



# Newsletter



naeyc<sup>®</sup>

**Week** of the  
**Young Child**<sup>®</sup>

*Spring*  
**2023**



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**STEP** INC. *Star Awards*

STEP recognizes its employees year-round through a peer recommendation and recognition program called the STEP Star Awards.

Employees are encouraged to submit the names of fellow coworkers who are going above and beyond to make STEP's mission and vision a reality. Employees nominated for a STEP Star Award are recognized with a personalized STEP Star certificate and a STEP Star pin. Each month a name is drawn from that month's recipients for a \$25 gift card of their choosing.



**February, March, and April**  
**STEP Star award winners are:**

**Staci Holter**  
Head Start  
Classroom Aide

**Lindsey Wisor**  
STEP Administration  
Human Resources Generalist

**Amelia Zito**  
Early Learning Resource Center  
Eligibility/Resource and Referral Specialist

**Amanda Shaffer**  
Head Start  
EHS Home Visitor

**Tasha Tressler**  
Head Start  
Classroom Adie

**Darlene Jameson**  
Transportation  
Eligibility & Data Entry Specialist

**Denise Knarr**  
Head Start  
Teacher Assistant

**Jennifer Smith**  
Office of Aging  
Administrative Specialist

**Meghan Mellina**  
Housing  
Housing Administrative Coordinator

**Joshua Smith**  
Head Start  
Information Assistant

**Kimberly Entz**  
Head Start  
Teacher Assistant

**Olivia Penrod**  
Head Start  
EIMH Specialist

**Elaine Hilner**  
STEP Administration  
Lead Human Resources Generalist

**Michelle Middendorf**  
Transportation  
Lead Operator

**Michelle Harstead**  
Head Start  
Teacher Assistant

**Steven Barton**  
Transportation  
Driver

**Kevin Baker**  
Transportation  
Driver

**Diana Lynch**  
Head Start  
Family Advocate

**Suzanne Neatrou**  
Head Start  
Teacher Assistant

**Jessalee Kline**  
Service Navigation  
Family Navigator

**Angela Mahonski**  
Head Start  
Health Specialist

**Cameron Ramsey**  
Service Navigation  
Compliance/Customer Service Specialist



**The winner of February's gift card drawing was Staci Holter!**

**The winner of March's gift card drawing was Darlene Jameson!**

**The winner of April's gift card drawing was Michelle Harstead!**



# COMMUNITY ACTION MONTH

2023 marks the 59th year since the Community Action Network was established to help American families and communities overcome obstacles to poverty. Over 1,000 agencies across the country are working every day to create opportunities and transform the lives of their neighbors, making communities stronger, and helping families across the US thrive. This year, STEP, a proud member of the Community Action Network, will commemorate 57 years of helping families throughout Lycoming and Clinton counties.

Community Action Agencies serve 99% of America's counties with life changing services that create pathways to opportunity and prosperity. As a Community Action Agency, STEP connects individuals, families, and communities to approaches that help them succeed - including high quality education programs for children, job readiness skills for adults, safe and affordable housing for families, programs for older adults, and so much more.

The month-long awareness campaign served as a reminder of the important work being done by STEP staff on a local level to empower struggling families within our communities. An "All Staff Call" took place on "May the Fourth" to bring together and recognize STEP's staff of nearly 300 employees for all of their hard work this year and beyond.

To learn more about the impact of our agency, please follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/STEPpathways](https://www.facebook.com/STEPpathways) for posts that include Mission Monday, Transformation Tuesday, Impact Wednesday, Throwback Thursday, and Fact Friday among others.



Community Action Association of Pennsylvania (CAAP), the authority on the fight on poverty in PA, honors individuals across the commonwealth for successfully reaching, or making significant progress toward Self-Sufficiency through Community Action programming.

STEP nominee Karin Fields was among the awardees honored by the CAAP for her successes! Karin was awarded a stay at Hershey Lodge, Hershey Park Tickets, and travel accommodations for herself and her family.

