



Newsletter



**BUILDING
GREEN FUTURES**

Rewarding Careers + Energy Efficient Communities

Summer
2024

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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.



May, June, and July STEP Star award winners are:

Individuals indicated with an asterisk (*) have been nominated more than once.

Jordan McCoy*

Head Start
Early Intervention Mental Health Specialist

Brittney Weaver

Head Start
Early Intervention Mental Health Specialist

Brenda McDermit

Office of Aging
Center for Health Aging Coordinator

Gretchen Mantle

ELRC Region 7
Contract Specialist

Jenn Platt

Head Start
Preschool Home-Based Supervisor

Patricia Marshall

Head Start
Early Intervention Mental Health Specialist

Jane Thompson

Office of Aging
Centers for Healthy Aging Manager

Jennifer Sweet

ELRC Region 7
Intake/Collaboration Specialist

Teresa Bartholomew

Head Start
Home Visitor

Linda Lockcuff

Head Start
Classroom Aide Floater

Erin Bissman

Office of Aging
Center for Health Aging Coordinator

Teresa Frierson

ELRC Region 7
Provider/Collaboration Specialist

Candice Poff

Head Start
Teacher

Madison Snyder

Head Start
Early Intervention Mental Health Specialist

Sarah Noble

Office of Aging
Center for Health Aging Coordinator

Jessica Brumgard

ELRC Region 7
Eligibility/Resource & Referral Specialist

Rebecca Taylor

Head Start
Home Visitor

Paige Koziy

Head Start
Early Intervention Mental Health Specialist

Carly Engel

Office of Aging
Center for Health Aging Coordinator

Melissa Kerschner

ELRC Region 7
Director

Amy Bower*

Head Start
Teacher

Deanna Roat

Head Start
Center-Based Supervisor

Tammy Frye

Office of Aging
Center for Health Aging Coordinator

Cameron Ramsey

Service Navigation
Compliance Customer Service Specialist

Sade Teel

Office of Aging
Care Manager/Assessor

Shannon Cohick

Head Start
Deputy Director EHS, Home-Base, & Health

Jo Gregory

Office of Aging
PA MEDI Coordinator

Kara King

Service Navigation
Family Navigator

Rusty McCarty

Housing Options
Maintenance/Grounds Keeper

Janna Gohl

Head Start
PBIS Specialist

Buffy Neese

Head Start
Health Specialist

Raelyn Jackson

Service Navigation
Director

Renee Rafter

Head Start
EHS Home Visitor

Charles Wentzell

Transportation
Driver Manager

Gene Good

STEP Administration
Chief Information Officer

Ashley Askey

Head Start
EHS Teacher

Tara Coleman*

Office of Aging
Center for Health Aging Coordinator

Amelia Zito

ELRC Region 7
Eligibility Manager

The winner of May's gift card drawing was Jordan McCoy!

The winner of June's gift card drawing was Amy Bower!

The winner of July's gift card drawing was Jo Gregory!

Leadership Lycoming

- CLASS OF 2024 GRADUATES -



STEP Office of Aging Social Services Manager Nikolina Cleaver and STEP Head Start Deputy Director of Preschool Laurel Cowher were graduates of Leadership Lycoming's Class of 2024.

Leadership Lycoming is a specialized training program designed to understand the needs of the community it serves and develop and motivate effective leaders committed to utilizing their skills and talents for the betterment of their community.



AmeriCorps

- END OF YEAR PICNIC -



STEP AmeriCorps gathered for their end of year celebration at Bruce Henry Park on Friday, July 19. Seventeen STEP AmeriCorps members were presented with Certificates of Recognition for their service to local schools and nonprofit organizations during the 2023-2024 service year.

JUNETEENTH 2024

On Saturday, July 22, STEP's Social Justice Task Force partnered with the Lycoming County NAACP and the City of Williamsport to host the 3rd Annual Williamsport Community Juneteenth Celebration at Shaw Park.

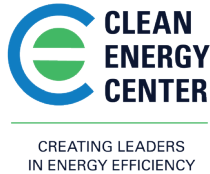
This year's theme was **Celebrate our Ancestors** | **Elevate our Youth** | **Liberate our Minds**, and the event featured a variety of performances including singing, a drum circle, line dancing, girls drill team, and a jazz trio. Speakers and highlighted individuals included Savannah Peterson, Pastor Evans, Mayor Derek Slaughter, Lisa E. Williams, Janelle Drummond, Tyra Cruz, Jernae Drummond, Anyae Grissom, Jamilla Riley-Epps, and Chanj Jason.





BUILDING GREEN FUTURES

Rewarding Careers + Energy Efficient Communities



Building Green Futures, funded by the Whole-Home Repair Program in partnership with STEP and SEDA-COG, provided exclusive training and unique access to both classroom credentials and hands-on work experience in the home energy and construction industries.

