



Newsletter



**Week of the
Young Child**

Spring
2018

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STEP INC. *Employee of the Quarter*



Pictured from left: STEP President & CEO Jim Plankenhorn, Accounts Payable/Payroll Coordinator Toni Troxell, Assistant Chief Financial Officer Kelly Gillis, and Chief Financial Officer Traci Lowe.

Toni Troxell has been a STEP employee since 1993. She is the front line staff person in the fiscal department that interacts with employees when there are payroll questions and/or issues. She exudes a positive attitude and cares deeply for her fellow employees. Toni shows tremendous attention to detail and truly understands how important her functions are to the agency.

Toni demonstrates an exceptional work ethic with all of her duties at STEP. In addition, she embraces the wellness of STEP employees and offers a Zumba class on Monday evenings at the RiverWalk Center that is free to all STEP employees.

STEP INC. *New Business*

STEP, Inc. has been selected by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services' Office of Child Development and Early Learning as the regional Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) serving Lycoming, Clinton, and Tioga counties.

Developed as a result of stakeholder feedback, ELRCs consolidate the current work of Child Care Information Service agencies and the Regional Keys to create an enhanced resource and referral system for communities seeking early learning services and supports.

Beginning July 1, 2018, STEP, Inc. and other ELRCs will provide a single point-of-contact for families, early learning service providers, and communities to gain information and access services that support high-quality child care and early learning programs. ELRCs will administer over \$680 million in child care subsidy and supports. This state and federal investment in Pennsylvania's working families enables parents to maintain employment while creating opportunities for the commonwealth's children to develop and learn to their fullest potential. Through the ELRC, child care professionals can obtain support in building quality outcomes for children by working with quality coaches to achieve Keystone STAR 3 and 4 status, building connections with community partners, and supporting children and families in accessing additional services, such as PA Pre-K Counts, Head Start, home-visiting, and Early Intervention.

AARP Tax-Aide *Wraps Up*

The STEP Office of Aging annually sponsors the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Tax-Aide program in conjunction with the IRS. The volunteer-driven program offers free tax help for taxpayers with low and moderate incomes, with special attention to people aged 60 and older. The volunteers complete federal, state, and local tax returns, and applications for Pennsylvania's Property Tax/Rent Rebate program.

Retired Pennsylvania College of Technology accounting professor Phil Landers volunteers as the Tax-Aide site coordinator in Lycoming County. His team of nine volunteers filed 818 federal returns this past tax season, resulting in a total of more than \$494,000 in tax refunds. The group uses space at the Office of Aging Lincoln Senior Center at the STEP office building in Williamsport.

Working out of STEP's Clinton County Community Center in Lock Haven, Clinton County Tax-Aide Site Coordinator Sue Toot enlisted 16 community volunteers, including students in the accounting program at Lock Haven University, to help with tax returns. Clinton County tax volunteers filed 630 federal returns this past tax season, resulting in a total of more than \$462,000 in tax refunds.



STEP Office of Aging Honors Volunteers



STEP Office of Aging volunteers were recently recognized for their contributions at banquet luncheons held at the RiverWalk Center in South Williamsport on April 6th and 13th, and on April 20th at the Clinton County Community Center in Lock Haven.

Meals at both locations were provided through Frey's Commissary. STEP AmeriCorps members helped serve guests at the RiverWalk Center, while National Honor Society students from Central Mountain High School provided service at the Clinton County Community Center banquet.

Many of these volunteers deliver Meals on Wheels, some help out with bingo and exercise classes, while others donate their time to ensure the success of STEP Office of Aging programs. Dozens of volunteers received certificates for their extended years of service to senior programs.



This year the George C. Meck Volunteer of the Year Award was awarded to Barbara Hendricks. Barbara is pictured below with Center Coordinator Tara Coleman, Aging Advisory Council Chairperson Ray Humphrey, Director of STEP Office of Aging Fred Shrimp, STEP President and CEO Jim Plankenhorn, and Clinton County Commissioner Paul Conklin.



Week of the Young Child

STEP Head Start celebrated Week of the Young Child from April 15-21. The Week of the Young Child is an annual observance hosted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). NAEYC celebrates early learning, young children, their teachers, and their families across the globe.

Inside our classrooms, Week of the Young Child activities included Music Monday, Tasty Tuesday, Work Together Wednesday, Artsy Thursday, and Family Friday.

Music Monday - Through music, children develop math, language, and literacy skills - all while having fun and being active!

Tasty Tuesday - Cooking together connects math with literacy skills, science, and more. Head Start encourages healthy nutrition and fitness habits at home and in class.

Work Together Wednesday - When children build together, they explore math and science concepts, and develop their social and early literacy skills.

Artsy Thursday - Children develop creativity, social skills, and fine motor skills with open-ended art projects where they can make choices, use their imaginations, and create with their hands.

Family Friday - Engaging and celebrating families is at the heart of supporting our youngest learners. We applaud family members' role as young children's first and most important teachers.



PA One Book: *Every Young Child*



Now in its 13th year, *Pennsylvania One Book: Every Young Child* is a valuable program that highlights the importance of early literacy development in preschoolers and the significance of reading early and often to children, as well as engaging them in conversation and other activities around books.

This year's PA One Book was ***My Cousin Momo***, written and illustrated by Zachariah OHora. The author visited the STEP Round Hills Campus. Thanks to support from the James V. Brown Library and a fundraiser held by STEP staff, all children enrolled in STEP's Early Learning programs received their own copy of ***My Cousin Momo***. Many classrooms invited additional guest speakers to read the featured book.