Karin is a single mother who entered STEP's Work Ready Program in the summer of 2021. From the very start of her enrollment, Karin's goal was to obtain employment and support her family independently. Karin first obtained employment with Muncy School District but was not provided full-time hours, and most weeks were below 20 hours. This did not provide her with the income to meet her family's needs.

Karin remained engaged in the program and worked with her Family Navigator to move towards more gainful employment. While enrolled in the program, she received car repairs and transportation assistance, which enabled her to seek employment further from her home. Karin obtained employment as a receptionist in the Fall of 2021 at River Valley Health and Dental and reports loving this job.

In January 2022, Karin's TANF benefits closed, and she moved to the retention phase of Work Ready. She remained in the retention phase of Work Ready for one year and successfully completed the program. Karin continues to receive support services but is always working on herself and her success. STEP is very proud of Karin and her tremendous accomplishments.







# Celebrates

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# Week of the Young Child

STEP Head Start celebrated Week of the Young Child from April 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>. Week of the Young Child is an annual observance hosted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) to focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families, and to recognize the early childhood programs and services that meet those needs.

STEP Head Start families and staff organized a fun-filled week celebrating early learning, young children, their teachers, families, and communities. The week's activities included Music Monday, Tasty Tuesday, Work Together Wednesday, Artsy Thursday, and Family Friday. There is so much that children learn as they sing, cook together, build together, create art, and celebrate with their families.



## Music Monday

When children sing, dance, and listen to music, they develop their language and early literacy skills while being active and encouraging movement.

STEP Head Start children had the opportunity to explore a variety of musical instruments including drums, guitar, keyboard, symbols, and the xylophone.

## Tasty Tuesday

This fun, food-themed day is about more than just cheese and crackers. Cooking together connects math with literacy skills, science, and more. Head Start encourages healthy nutrition and fitness habits.

Some of the tasty treats enjoyed by Head Start children were fruit salad, smoothies, and tacos!

## Work Together Wednesday

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

Some of our Head Start classrooms worked together to pick up litter around the playground!

## Artsy Thursday

Think, problem solve, create! 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.

Children were encouraged to get creative with coloring, painting, and tracing.

## 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.

To celebrate Family Friday, parents and caregivers were invited to stay for special projects!



# AARP<sup>SM</sup> Tax-Aide<sup>TM</sup>

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 7 volunteers filed 512 federal returns this past tax season, resulting in over \$387,000 in tax refunds. The group prepares taxes at STEP Office of Aging's Lincoln Center for Healthy Aging in Williamsport.

Working out of STEP's Clinton County Community Center in Lock Haven, Clinton County Tax-Aide Site Coordinator Alice Bryerton enlisted nine community volunteers to help with tax returns. Clinton County tax volunteers filed 493 federal returns this past tax season, resulting in a total of more than \$500,000 in tax refunds.



**Pictured from left:**  
AARP Tax-Aide volunteer Anastazy Lencz and site coordinator Phil Landers assist a customer with her taxes.



## STEP HEAD START GRADUATE RECEIVES SCHOLARSHIP!



Breanna Corlew, a senior at the Jersey Shore Area High School, was named a winner of the third annual Pennsylvania Head Start Association (PHSA) 2023 Jeff Koppel Memorial Scholarship Award. The \$2,500 scholarship recognizes former Head Start students with outstanding academic and personal achievement along with strong leadership and motivational skills who are enrolling in post-secondary education. Breanna is the daughter of Melissa, STEP Head Start Education Supervisor, and Daniel Corlew of Rauchtown, PA.

Breanna was a Head Start student at the STEP Head Start McElhattan Center. She has been accepted into the Honors Program at West Chester University and will major in English.

Head Start helped Breanna set high academic goals, sparked an early passion for learning, and taught her to seize every opportunity available. She still has her signed copy of *If You Were a Penguin* after meeting its authors, Florence Friedmann Minor and Wendell Minor, in her Head Start class. Breanna believes Head Start encouraged her passion for reading, and her positive memories of learning as a young child led her to associate learning with fun and gave her an extra boost before entering kindergarten.