The paid three-week career exploration program was held in June at Pennsylvania College of Technology's Clean Energy Center on Reach Road, Williamsport. Participants were matched to local PA Weatherization Assistance Program employers STEP, Inc. and SEDA-COG to complete their mentored field assignment. During the program, participants had a 1:1 intern to mentor ratio for job shadowing.

Building Green Futures offers meaningful pathways into career and supportive systems to provide underrepresented populations access to energy efficiency employment. Removing barriers to entry is a key aspect of the program and vital to building a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce. Participants receive free access to training, meals during training, stipend, and reimbursement for childcare, elder care, and travel.

In addition to construction-related workforce development initiatives, the Whole-Home Repair Program, funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, allows county-wide agencies to address habitability and safety concerns, improve energy efficiency, and make units accessible for individuals with disabilities. PCT's Clean Energy Center is helping to fill a significant current and future shortfall in qualified workers to improve the state of housing in Pennsylvania.



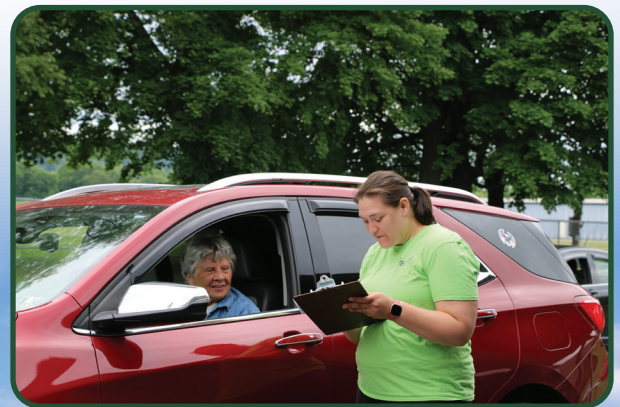


SENIOR FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM

Veggie Vouchers

Each year STEP Office of Aging administers the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), designed to help low-income older adults access fresh, locally grown food and good nutrition while supporting local farmers in Lycoming and Clinton counties. This year each recipient received \$50 worth of Veggie Vouchers to purchase fruits and vegetables.

Drive through distribution was offered June 11-14 at the Clinton County Community Center, the Castanea Picnic Grounds in Clinton County, and at STEP's RiverWalk Center in Lycoming County. The event was hugely popular, and STEP Office of Aging staff and volunteers were able to distribute all 2,800 Veggie Vouchers. Part of STEP's Independent Living Pathway to Success, STEP Office of Aging is the local Area Agency on Aging in Lycoming and Clinton counties. Through its eight Centers for Healthy Aging and two social services offices, STEP Office of Aging provides a wide range of programs and services designed to advance the well-being of older adults and enable seniors to remain in their own homes and apartments and lead independent lifestyles. For more information on Office of Aging programs and services, call 570-323-3096 or visit www.stepcorp.org.



Understanding Adult Protective Services

The Older Adults Protective Services Act was enacted on November 6, 1987 to provide the detection and reduction, correction, or elimination of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or abandonment of older adults (age 60+). The passing affirmed that it was the policy of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that older adults who lacked capacity to protect themselves and are at imminent risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or abandonment shall have access to, and be provided with services necessary to protect their health, safety, and welfare.

STEP and STEP Office of Aging firmly believe it was not the purpose of the act to place restrictions upon the personal liberty of older adults, but rather assure the availability of Protective Services (PS) to older adults in need of them. These services safeguard the rights of incapacitated older adults while protecting them from abuse, neglect, exploitation, or abandonment.

The 52 Area Agencies on Aging serving Pennsylvania's 67 counties implement the Protective Services program at the local level on behalf of the Pennsylvania Department of Aging (PDA). STEP Office of Aging is responsible for providing this service to individuals in Lycoming and Clinton counties.

Protective Services begins with a standardized form called a 'report of need' to record any allegations. Reports of need are taken 24 hours a day, seven days a week for individuals in nursing homes, personal care homes, group homes, or for individuals that reside in the community. **Between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, STEP Office of Aging received 386 reports of need for individuals 60 years of age and over.**

When a report of need is received, it is forwarded to the supervisor who reviews the allegations and considers the level of risk to the older adult at the time of the report and assigns a category. The category (emergency, priority, non-priority, another planning and service area, or no need for Protective Services) is based on the severity

of allegations in the report of need. Specific time frames for the initiation of the investigation and the initial face-to-face with the older adult are monitored by PDA. The Protective Services care manager has from 24 to 72 hours to complete an initial face-to-face visit with the older adult. This is the first step that starts a Protective Services investigation. **Between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, STEP Office of Aging completed 255 Protective Services investigations. 100% of the face-to-face visits that began these investigations were completed within that 24-to-72-hour time frame required by the Department of Aging.**

