



Newsletter



STEP AmeriCorps
MLK Day of Service

Winter
2020

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From left: STEP President & CEO Jim Plankenhorn, Construction Supervisor Jerry Walburn, and Housing Options Director Dave Mitchley.

Jerry is a Construction Supervisor for STEP's Housing Options Pathway. His interactions with clients are pleasant and professional and his calm demeanor puts the clients at ease while he completes his necessary work.

During the months of October through December, Jerry was the only STEP employee with the required training to complete rehab audits and inspections. This was outside of his comfort zone, but he willingly accepted this responsibility with a great attitude. He completed tasks required of a Project Manager in addition to his job as Construction Supervisor, bouncing back between the two responsibilities on a regular basis – always being positive. Jerry always sets a good example to the rest of the staff regardless of his assigned duties.

Jerry interacts with the entire Housing team in a positive manner. He is active in meetings and often speaks up in a constructive fashion. He has been open to changes and is also able to voice concerns without hesitation, making the recent transition and team building process a smooth one.

STEP Head Start Mitten Tree Project

Warm, colorful mittens were distributed this winter to children in STEP Head Start, thanks to the generosity of many. This is the 15th year STEP Head Start's annual Mitten Tree Project has been able to keep more than 600 children's hands warm. The collection ran through the end of December, then donations were sorted and distributed to Head Start classrooms in Lycoming and Clinton counties.

This year, the project saw donations of more than 2,000 items, including mittens, gloves, hats, and scarves. Each child received a pair of gloves or mittens as well as a scarf or hat. The large volume of donations also allowed for extras to be sent to the classrooms to be used when a child forgets their gloves, or if a new child enrolls who does not have any.

STEP Head Start's Mitten Tree Project was honored to be this year's charity project of First Citizens Bank in Mill Hall for their annual Charity Wreath Auction. First Citizens Bank raised more than \$400 for the project! Items were also donated by long-time supporters Knitting for Neighbors, along with many independent donors and donations from area churches.



Early Head Start Winterfest

STEP Early Head Start celebrated WinterFest 2020 on the evening of Tuesday, January 21. The annual event welcomed Early Head Start children and their families to explore winter-inspired stations. Kids visited each area with opportunities to strengthen their fine and gross motor skills with frozen paint, snowman toss, play-doh sculpting, ice chiseling, a sensory pool, and a tummy time area for infants.

Agency partners including Early Learning Resource Center Region 7, UGI, and the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank were in attendance to talk with families and share information.

STEP Early Head Start serves children from birth to age three in Lycoming and Clinton counties. The program provides early, continuous, and comprehensive year-round child development and family support services to pregnant women, infants, and toddlers, including those with disabilities.



STEP AmeriCorps

2020 DREAM WEEK



MLK DAY OF SERVICE

Hundreds of Lycoming and Clinton County residents stepped up to serve as volunteers on the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday. Volunteers packed nutritious meal kits, joining hundreds of thousands of Americans across the country in volunteer service.

STEP AmeriCorps planned the day of service in partnership with the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, Lycoming College, Pennsylvania College of Technology, and the Beloved Community Council. This partnership leveraged the strength of volunteers to help tackle local problems and advance Dr. King's dream of opportunity for all.

The "Pack and Share" service event, held on Monday, January 20, was STEP AmeriCorps' largest service project of the year. The service project leveraged more than 400 volunteers and saw more than 12,000 pounds of food packed into 2,250 meal kits and 1,000 backpacks, which will be given to area families who struggle with hunger. They will be distributed through the Food Bank's partner agencies and programs.



This event was part of Dream Week 2020 - a series of events centered around MLK Day. Additional activities included workshops, a showing of "Harriet" the movie, and guest speakers - all aimed to empower individuals to bring about change that moves us closer to Dr. King's vision of a beloved community.

Santa's Seniors

Through the generosity of a wide network of volunteers and donors, 362 boxes full of gifts and food made their way to the homes of Meals on Wheels recipients in Lycoming and Clinton counties. The boxes contained ready to eat or easily prepared foods, cold weather necessities, personal care items, puzzles, mugs, blankets, poinsettias, and more. Donations were gathered this fall, up until the second week of December, then sorted, packed, and distributed to consumers just before Christmas.