Breanna has a 4.0 Grade Point Average (GPA) and ranks among the top five percent in her class. She holds several leadership roles at the Jersey Shore Area High School: President of the National English Honor Society; and Webmaster, Secretary, and currently President of the Key Club. She participated in the Mock Constitutional Convention-Model United Nations (UN) all four years of high school and won the Superior Delegate Award. She is a member of the National Honor Society, the Spanish National Honor Society, the tennis team, and the Youth Development Task Force of the Lycoming County Health Coalition, which collaborates with nine county school districts. A Girl Scout who earned the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards, Breanna also umpires Little League Softball, held two part-time jobs, and interned at the local newspaper, "The Lock Haven Express."

The Jeff Koppel Memorial Head Start Scholarship Fund in partnership with the Pennsylvania Head Start Association honors the life and important contributions made to the Head Start community by Jeff Koppel, a former Head Start Director, and management training and assistance provider to Head Start and Early Head Start Programs. Before his death in January 2020, Jeff's reputation as a friendly helper and advice-giver, fierce Head Start advocate, and always-available shoulder for Head Start Directors, staff, and Boards to lean on was well-established.



# DAY WITHOUT CHILD CARE: FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS

**Let's talk about the state of Early Care & Education**

The Early Learning Resource Center for Region 7 (ELRC 7), serving Lycoming, Clinton, and Tioga counties, knows that when it comes to children, it still takes a village. ELRC 7 created an educational resource in hopes that everyone who is affected by the Early Care and Education crisis will have access to information to better understand what is happening in the profession, and what to do if they choose take action.

The publication is available for free download [www.stepcorp.org/daywithoutchildcare](http://www.stepcorp.org/daywithoutchildcare). A printed copy can also be requested at the same address.

"The Early Care and Education field, parents and caregivers, and employers are all in crisis right now," said Melissa Kerschner, Director of ELRC 7. "The true cost of child care is not being acknowledged. Despite significant education and credentialing investments, workers flee to careers where they receive higher compensation, and classrooms disappear. Caregivers are left scrambling to find a place for their children so they can attend work or school. Just as important, children miss out on development during a critical window, putting them behind when they start school."

A Day without Child Care aims to create an equitable child care system, thriving wages for child care providers, and affordable child care for all families. Anyone interested in learning more can visit: <http://cca.is/childcare>.



*Mark Your Calendar!*

**STRENGTHENING**  
Our Roots



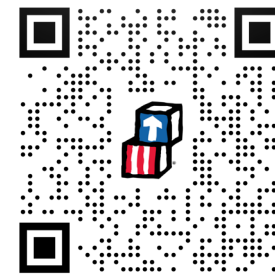
To  
**EMPOWER**  
Future Generations

**Juneteenth** | Saturday, June 17

Join us at Brandon Park in Williamsport from noon - 4:00 PM.

The Juneteenth festivities will truly offer something for everyone! All members of the community of all backgrounds are invited to join in this celebration of African American liberation and civil rights history. It is a great way to celebrate American heritage together.

This year's theme is Strengthening Our Roots to Empower Future Generations - we will be celebrating children while educating youth on their roots.



## STEP Head Start - Student Enrollment

STEP Head Start is accepting applications for the 2023-2024 school year. Preschool children in Lycoming and Clinton counties, including those with disabilities, are eligible for enrollment. Head Start accepts applications year-round, and fills vacancies from its waiting list as they occur. While children from low-income families have enrollment priority, children from higher-income families may be enrolled as well.

Complete your child's Head Start application online at [www.stepcorp.org/HeadStart](http://www.stepcorp.org/HeadStart). Applications can be emailed to Donna Flick at [dflick@stepcorp.org](mailto:dflick@stepcorp.org) or dropped off at the STEP offices at 2138 Lincoln Street, Williamsport or the Clinton County Community Center at 124 East Walnut Street, Lock Haven.



**River Valley Health & Dental** at STEP's Clinton County Community Center in Lock Haven is open as of June 5.

Stay tuned for details about the ribbon cutting and grand opening to be held in August!





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