

Success Through Engagement & Partnership



2020-2021
Annual Report



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The mission of STEP is to engage diverse individuals, families, and communities in the pursuit of social and economic success. STEP is one of approximately 1,000 Community Action Agencies nationwide (with 43 in Pennsylvania), and, based on the size of its annual budget, is the 3rd largest of the agencies serving solely in Pennsylvania. STEP is an active member of the national Community Action Partnership and the Community Action Association of Pennsylvania (CAAP). STEP fulfills its mission and achieves the three national community action goals through programs under its five Pathways to Success: Early Learning, Housing Options, Workforce Development, Community Collaboration, and Independent Living.

Three National Community Action Goals:

1. Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security.
2. Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity.
3. People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities.

Services and strategies utilized by STEP to achieve the National Community Action Goals:



Education & Cognitive Development



Income, Infrastructure, & Asset Building



Housing



Employment



Health/Social Behavioral Development



Civic Engagement & Community Involvement

Year after year I continue to be amazed at the dedication and faithfulness of our staff and volunteers. While it seems that next year could not possibly be more demanding than the year previous, this has lately been the case.

I have witnessed our staff give their all, and our customers make great strides in their self-sufficiency journey. Community action now plays an even more critical role in bringing about positive change as it relates to social and economic success.

When I spoke about it last year, I had no idea that the current pandemic would still be affecting us at the level it has throughout the year. Through it all, however, STEP's staff and volunteers have provided tremendous benefit to the communities we serve. I salute STEP staff, volunteers, and our customers for their hard work, never-give-up attitude, and tremendous achievements.

Please take a few moments to read over the next few pages and be prepared to be as amazed as me at the successes over this very challenging year. Thank you!

Jim Plankenhorn
President & CEO
STEP, Inc

Message from the Chairperson

It is so important to remember that STEP stands for Success Through Engagement and Partnership. It may have looked different, but STEP's success the past year included many wonderful things.

STEP engaged with families and the community in meaningful ways. This included getting creative to maintain contact with children and older adults, distributing COVID relief funds to childcare providers, helping renters stay in their homes, and more.

A big thank you to the wonderful staff at STEP for executing the mission and pursuing social and economic success! Lastly, I want to thank Jeff Snyder for his service as STEP Board Chair. His efforts positioned STEP to be able thrive during difficult times.

Brenda Nichols
Incoming Chairperson
STEP Board of Directors

It has been my pleasure to serve as Board Chairperson for the STEP Board of Directors for the last five years. I have learned a lot about how STEP functions and what they do in our communities. I have also had the privilege of working with a diverse group of fellow board members, as well as the STEP staff who keep the agency going through all sorts of challenges. I look forward to continuing to serve on the board and seeing the continued growth that happens under the leadership of our new Board Chairperson, Brenda Nichols.

Jeffrey Snyder
Immediate Past Chairperson
STEP Board of Directors

GOVERNANCE

Board of Directors

STEP's Board of Directors is tripartite in structure, with members representing the public, private, and low-income sectors/populations of Lycoming and Clinton counties.



Brenda Nichols
Chairperson
Lycoming County
Private Sector



Aron Carter
Vice Chairperson
Jersey Shore State Bank



Jacqueline Oliva
Secretary
River Valley Health
& Dental Center



Lindsay Stamm
Treasurer
Lycoming County
Housing Authority



Randall Allison
Williamsport
City Council



Susan Bigger
Williamsport Area
School District



Canda Boatman
Head Start
Policy Council
Representative



Maria Boileau
Clinton County
Voter Registration



Tia Hillyer
Clinton County
Housing Authority



Joanne Ludwikowski
McCormick
Law Firm



Scott Metzger
Lycoming County
Commissioner



Gail Nestlerode
Nestlerode
Contracting Co., Inc.