PDA also dictates that the purpose of an investigation is to determine: 1) if the allegations made in the report of need can be substantiated; and/or 2) if the older adult referred to in the report of need is an older adult in need of Protective Services. During an investigation, the Protective Services care manager collects evidence, makes direct observations, conducts interviews, and reviews appropriate records. Based on the information gathered, the care manager must determine if there is enough evidence to show if the older adult is/was in need of Protective Services either at the time of the report or at the time of the incident. This determination must be made within 20 days of the report of need. **STEP Office of Aging, between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, completed all 255 of its case determinations within that 20-day timeframe.**

Currently STEP Office of Aging has four full-time staff members dedicated to making Protective Services successful. Together the team possesses more 40 years combined with STEP Office of Aging. Three care managers make up an on-call rotation that provides coverage 24 hours a day, seven days a week. One dedicated PS manager and four other Aging supervisors provide on-call supervisory coverage/guidance for the on-call care managers. **The STEP Office of Aging toll-free number to submit a report of need is 1-800-332-8555.**

Veterans Transportation Program

With an established partnership with American Rescue Workers and new support through a Veterans Trust Fund grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, STEP Transportation can offer veterans transportation for a wide variety of activities.

Dan Merk, STEP Transportation Director, stated: "Access to health care facilities and other locations which support daily life activities can be a burden to many veterans because of a lack of suitable transportation. Many veterans do not fit into traditional transportation funding pockets. This pilot funding allows STEP to provide transportation services to those veterans so that they have increased access to health care and those daily life activities."

Eligible trips include going to both Wilkes Barre and Altoona veterans' facilities as well as grocery stores, pharmacies, education facilities, libraries, PA CareerLink®, job interviews, court dates, food banks, social services, Social Security, recreation, and the DMV. Other medical facilities are also eligible, including UPMC and Geisinger facilities in Lycoming, Clinton, Montour, Union, Northumberland, and Centre counties.

To optimize the use of veterans-specific funds, more general funding streams such as Medical Assistance, Office of Aging, and Americans with Disabilities Act will be considered first. If the trip cannot be completed using those sources, the Veterans Transportation Program funding will be utilized.

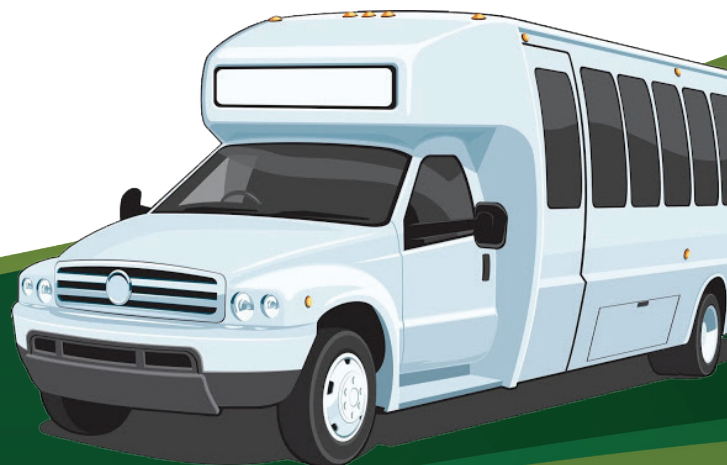
If you or a veteran you know needs transportation, you can call STEP Transportation at 570.323.7575, or email trcenter@stepcorp.org. For eligibility, you must be able to document your veteran status (i.e., DD-214).



**AMERICAN
RESCUE
WORKERS**



pennsylvania
VETERANS' TRUST FUND





Exciting News!



EARLY LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER

PA OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING

7
Region

*In partnership with STEP, Inc.
Serving Lycoming, Clinton, and Tioga counties.*



Pennsylvania's Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) has confirmed that the Early Learning Resource Center Region 7 will continue here at STEP for the next contract of five more years! With a new contract comes new beginnings and exciting changes, including expanded offices, new staff, and new initiatives, including the Substitute Aide Pool Program and exciting training opportunities. Stay tuned for more information.



Mark Your Calendar!

Medicare Open Enrollment October 15 through December 7

Medicare



Medicare open enrollment – also known as Medicare's annual election period – runs from October 15 through December 7 each year. (Although Medicare's open enrollment period ends on December 7 each year, extended enrollment opportunities are available to people in areas where FEMA declares an emergency or major disaster that hampers your ability to complete your enrollment during the normal window.)

During this annual window, Medicare plan enrollees can reevaluate their coverage – whether it's Original Medicare with supplemental drug coverage, or Medicare Advantage – and make changes or purchase new policies if they want to do so.

Call STEP Office of Aging at 570-323-3096 for more information.



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