

DREAMWEEK

MISSION POSSIBLE



Winter
2025

» *on the cover:*

- 6 Dream Week:
Mission Possible

» *in this issue:*

- 4 New Developments
- 5 STEP Head Start
Mitten Tree Project
- 8 Santa's Seniors
- 10 Community Needs
Assessment

» *in every issue:*

- 3 STEP Star Awards
- 11 Upcoming Events



STEP Board of Directors

Brenda Nichols
Chairperson

Aron Carter
Treasurer

Lindsay Stamm
Vice Chairperson

Jacqueline Oliva
Secretary

Randall Allison
Tia Walker
Nicole Hayes

Matthew Rickard
Abigail Roberts
Jeffrey Snyder

Joanne Ludwikowski
Scott Metzger

Patti Wylie



STEP Administration

Rachelle Abbott
President & CEO

Patti Kiessling
Chief Financial Officer

Aron Haefner
Chief Operations Officer



Contact STEP



STEP, Inc.
2138 Lincoln Street
Williamsport, PA 17701
570.326.0587

**STEP Clinton County
Community Center**
124 East Walnut Street
Lock Haven, PA 17745
570.858.5800



Visit us at
www.stepcorp.org



[facebook.com/
STEPPathways](https://facebook.com/STEPPathways)

[facebook.com/
STEPHeadStart](https://facebook.com/STEPHeadStart)

[facebook.com/
STEPELRC](https://facebook.com/STEPELRC)

[facebook.com/
STEPHousingOptions](https://facebook.com/STEPHousingOptions)

[facebook.com/
STEPAmeriCorpsPA](https://facebook.com/STEPAmeriCorpsPA)

[facebook.com/
STEPOfficeOfAging](https://facebook.com/STEPOfficeOfAging)



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 name(s) 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.



November, December, and January STEP Star award winners are:

Jeffrey Schroll
Transportation
Driver

Laurel Cowher
Head Start
Deputy Director of Preschool

Madison Reese
Head Start
Teacher

Kevin Baker
Transportation
Driver Supervisor

Deanna Roat
Head Start
Education Supervisor

Kristina Short
Head Start
Classroom Aide

Sue Mayer
Head Start
Teacher

Art Hengler
Transportation
Driver Trainer

Dana Cain
Administration
Multimedia Specialist

Jennifer Wilson
Head Start
Teacher

Laura Stitzer
Transportation
Driver

Erica Blake
Head Start
Deputy Director Operations &
Engagement

Melissa Gundy
AmeriCorps
Member Development
Coordinator

Pete Spagnuolo
Transportation
Driver



The winner of November's gift card drawing was Laurel Cowher!

The winner of December's gift card drawing was Jennifer Wilson!

The winner of January's gift card drawing was Laura Stitzer!



New Developments

Rapid Response Team

The ELRC Region 7 in partnership with STEP, Inc. is implementing the Rapid Response Team (RRT) approach through a multi-tiered system of supports, with the shared goal of preventing suspensions and expulsions. ELRC Region 7 Quality Coaches will continue to assist early care and education (ECE) providers in developing and implementing suspension and expulsion policies. Providers will be encouraged to adopt these plans and include referrals to the RRT as needed. This approach will enable a timely, short-term response to referrals from ECE providers and help establish structured care plans as alternatives to suspension or expulsion. The objective is to ensure that referrals are made before incidents escalate to immediate suspension or expulsion.

This process will involve collaboration among ECE providers, classroom teachers, families, children, and community resources. The multi-tiered approach provides unified guidance throughout the process, preventing families from struggling to navigate services independently. It also equips providers with strategies that benefit not only the identified child but the entire classroom.

Code Blue

STEP Service Navigation, in partnership with First Church Williamsport, is providing a Family Navigator on-site at the Code Blue shelter Mondays and Wednesdays from January through March to assist individuals and families in need by connecting them to STEP services and other community resources.

The Code Blue shelter is open from 9pm to 7:30am daily, and is designed to provide a warm place to sleep and a meal for those in need. Code Blue is funded through Lycoming County Homeless Assistance Program, for more information visit: <https://firstchurch.cc/outreach/>.