Abigail Roberts
City of
Lock Haven



Jeffrey Snyder
Clinton County
Commissioner



Edward Weinhoffer
STEP Aging
Advisory Council
Representative

Head Start Policy Council

Malena Dunn, *Chairperson*
Aron Carter, *Treasurer*

Erica Blair
Canda Boatman
Alicia Leathers
Ruth Love-Schooley

Maritza Pena
Angie Sees
Tracy Shade
Patti Wylie

Aging Advisory Council

Raymond Humphrey, *Chairperson*

Janet Blachek
Sharon Cashwell
Lucille Evans
Leslie Houser
Rochelle Keefer
Jack McKernan
Scott Metzger
Jeffrey Snyder
Joseph Sohmer
Edward Weinhoffer

VOLUNTEERS

STEP appreciates all of its volunteers. As a Community Action Agency, STEP relies on volunteers to meet its goals. Many of STEP's volunteers are concentrated in its Office of Aging and Early Learning Programs, as well as STEP's governing bodies. All service provided by members of the STEP Board of Directors, Head Start Policy Council, and Aging Advisory Council is on a volunteer basis, complementing thousands of volunteers and AmeriCorps members who serve with the agency.

- **364** STEP Head Start, Early Head Start, and Pre-K Counts parent volunteers contributed **12,629** hours.
- **65** STEP Office of Aging volunteers provided **1,931** hours of service.
- STEP Board of Directors members gave over **300** hours through meetings, training, events, and planning.

EMPLOYEES

STEP Star Awards

In the fall of 2020, STEP's Employee of the Quarter program transitioned to a peer recommendation and recognition program called the STEP Star Award.

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.

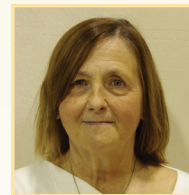
Since the program's inception through the end of the 2020-2021 fiscal year, **102** employees have been presented with STEP Star Awards.



Employee Milestones



Kim Vergilis
45 Years of Service
STEP Head Start



Bonnie Burget
45 Years of Service
STEP Head Start



Tammy Frye
40 Years of Service
STEP Office of Aging

Jean Myers
30 Years of Service
STEP Administration

Harry Tompkins
30 Years of Service
STEP Administration

Marcie Gentzyl
30 Years of Service
STEP Head Start

Donna Flick
20 Years of Service
STEP Head Start

Traci Foster
20 Years of Service
STEP Office of Aging

Melissa Corlew
20 Years of Service
STEP Head Start

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Carolyn Hawk

Director, STEP Head Start

Nate Snook

Director, STEP Housing Options

Jean Sullivan

Director, STEP Office of Aging

Melissa Kerschner

Director, Early Learning
Resource Center Region 7

Melissa Magargle

Program Manager,
STEP Service Navigation

Dan Merk

Program Manager,
STEP Transportation

Lori Boos

Program Manager, STEP AmeriCorps

2020-2021

Agency Highlights



Community Needs Assessment

As a Community Action Agency, STEP depends on data-driven decision making. The Community Needs Assessment helps the agency identify service and resource gaps within the communities it serves and show where new or additional programming should be focused in order to recover from the COVID-19 crisis. Visit <https://www.stepcorp.org/agency-info/administrative/> to view the reports for both Lycoming and Clinton counties.



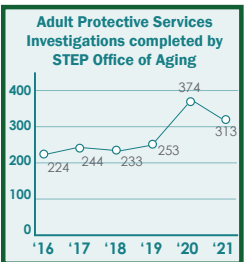
STEP Transportation

Medical conditions requiring regular treatment do not take time off during pandemics; individuals with disabilities or circumstances that prevent them from driving still need to get to medical appointments, the pharmacy, and to the grocery store. STEP Transportation operates to serve their customers with trips necessary to maintain not just good health, but people's lives. STEP Transportation has taken precautions during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as eliminating non-essential trips, to minimize exposure for both their drivers and the customers who need their services. STEP Transportation has provided 79,687 rides since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020.



STEP Head Start

During the 2020-2021 program year, STEP Head Start classrooms offered fully remote and in-person/hybrid models for early learning. Innovative learning experiences were utilized, including: literacy bags, outdoor story time sessions, kid-friendly kitchen activities, and themed Zoom meetings. To further support the children enrolled in the program, STEP Head Start's meal distribution program ensured that breakfast and lunch were provided to each child five days a week. In total, more than 13,970 meals were provided to STEP Head Start children.