STEP AmeriCorps DAY OF WILLIAMSPORT MARCH 13TH 2018



Nearly 600 AmeriCorps members from across the state came to Williamsport on Tuesday, March 13, 2018 for the "Day of A," the organization's day to celebrate what it stands for by working on service projects together.

After the speaker presentations, groups of AmeriCorps members gathered to go out into the community to work on service projects at local non-profit organizations, including STEP, the City of Williamsport Recreation Department, YWCA, Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, Transitional Living Centers, Family Promise, Pennsylvania College of Technology, and the American Rescue Workers.

One city hosts the event each year, and this is the first time PennSERVE, the state-level agency that oversees the AmeriCorps program in Pennsylvania, has chosen STEP AmeriCorps and Williamsport.

Members started their day at the Community Arts Center to discuss AmeriCorps and the importance of community service. Keynote speaker Steve Keener, President and CEO of Little League International, spoke about the importance of teamwork, fair play, and sportsmanship - mentioning that those same qualities will lead the younger generation to give their time to programs like AmeriCorps - serving their communities and being good, responsible citizens.

Additional speakers included: Executive Director of PennSERVE, Maureen Eccleston; Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Jerry Oleksiak; STEP AmeriCorps Program Manager Emily Gale; and STEP AmeriCorps members Shamea Chestnut, Odren Polk, Tyran Fisher, and Kayla Drummond.



Steve Keener
President & CEO
Little League International



Jerry Oleksiak
Secretary of Pennsylvania
Department of Labor & Industry



Maureen Eccleston
Executive Director
of PennSERVE



Speakers Panel

#Getting THINGS done!



#Getting THINGS done!

“ This was the largest AmeriCorps Week event in the entire country this year. Across the country 75,000 AmeriCorps members are celebrating their service this week, and we're the largest group of members in one place at one time.

Maureen Eccleston
Executive Director
PennSERVE

“ Being a part of AmeriCorps means you get to help people. You help yourself and you actively listen and learn about the community, about unity, and about working with a team.

Emily Gale
Program Manager
STEP AmeriCorps



#Getting THINGS done!



#Getting THINGS done!

National Service Day of Recognition



On National Service Recognition Day, thousands of local leaders take time to honor AmeriCorps members by participating in recognition events, issuing official proclamations, and taking to social media in a nationwide show of appreciation.

In Lock Haven, Mayor William "Bill" Baney, accompanied by members of the community and STEP AmeriCorps, proclaimed Tuesday, April 3 National Service Day of Recognition.

The proclamation lauds AmeriCorps members for addressing some of the most pressing challenges that face America's communities, like fighting the opioid epidemic, responding to natural disasters, preparing students for the workforce, and helping veterans and military families.

STEP AmeriCorps serves Clinton, Lycoming, and Tioga counties by partnering with local non-profits and school districts to provide service opportunities to its members to meet the region's needs.

In Clinton County, STEP AmeriCorps hopes to expand its presence, partnering with Lock Haven University, Ross Library, the Clinton County Housing Authority, and Downtown Lock Haven Inc.

STEP AmeriCorps members go through a comprehensive application process and are then placed in community organizations where they are most needed to serve either full-time or part-time. For more information visit www.stepcorp.org/AmeriCorps.php



Mark Your Calendar!



STEP 'N Out! Bus Trips

Brought to you by the STEP Office of Aging and a grant through the Pennsylvania Department of Aging, "STEP 'N Out!" is a way for individuals age 60+ to experience local and regional history, entertainment, and landmarks. Call your nearest center for more details, including pick-up/drop-off locations.

June 6
Multi-Center Trip:
Knoebels Senior Day

June 27
Multi-Center Trip:
Sight & Sound Jesus

Clinton County Community Center: 570.858.5820

Lincoln Center: 570.601.9573

Meck Center: 570.546.2542

Renovo Center: 570.923.2525

Jersey Shore Center: 570.601.9591

Loyalsock/Montoursville Center: 570.601.9590

Mill Hall Center: 570.726.6378

RiverWalk Center: 570.601.9592



Saturday, May 19 • 10 AM - 1 PM

RiverWalk Center | 423 East Central Avenue, South Williamsport
Bike Rodeo & Party In The Park

STEP will be holding its annual Bike Rodeo in conjunction with Party in the Park and Paws Park's Doggone Craft & Vendor Fair. Bring your bike, or borrow one from the center, and join us for a day of community fun!

Party in the Park is open to the public and will have food trucks, a craft and vendor fair, and bounce houses, games and activities for kids. There will be tennis clinics available for both children and adults. The South Williamsport Community Park Improvement Association will also have the grand opening and dedication of the new tennis courts at 11:30 AM.



Veggie Vouchers

Friday, June 1 • 10 AM - 3 PM RiverWalk Center

Tuesday, June 5 • 11 AM - 4 PM Clinton County Community Center

Monday, June 11 • 1 PM - 3 PM Jersey Shore Center (while supplies last)

Thursday, June 14 • 12 PM - 2:30 PM Renovo Center (while supplies last)

Friday, June 15 • 11 AM - 2 PM Meck Center (while supplies last)

\$20 of free fruit & vegetable vouchers will be available for qualified seniors to use at participating vendors. To qualify, you must be 60 years of age or older, live in Lycoming County or Clinton County, and have a total annual income of less than \$22,459 for one person or \$30,451 for two people. Proof of age and residence must be shown (driver's license, utility bill, PA ID, etc.).





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