEO/trainer) / Jamiel Owens (trainer) Autism Toolbox Training; Levi Walbert, Supported Decision Making PA Project*** AuTT has a goal – to bridge the gap between the autism community and members of the law enforcement and first responders' communities throughout Pennsylvania. Through simple, straightforward, logic-based training, AuTT focuses on basic information sharing, open communication and collaboration. AuTT strives to ensure that the same message and goals are being shared by everyone, increasing the likelihood of positive interactions whenever possible. When training community members, AuTT emphasizes practical strategies for communication, ensuring that individuals and their family members and caregivers are prepared for situations where they may need to engage with police, firefighters, EMTs, or other first responders. We cover topics such as understanding common law enforcement protocols, practicing self-advocacy techniques, and recognizing potential sensory overload triggers that may affect an individual's response to emergency situations. The presentation, titled "Tools for your Toolbox – Bridging the Gap Between the Autism Community and Law Enforcement/First Responders," has three sections. •An overview of what is taught to law enforcement and first responders about autism. •A closer look at law enforcement and first responder training and how specific protocols can affect members of the autism community. •Suggestions about how a member of the autism community can fill their toolbox and prepare for any interaction.
1:15 PM Commonwealth Salon B	**MCC Lifesharing: Operational Challenges and Real-World Solutions** ***Jennifer Harniman-Crangle, PCCRC; Kathy Trumbore, KenCrest; Gavin O'Marehen, Mainstay; Barb Dyer, Citizen Care*** This session focuses on how agencies are operationalizing MCC Lifesharing programs in real-world conditions, with an emphasis on provider and agency perspectives. Key topics include eligibility and registration processes, day-to-day program operations, program structure, regulatory expectations, and funding challenges, particularly as individuals transition into adulthood. The session will be delivered in a panel format featuring experienced providers who will share how they are solving these challenges in practice, where approaches are succeeding or falling short, and the tradeoffs being made to maintain stability and quality. Participants will gain practical insights and strategies that can be applied across different program models.
1:15 PM Commonwealth Salon A	**Supported Decision Making – Your life, Your Decisions** ***Levi Walbert , Supported Decision Making PA Project*** Every day each of us makes countless decisions about our lives, big and small. These decisions lead to the kinds of lives we live and futures we want to pursue. So, what would it mean if you were not allowed to make your own choices, just because you struggled to understand, research, or communicate those choices? Supported Decision Making (SDM) is a way of making your own choices with the support of a team of your choice – all while retaining your rights to make those decisions. SDM exists as a less restrictive alternative to guardianship, and as a system that can meet the diverse needs of people who want support in their decision making.
1:15 PM Hemlock	**Activity Room Open**
2:15 PM Commonwealth Foyer	**Break**

TUESDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 20, 2026 – CONTINUED

2:30 PM **Commonwealth Salons C/D/E**	**Empowering Independence: Transforming Lives with Remote Support Through Person-Centered Technology and Agency Perspectives** ***Heather Lewis, Coordinator of Technology Services, and Gavin O'Marehen, Mainstay Life Services*** The growing demand for accessible and inclusive support has driven innovative providers to leverage technology to better serve people with disabilities. This session will showcase the journey of Mainstay Life Services, as they embraced remote support technologies to empower the people they support, enhance care delivery, and foster independence. Through real-world examples, this session will explore the challenges, solutions, and outcomes of implementing technologies. Attendees will learn how these advancements have transformed the lives of people supported and redefined the way support services are delivered.
2:30 PM **Commonwealth Salon A**	**Life Sharing Through an SRV Lens: Its Promise, Power, and Vulnerabilities** ***Barbara Dyer, Director of Life Sharing, Citizen Care*** Life Sharing is a relationship-based way of supporting people with disabilities through shared daily life. Instead of rotating staff and shifts, Life Sharing is about people living together, supporting one another, and being part of family and community life. When done well, it helps people live ordinary lives, build meaningful relationships, and stay connected to their communities. This session looks at Life Sharing through a Social Role Valorization (SRV) lens. We'll explore what makes Life Sharing strong and meaningful, enhancing the image and competency of people supported. We'll also look at risks, such as overdependence, caregiver burnout, or compatibility challenges as needs change. Participants will learn what safeguards are needed to protect people supported, families, and the integrity of the model.
2:30 PM **Commonwealth Salon B**	**Building Better Bridges: Unlocking Concrete Support Through Strong Relationships & Support Systems** ***Icylee L. Basketbill, B.S., Founder/Mentor/Educational Consultant/Advocate, Guided Pathways to Empowerment*** All families need help sometimes–yet reaching out for support can feel vulnerable or uncomfortable. Often, the strongest pathway to support begins not with a service, but with connection. This session explores how strong relationships and healthy support systems create the foundation for accessing concrete support. This interactive presentation highlights the connection between social relationships, trust-building, resilience, and resource access. Participants will examine why social connections are essential protective factors for individuals and families and will be introduced to the ***Seven Keystones of Support***, a practical framework for identifying the different types of relationships needed for a balanced and supportive network. Through guided discussion, real-life examples, and reflective activities, attendees will gain strategies to help families strengthen relationships, expand support systems, and increase access to practical resources such as food, housing, transportation, healthcare, and financial assistance. Participants will leave with actionable tools they can apply in both personal and professional settings to foster connection and strengthen pathways to support.
2:30 PM **Hemlock**	**Activity Room Open**
3:30 – 3:45 PM **Commonwealth Salon B**	**Gift Baskets Drawings and** **SPECIAL PRIZE DRAWING!! (must be present to win)** **Adjourn–Safe Travels Back Home!**

Thanks to Our Supporters

A Special Thank You to PA ODP for their extraordinary support of this year's conference.

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Are You a PA Lifesharing Coalition Member?

The Coalition holds statewide and regional meetings. For more information on these meetings, please email the following Regional Contacts:

- Central Region
  Becky Kreischer (bkreischer@boldinc.org)
  Courtney McGee (cmcgee@persondirectedsupports.com)

- Northeast Region
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- Western Region
  Open
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For more information,
www.palifesharing.com

2027 Conference
More Information Coming Soon!