STEP Office of Aging's Adult Protective Services

Overseen by the Pennsylvania Department of Aging, STEP Office of Aging's Adult Protective Services program implements the Older Adults Protective Services Act (OAPSA) and its subsequent amendments. OAPSA mandates reporting requirements on cases of suspected abuse. STEP Office of Aging's Adult Protective Services program is authorized to carry out OAPSA and the services necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of older adults who lack the capacity to protect themselves and who are at imminent risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or abandonment.



STEP AmeriCorps Dream Week 2021

Most years, STEP AmeriCorps' Martin Luther King (MLK) Day of Service sees hundreds of community members step up to serve as volunteers, providing valuable work for local nonprofits and ultimately serving area residents with various needs, from hunger to homelessness and more. This year, STEP AmeriCorps, Lycoming College, Pennsylvania College of Technology, and Beloved Community Council planned Dream Week in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. - a week full of opportunities to (safely) be "better together." Dream Week events included a Peace Walk, blood drive, and motivational speakers.



Social Justice Task Force

Community Action has a long history of working on Social Justice and equity for all individuals. In the Summer of 2020, STEP formalized their efforts around diversity, equity, and inclusion with the establishment of the Social Justice Task Force. The Social Justice Task Force is made up of various members of staff and will implement trainings to support the conversations of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and work to move the community forward.

EARLY Learning



STEP's Early Learning Pathway includes Head Start, Pre-K Counts, Early Head Start, Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC), and the Maternal, Infant, & Early Childhood Home Visiting program (MIECHV). These high-quality early learning experiences are provided by skilled professionals, in partnership with parents and communities. The Early Learning Pathway leads to success in school and life.

- **744** children demonstrated skills for school readiness.
- **756** children improved their attention skills.
- **758** individuals demonstrated improvements in cooking, shopping, or growing food.
- **77** caregivers demonstrated increased sensitivity and responsiveness toward their children.
- **489** children were up to date on immunizations.
- **12** children were referred for mental health services.
- **458** family partnerships were established, leading to **96** family goals being achieved.
- Total Early Head Start, Head Start, Pre-K Counts, and MIECHV enrollment: **479** children.
- **1,439** children were enrolled in a child care facility with a level three or four Keystone STARS rating.
- **118** child care providers obtained or kept a STAR designation; **7** providers moved up to a higher designation.
- **\$4,312,947** was issued in child care subsidy to local providers.

Sustaining Childcare

The Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) - Region 7, in partnership with STEP, provides information and services that support child care providers and families in Lycoming, Clinton, and Tioga counties.

Child care providers have endured a year of challenges and changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and are seeing a slower return to child care due to parents working remotely or not currently working and apprehension related to the virus. In addition, providers face increased operational costs related to safety and sanitization procedures necessary to keep staff, children in care, and their families safe from COVID-19.



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic the ELRC received Act 24 funding through the Office of Child Development and Early Learning. This funding allowed the ELRC to further support child care providers in the service area through the purchase and distribution of Personal Protective Equipment kits to the 95 child care providers it serves.

HOUSING

Options



STEP's Housing Options Pathway includes Weatherization, Housing and Building Initiatives, and the Utilities Assistance Program. Individuals and families secure and maintain safe, affordable, and energy-efficient housing. The Housing Options Pathway leads to a safe and affordable home.

- **236** households experienced increased health and safety due to home improvements.
- **2,477** households improved energy efficiency and/or reduced their energy burden; **139** did so through weatherization.
- **46** households received code-compliance assistance through housing rehabilitation.
- **126** households enrolled in a STEP program obtained safe and affordable housing for 180 days; **574** households maintained safe and affordable housing.
- **354** households avoided eviction or foreclosure.
- **2,524** customers enrolled in utility assistance programs to reduce their monthly costs and cure arrearages.