This marked the fifth year of STEP administering the project, utilizing resources and volunteers/service members from STEP Office of Aging, STEP AmeriCorps, and Head Start. The Sun Gazette, Lock Haven Express, and Backyard Broadcasting provided extensive publicity and coverage for the donation drive. The media outlets also served as donation drop-off locations, gathering a staggering collection of individual donations to help fill the boxes.



The boxes themselves were donated by Miller Brothers Auto Sales and filled with contributions from local businesses and organizations. Helminiak's Greenhouse & Landscaping provided a poinsettia for each recipient. Donors of cash, goods, and gift cards included: UPMC Health Plan, Geisinger, Clinton County Dental Clinic; Phoenix Rehabilitation & Health Services; Reese's Print Shop; Restless Oaks; Steinbacher, Goodall & Yurchak; Weis Markets; Avery Dennison; Presbyterian Home; Novitas, Charlotte Pipe and Foundry Co., Cranmer's Auto Repair, Centre Concrete, Pat Mumma and Jeri Alrich, and Wegmans. Countless individual donations were delivered to STEP and to the media outlet offices.

Sorting, counting, and packing the donations is possible only because of the astounding work done by volunteers from STEP's Office of Aging programs, service members from STEP AmeriCorps, and community volunteers. The Pennsylvania State Police delivered boxes in Montoursville and Renovo. STEP's Meals on Wheels volunteers delivered boxes on their routes throughout Lycoming and Clinton counties.



Early Learning Endowment Fund



Pictured from left: Jennifer Wilson, Rachele Abbott, Melissa Kerschner, Jennifer Sweet, Jamey Williams, Patti Kiessling, Carolyn Hawk, and Jim Plankenhorn.

STEP and the First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania (FCFP) are pleased to announce the creation of the STEP Early Learning Endowment Fund at FCFP. STEP created the fund with over \$25,000 raised over the last year as a permanent funding source in which a portion of the fund's investment income is granted back to STEP in support of their programs and projects, while the fund's principal is protected for future charitable interest.

"The STEP Early Learning Pathway Endowment is the fifth of six endowments we plan to create. We continue to invest into the future of STEP programming by providing a long term financial resource that, over time, will decrease our reliance on local, state, and federal funding," said Jim Plankenhorn, President & CEO of STEP. "Bringing these endowments into being requires a tremendous amount of work and dedication. Our staff, volunteers, board members, donors, and other supporters continue to go above and beyond as we pursue long term goals for the agency."

Jennifer Wilson, President & CEO of FCFP, added, "FCFP is pleased to continue our partnership with STEP through the creation of their fifth organizational endowment. We commend them on their vision of creating endowments to help provide financial stability for their programs."

Anyone wishing to create a fund to support their favorite nonprofit organization in perpetuity may do so by contacting FCFP at 570-321-1500.



Mark Your Calendar!



Raise the Region
Wednesday, March 11 at 6:00 PM
through Thursday March 12 at 11:59 PM

Raise the Region is a 30-hour online fundraising event held by the First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania. You can support STEP by visiting: bit.ly/STEP-RTR



Loyalsock Grand Opening
Thursday, March 12 at 11:00 AM

Please join STEP and Loyalsock Township as we celebrate the grand opening of the Loyalsock Center for Healthy Aging at the Loyalsock Township Community Recreation Center.

Ceremonial ribbon cutting, activity stations, and guest speakers will be featured during this event.



No Small Matter
Thursday, April 9 at 7:00 PM
Community Arts Center | 220 W. 4th Street Williamsport

Join us for a FREE documentary screening of No Small Matter in honor of Week of the Young Child. A panel discussion will be held after the screening.

FREE tickets to the event are available through Early Learning Ambassadors as well as the Early Learning Resource Center Region 7 offices:

- 2138 Lincoln Street, Williamsport
- 124 East Walnut Street, Lock Haven
- 5 East Avenue, Wellsboro

This event is hosted by the Early Learning Resource Center Region 7 Local Leadership Council, The Early Learning Ambassadors, and the Office of Child Development and Early Learning's 2019-2020 Governor's Institute. For more information call 570-327-5495



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