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## CHESTER COUNTY

# From shy boy to a leader through 4-H

Ronak Suchindra of Chester Springs named winner of 4-H Youth in Action

By Bill Rettew  
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CHESTER SPRINGS—When 17-year-old Ronak Suchindra discovered 4-H, nine years ago, he was a shy boy, but he has since become a confident leader and scholarship award winner.

The Downingtown East senior was named one of the winners of the 2025 Youth in Action Awards, which honors four 4-H youth from across the country for their

exceptional achievements, impact on their communities and demonstrating that they are Beyond Ready for successful futures.

With the help of 30 middle and high school student volunteers, Ronak has mentored more than 3,000 students globally to help foster a new generation of STEM enthusiasts.

Ronak met PennState Extension educator Toni M. Stuetz as an eight-year old. She introduced him to robots and Legos. He is a

member of the Penn State Cooperative Extension 4-H program.

At first, the grade schooler was intimidated but soon had a change of heart.

“It opened up my creativity, so I could express myself,” Ronak said. “4-H not only incorporated robotics and creativity but also public speaking issues I’m passionate about such as space debris.”

Space debris is the waste generated by space travel and Ronak delved into the unknown and unlocked endless possibilities.

“What can engineers do to catch these space debris?” he asks.

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4-H scholarship winner Ronak Suchindra. BILL RETTEW — MEDIANEWS GROUP

## CHESTER COUNTY

# BUILDING EMPATHY

Poverty simulation draws volunteers from across Chester County to Oxford



Volunteers from across Chester County take part in a poverty simulation event at St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church on Oct. 25. PHOTO COURTESY OF CHERYL MILES — KENNETT AREA COMMUNITY SERVICE

By Jen Samuel  
FOR MEDIANEWS GROUP

OXFORD — Eighty-eight people volunteered to experience life in Chester County while undergoing immense financial hardships during a well-attended poverty simulation event at St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church.

“It is important for all of us to work together,” said Cheryl Miles, community housing development director at Kennett Area Community Service.

Collaborating nonprofit partners of the simulation included, besides Kennett Area Community Service, Chester County United Way, Serving Inspiring Loving Others (SILO), Oxford’s Neighborhood Services Center, CHESCO Bridges Coalition, Lighthouse Youth Center, Orion Communities, Migrant Education of Pennsylvania, Chester County Partnership to End the to Homelessness, Chester County Intermediate Unit, and United Way of Southern Chester County.

“This is a group of nonprof-



People learn how to survive if impoverished during a simulation event in Oxford on Oct. 25. PHOTO COURTESY OF CHERYL MILES — KENNETT AREA COMMUNITY SERVICE

its throughout Chester County who work with families experiencing homelessness, experiencing poverty,” Miles said.

Working together inside the sanctuary of St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church, the 88 volunteers from across the county took part in the simulation by assuming the identity of a person living in poverty.

Miles said the goal of the simulation was to empower the community to better understand poverty and how it impacts people with lived experiences.

The 88 volunteers were assigned into families facing various hardships including long work hours without reasonable childcare options, the problems which arise when seeking support

at various social service agencies that operate only during limited week-day timeframes, and the everyday struggles of food insecurity.

“We call it a simulation. We want people to know this is not a game,” Miles said. “We want to build empathy.”

There were 22 nonprofit team members who assumed the identity of various important community roles for the volunteers to interact with during the simulation. These societal roles included a nurse, a banker, a police officer, a grocer and prospective employers. There was even a pawnbroker.

Throughout the morning, the volunteers navigated real-life scenarios through the morning, with limited resources, while faced with critical decisions which not only impacted their futures, but the livelihood and well-being of their entire families.

“It’s critically important for community members and stakeholders to thoroughly understand what it’s like to navigate systems and

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## ELECTION 2024

# COUNTING ON THE PROCESS

Election 2024 in Chester County will wrap up sooner than 2020

By Michael P. Rellahan  
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The 2024 presidential election promises to be over sooner than you think — at least in Chester County.

While the nation may wait for tight races in Pennsylvania and other swing states to close days after Tuesday, Nov. 5, the vote-counting process here should not be a repeat of four years ago, when it took until the end of the election for staff in the county Office of Voter Services to finish counting the tens of thousands of mail-in ballots cast in that COVID-19 era.

This year, far fewer voters are casting their ballots by mail than in 2020; as of four days after the close of voter registration, 68,373 had cast their ballots for president, U.S. senator, U.S. House of Representative, and state executive and legislative offices, as opposed to the 151,149 who did so then.

Thus, there will be far fewer mail-in ballots to process, making counting less time-consuming. But also, the Voter Services operation that struggled in 2020 to process the new ballots has been replaced by a more streamlined and efficient system that those election workers have grown used to dealing with in the years since.

So the question of who wins the presidential election — along with the other contested races — in the county’s count should come before the sun sets on Wednesday, Nov. 6.

For politicians in the Democratic and Republican parties, the answer of winner and loser is clear. County Democrats have faith that Vice President Kamala Harris will prevail, while county Republicans are no less sure that former President Donald Trump will win.

“This election was always going to be close in Pennsylvania — particularly when we’ve had out-of-state billionaires flood the Commonwealth

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## CHESTER COUNTY

# Second gentleman Doug Emhoff visits Chester County

By Bill Rettew  
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WEST CHESTER — With just a few days left until the general election, Doug Emhoff, Second Gentleman and husband of presidential candidate Kamala Harris, visited a private residence in the borough on Friday evening to urge phone bank volunteers to keep at it and knock even more doors.

“There’s only one choice and that happens to be my wife,” Emhoff said, with a smile, during an informal presentation, as some volunteers continued to finish up calls.

Emhoff told the volunteers that every voter

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