Supporting the Community with Utility Assistance

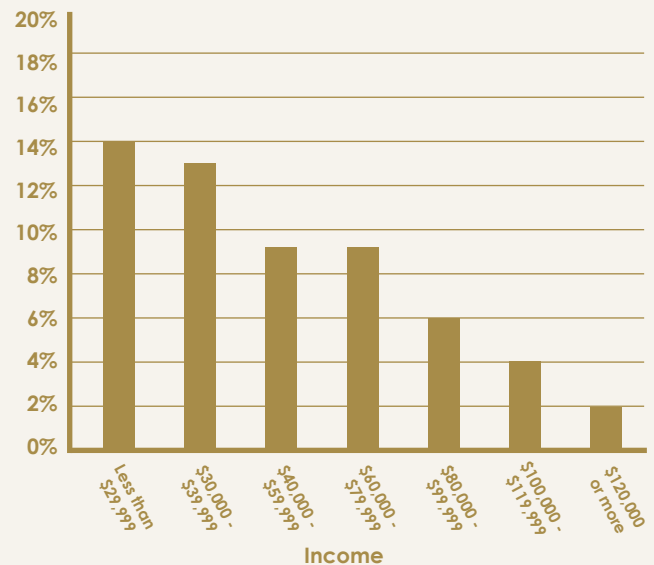
Households across Clinton and Lycoming counties, many who may never have needed assistance previously, have lost their income or have had their work hours reduced, and struggled to keep up with utility payments during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On top of reduced incomes, many residents are spending more time at home and increasing their use of computers and other devices. Since energy usage makes up the largest portion of monthly utility costs for most consumers, this shift to “work at home” and “school at home” has had a notable impact on monthly bills.

STEP's Utilities Assistance Program partners with PPL Electric Utilities and UGI Corporation's subsidiaries, Penn Natural Gas and Central Penn Gas. Qualified customers are offered affordable utility payments through their Customer Assistance Programs (CAP). These programs offer a reduced monthly payment as coverage for utility service, cancel a portion of any debt owed to the company, and provide energy education and weatherization services.



Percent of Income spent on utilities in Pennsylvania



WORKFORCE *Development*



STEP's Workforce Development Pathway includes the Work Ready Program and the Employment Transportation Assistance Program. Through these programs, individuals overcome barriers to obtain or maintain employment and achieve self-sufficiency. The Workforce Development Pathway leads to employment and self-support for individuals, and economic success for the community.



Youth Enrichment for Success participant Robert Knight earned his high school equivalency diploma.

- **23** unemployed youth obtained employment to gain skills or income.
- **32** adults obtained employment below a living wage; **11** at or above a living wage.
- **14** employed participants increased benefits.
- **22** employed participants in a career-advancement program increased income through wage or salary improvement.
- **71** individuals obtained or kept employment by accessing reliable transportation options.

Workforce Development Endowment Fund

STEP has worked toward establishing the Workforce Development Endowment. This permanent fund marks the sixth endowment established to help support future STEP programming. The Workforce Development Endowment Fund will generate income each year that is able to support any of STEP's Workforce Development Pathway programs, including Work Ready and the Employment Transportation Assistance Program, which lead to employment and self-support for individuals and economic success for the community.

To assist in building the endowment, STEP held a variety of activities to raise funds. Fundraising efforts raised over \$25,000 - all of which was used to establish the Workforce Development Endowment Fund! STEP would like to thank our staff, Board of Directors, and individual and corporate contributors who helped make the establishment of this fund a successful endeavor.



From left: Jason McCahan, First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania Director of Philanthropy, Rachelle Abbott, STEP, Inc. Chief Operations and Planning Officer, Jim Plankenhorn, STEP, Inc. President and CEO, Patti Kiessling, STEP, Inc. Chief Financial Officer, and Jennifer Wilson, First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania President and CEO.

COMMUNITY *Collaboration*



STEP's Community Collaboration Pathway consists of Service Navigation and STEP AmeriCorps. Through cooperation and partnerships, resources are maximized, and organizations and communities are enriched. The Community Collaboration Pathway leads to increased resources for individual and community success.

- **114** individuals achieved and maintained capacity to meet basic needs for 90 days.
- **105** individuals engaged with Community Action reported improved financial wellbeing.
- **99** participants increased skills, knowledge, and abilities allowing them to work with Community Action to improve conditions in their communities.
- STEP worked with **771** partners to eliminate service gaps and duplication.
- **19** AmeriCorps members completed their term of service and received an Education Award.
- **2,067** referrals were made to STEP programs and external partners to connect customers with the services they need.



