



*Newsletter*

**PEACE WALK &**  
**2019 MLK DAY OF SERVICE**



*STEP AmeriCorps*  
**MLK Day of Service**

*Winter*  
**2019**

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» Contact STEP



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From left: STEP President & CEO Jim Plankenhorn, Lead Family Navigator Heather Rhine, and Service Navigation Manager Melissa Magargle.

Heather Rhine is a Lead Family Navigator in STEP's Service Navigation department. She has been instrumental in making the transition of multiple staff in the department seamless and positive. Heather assumed the majority of the Supportive Housing Program case load when staff left the department and also trained new staff. She took on these additional responsibilities without complaint and continues to help new and seasoned staff daily with different issues as they arise.

Heather is positive, but firm with her clients. She encourages, supports, and guides them towards self-sufficiency. She can easily transition from a counselor role with a client to holding them accountable for their own success. She trains staff thoroughly on essential Family Navigator job duties and does not seem fazed by repeat questions or having to explain things more than one time. Heather has established great working relationships with landlords, referral partners, and staff that make her excel in the Supportive Housing Program position. Her willingness to step up and help in other areas makes her a huge asset to the Service Navigation department.

Heather encourages other staff to think positively. Co-workers look to her for guidance and feedback and she is constantly offering her support, which motivates the team in return.

# 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 14th 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 2,200 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 a total of \$475 for the project! Items were also donated by long-time supporters Knitting for Neighbors, Avery Dennison, Stevens Primary, numerous churches, Lycoming County employees, and individual donors.



Williamsport Area High School student Tiani Lewis (left) drops off her Mitten Tree donation with STEP Executive Assitant Jamey Williams.



STEP Head Start children are excited to show off the cold-weather essentials they received from the Mitten Tree.

# Early Head Start

## Winterfest

STEP Early Head Start celebrated WinterFest 2019 on the evening of Tuesday, January 22nd. The annual event welcomed Early Head Start children and their families to explore winter-inspired stations. Kids visited each area with opportunities to strenghten their fine and gross motor skills with painting, snowball 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, STEP Service Navigation, Head Start Policy Council, CSIU's YES program, and the Family Pathway Program 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.



# PEACE WALK & 2019 MLK DAY OF SERVICE



In 1994, congress designated Martin Luther King, Jr. Day as a national day of service, making it the only federal holiday to receive that designation. The organization charged with leading the service efforts, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), calls to “make it a day on.” The programs of CNCS, which include AmeriCorps, serve communities at over 60,000 locations nationwide; locally, STEP AmeriCorps members serve at 19 sites, helping nonprofits meet community needs and build their capacity to serve.

This year, in partnership with Lycoming College, Pennsylvania College of Technology, and the Beloved Community Council, STEP AmeriCorps participated in Dream Week, a series of events centered around MLK Day. The week began on Saturday, January 19 with the annual Peace Walk in downtown Williamsport. Other Dream Week activities included workshops, the “More Than a Meal” packing event, round-table discussions, 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.



The “More Than a Meal” packing event, held on Monday, January 21, was STEP AmeriCorps’ largest service project of the year. The service project leveraged more than 200 volunteers in partnership with the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, Lycoming College, Pennsylvania College of Technology, and the Beloved Community Council.

The event saw more than 5,000 pounds of food packed into meal kits, which will be given to area families who struggle with hunger. They will be distributed through the Food Bank’s partner agencies and programs.



# Santa's Seniors

Through the generosity of a wide network of volunteers and donors, 377 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, cards made by local students, 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.

2018 marked the fourth 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 were filled with contributions from local businesses and groups. UPMC Health Plan donated \$1,250, along with mugs for all boxes; Geisinger Lock Haven donated embroidered lap blankets for all boxes. Other donors of goods, gift cards, and cash included: Brigandi, Gleghorn & Associates; Clinton County Dental Clinic; Kellogg Company; seniors from the Mill Hall Center for Healthy Aging; Phoenix Rehabilitation & Health Services; Reese's Print Shop; employees of Restless Oaks; Steinbacher, Goodall & Yurchak; Susque-View Nursing & Rehabilitation Center; Weis Markets; Xi Epsilon Sigma of Lock Haven University; Avery Dennison; Crystal Vision Center; Presbyterian Homes; Wegmans; The Meadows; Woolrich; Donald G. Walker Funeral Homes; and U-Haul. Countless individual donations were delivered to STEP and to the media outlet offices. Handmade items in the boxes included cards from STEP Head Start and the Senior Tangling Group at STEP's Clinton County Community Center.

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. New volunteers this year came from the Williamsport/Lycoming Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Lycoming program. 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.

While the boxes are a once-a-year occasion, the home-delivered meals program provides regular social contact along with good nutrition for those unable to leave their houses or prepare meals without assistance throughout the year. If you are interested in being a regular part of delivering meals, or part of the Santa's Seniors program, please contact STEP at 570.326.0587.





# RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

Giving blood is a simple thing to do, but it can make a big difference in the lives of others. Every day, blood donors help patients of all ages: accident and burn victims, heart surgery and organ transplant patients, and those battling cancer. In fact, every two seconds, someone in the U.S. needs blood.

This February marked STEP's 3rd year as a Red Cross Blood Drive host, as employees and the public became a part of the 6.8 million Americans who donate blood each year. Eighteen donors gave enough blood to potentially help up to 54 people.

STEP will be hosting another Red Cross Blood Drive on May 9, 2019 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at 2138 Boyd Street, Williamsport.

To find a Blood Drive near you, call 1-800-RED-CROSS or visit [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org).



## Mark Your Calendar!



### Quarterly STEP'N Out! Trips in 2019

Brought to you by the STEP Office of Aging, "STEP'N Out!" is a way for individuals age 60+ to experience local and regional history, entertainment, and landmarks.

Spring 2019:

**Philadelphia Flower Show**  
Monday March 4, 2019

Call your nearest STEP Center for Healthy Aging for more details!



### Raise the Region

Wednesday, March 13 at 6:00 PM  
through Thursday March 14 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/RTR-STEP](http://bit.ly/RTR-STEP).



### AARP Tax Aide

NOW through early April

STEP Office of Aging is partnering with AARP and the IRS to bring free tax assistance to those who need it most! Tax-Aide is a free program that offers individualized tax preparation, with special consideration for tax filers 50 and older. For more information, call the STEP Office of Aging at 570-323-3096.



### Expanding Partnerships

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, known as WIC, has moved into its Lock Haven office inside STEP's Clinton County Community Center, expanding its partnership with STEP, Inc. and the Head Start Program.

WIC is a public health nutrition program that provides participant-centered education, breastfeeding support, healthy foods, and healthcare referrals for income-eligible women who are pregnant or post-partum, infants, and children up to the age of 5.



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