STEP AmeriCorps members participated in Newberry Community Partnership's Clean Up Day by collecting litter throughout the neighborhood.

Supporting the Community through Rental Assistance

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) provides assistance to qualified individuals to assist in payment of rental arrearages, forward rent, utility arrearages, and forward utility payments. Individuals must self-attest that they have experienced some sort of financial hardship that is due, directly or indirectly, to COVID-19, and/or they are at risk of homelessness or housing instability. The total combined household income cannot exceed 80% of the Area Median Income. Applicants must submit a completed application at www.stepcorp.org/lycorent. Participants can receive assistance for a total of 12 months, with staff discretion to include an additional 3 months to ensure housing stability.



Since the program began in March 2021, STEP's Service Navigation Department has processed **663** of **1,113** applications, and funding totaling **\$2,687,729.98** has been spent on rent and utility payments for **546** households. Recipients not only receive financial support for their rent and utilities, they also receive referrals to other agencies based on their needs, a goal plan, and case management to help them move forward towards self-sufficiency. Questions for ERAP that cannot be answered on our website can be directed to (570) 601-9505 or to lycorent@stepcorp.org.

INDEPENDENT *Living*



STEP's Independent Living Pathway consists of Office of Aging services and STEP Transportation. Through these programs, senior citizens and persons with disabilities maintain their independence with self-reliance, and continue to participate in community activities. The Independent Living Pathway leads to dignity and choices throughout life.

- **1,792** adults age 65+ and **710** individuals with disabilities maintained independent living situations.
- **11** seniors received **19** home modifications and/or assistive devices to maintain independence.
- **744** adults obtained access to health screening services.
- **760** individuals registered for STEP Transportation maintained their independence by receiving rides to medical appointments, work, and other activities.
- **313** Adult Protective Services investigations from **582** reports of need ensured the health, safety, and financial security of older adults.

Providing Household Essentials to Homebound Seniors

Over the past 15 years, STEP Office of Aging has partnered with the Williamsport Sun-Gazette, the Lock Haven Express, Backyard Broadcasting, and many other area businesses to coordinate the Santa's Seniors Program. This annual program provides gift boxes to over 350 senior citizens who receive Meals on Wheels through STEP's Office of Aging. The gift boxes are typically delivered by the Meals on Wheels volunteers with help from the Pennsylvania State Police. Often, these gift boxes are the only holiday items received by our home-bound seniors.

This year, for the safety of the older adults being served, the packing and delivery methods were changed to keep consumers and delivery service staff safe. STEP Office of Aging's Center Coordinators worked to sort and pack donations with the assistance of STEP AmeriCorps - a huge task that is usually done by many volunteers! A new partner, Bill MacIntyre Chevrolet Buick, provided a large van for the transportation of the bags from the packing sites to the meal distribution site.

Instead of a single boxed delivery, large holiday tote bags were delivered five times throughout the holiday and winter season using the same contactless procedures as for Meals on Wheels. Hats, gloves, scarves, toiletries, water bottles, snacks, breakfast foods, and single-serve pantry staples were among the items included in the bags gifted to our most vulnerable seniors, often forgotten during the holidays.



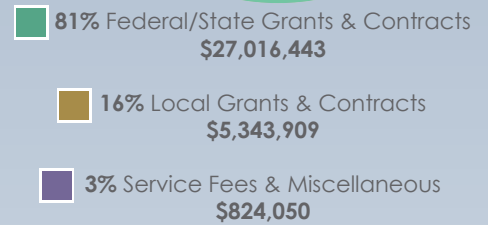
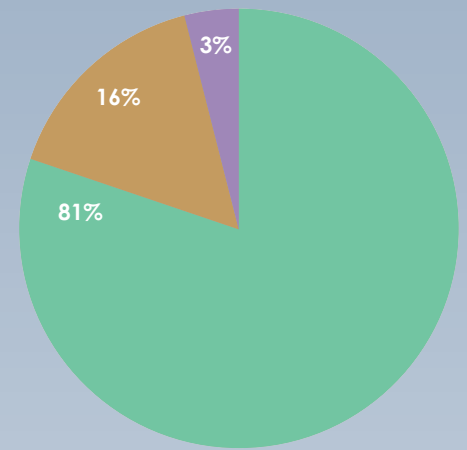
Financial Position

Statement of Financial Position

Total Assets.....	\$14,902,377
Total Liabilities.....	\$3,209,842
Net Assets.....	<u>\$11,692,535</u>

Statement of Activity

Total Grant Revenue & Other Support.....	\$33,239,552
Total Program Expenses.....	\$33,184,402
Excess (Deficit) Revenue Over Expenses.....	<u>\$55,150</u>



Program Expenditures

Early Learning 56%.....\$19,871,762 ■

- Head Start
- Head Start Supplemental Program
- Pre-K Counts
- Early Head Start
- Maternal, Infant, & Early Childhood Visiting
- Early Learning Resource Center

Housing Options 5%.....\$1,539,109 ■

- Weatherization & Housing Services
- Outreach Services

Workforce Development 1%.....\$194,861 ■

- Work Ready
- Employment Transportation Assistance Program

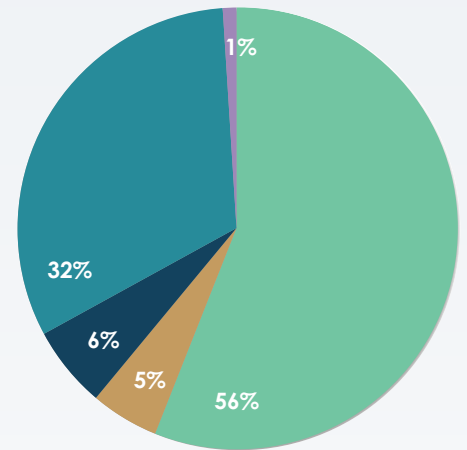
Community Collaboration 6%.....\$3,668,612 ■

- AmeriCorps
- Neighborhood Assistance
- Supportive Housing Program
- Service Navigation
- Administration & Planning

Independent Living 32%.....\$7,910,058 ■

- Office of Aging
- Shared-Ride Transportation Services
- Medical Assistance Transportation

Total Program Expenditures: \$33,184,402



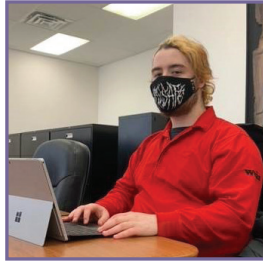
Message from the Chief Financial Officer

While I thought that fiscal year 20-21 would be a return to normal year, it turned out to be anything but. Regarding dealing with the pandemic, STEP was granted and expended over \$7,800,000 during the fiscal year in direct response to the COVID pandemic. These funds were either directly passed through to our clients in Lycoming, Clinton, and Tioga counties, or were used to equip our agency to continue to serve the evolving needs of our community. Our agency continues to step up to every challenge presented, as it now appears that assisting in response to the pandemic will continue for at least the next two fiscal years, while we still perform the requirements of our regular grantors in fulfilling STEP's mission.

Patti Kiesslering
Chief Financial Officer
STEP, Inc.



2138 Lincoln Street
Williamsport, PA 17701
570.326.0587



Give!



Donate
www.stepcorp.org/agency-info/community-support/donate.html



Raise The Region
www.raisetheregion.org



Endowment Funds:
STEP General Endowment
Early Learning
Housing Options
Workforce Development
Community Collaboration
Independent Living

Join!



Volunteer with us
www.stepcorp.org/Get_Involved



Join AmeriCorps
www.stepcorp.org/AmeriCorps



Employment Opportunities
www.stepcorp.org/Careers-Service

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facebook.com/STEPELRC

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS

July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

- Rachelle Abbott • Dana Cain • Chris Frantz • Courtney Kasenchak • Bill Kelly • Daryl & Scott Kern • Patti Kiessling •
• Melissa Magargle • Betsy Manlove • Sue Nelson • Gail Nestlerode • Brenda & Andy Nichols • Bill Nichols •
• Charles Plankenhorn • Jim Plankenhorn • Terry Roller • Jeff Sims • David Smith • David & Louisa Stone •
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