Leadership Lycoming Education Day

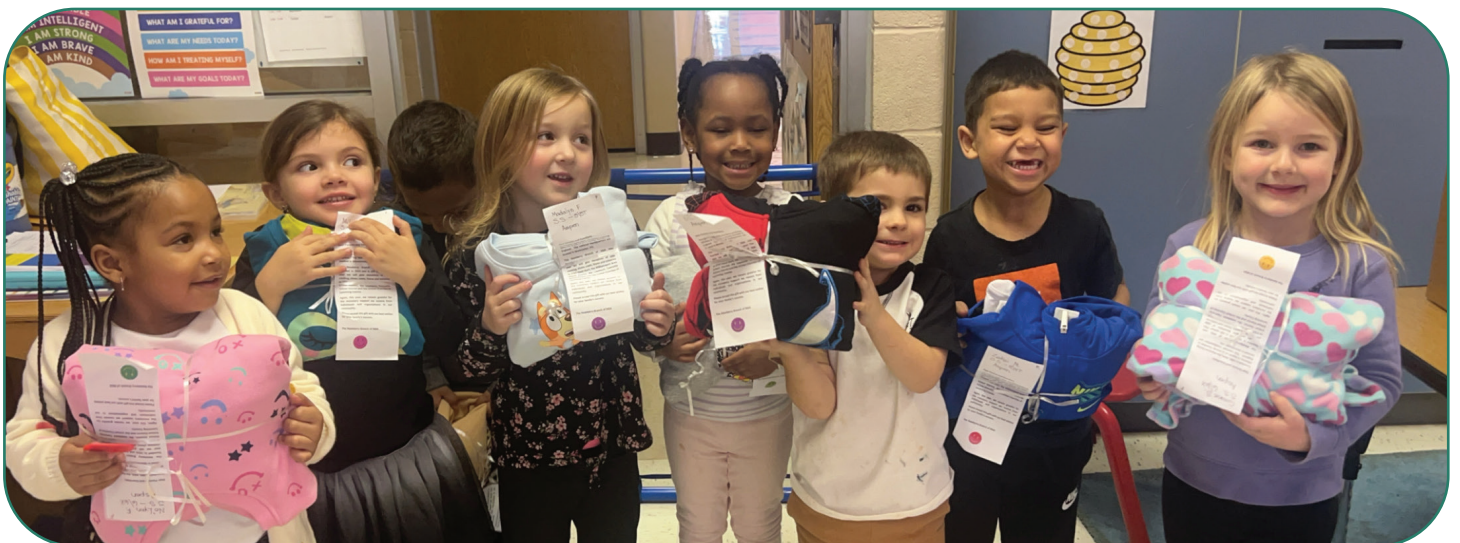
STEP and STEP Head Start hosted a portion of Leadership Lycoming's Education Day at our Round Hills Campus. Participants had the opportunity to learn about STEP, Community Action, and Head Start through a tour of the facility, classroom observation, and a game of STEP Jeopardy!



Mitten Tree Project

Warm, colorful mittens were distributed this winter to children enrolled in STEP Head Start, thanks to the generosity of many. This marks the 20th anniversary of STEP Head Start's Mitten Tree Project, which has been keeping hundreds of children's hands warm each winter. The collection ran from mid-October through November, then donations were sorted and distributed to Head Start and Early Head Start children in Lycoming and Clinton counties.

A total of 594 items were collected, including 316 pairs of mittens! 150 sets of mittens came from Knitters for Neighbors out of Messiah Lutheran Church. In addition, 361 Head Start children received items from the National Giving Alliance and Early Head Start was the recipient of a \$500 donation of coats from the Muncy Inmate Organization, which is comprised of prison employees.



DREAMWEEK

JANUARY 17 - JANUARY 25



MISSION POSSIBLE:

Protecting Freedom, Justice, and Democracy

The Martin Luther King, Jr., National Day of Service is a defining moment each year when Americans across the country step up to make communities more equitable and take action to create the Beloved Community of Dr. King's dream. Dr. King's acknowledgement and fight for systemic change serves as the call to action for the Day of Service.

MLK Day is the only federal holiday designated as a National Day of Service to encourage all Americans to volunteer to improve their communities. During the last quarter-century, the MLK Day of Service has grown, and its impact increased as more Americans embraced the idea that citizenship involves taking an active role in improving communities.

STEP AmeriCorps, Pennsylvania College of Technology, Lycoming College, the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, the Lycoming County United Way, the United Churches of Lycoming County, and the James V. Brown Library partnered for a week full of events known as Dream Week.



Lalitha Durlin, AmeriCorps Alumna
and Favors Forward Foundation Executive Director

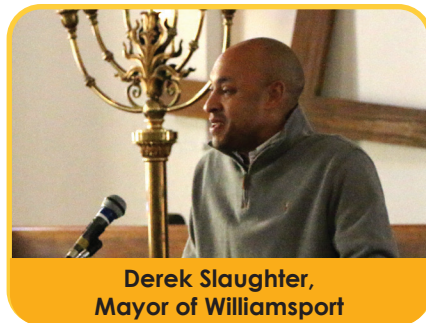


Patrick Jackson, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal
Church Worship Leader



To kick off Dream Week, STEP AmeriCorps members joined James V. Brown Library staff for their annual MLK Day Children's event on Monday, January 20, featuring a reading of *Be A King* and a variety of crafts including "I have a dream" vision boards, crowns, and musical instruments.

The STEP AmeriCorps annual Peace Walk planned for the MLK holiday was revised to an indoor speaking event at Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church due to the extreme cold temperature and icy conditions outside. Speakers included STEP AmeriCorps Program Manager Carrie Bruning, Williamsport Mayor Derek Slaughter, AmeriCorps Alumna and Favors Forward Foundation Executive Director Lalitha Durlin, Bethel AME worship leader Patrick Jackson, and STEP President & CEO Rachelle Abbott, all in honor of Dr. King's legacy.



On Friday, January 24 Pennsylvania College of Technology held a "Lunch and Learn" on the topic of financial literacy. The luncheon, facilitated by Cornerstone Independent Asset Management, was held at STEP's Williamsport campus on Boyd Street.

On Saturday, January 25, the United Churches of Lycoming County organized a bus trip to the African American Museum of History & Culture in Washington, D.C.

In addition to these events, Dream Week 2025 offered many service opportunities throughout the community, including preparing meals, serving meals, packing food boxes, produce distribution, a clothing drive, and STEP AmeriCorps hygiene drive.

The MLK Day of Service is led by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency that engages millions of Americans in service through its AmeriCorps and SeniorCorps programs and leads the nation's volunteer efforts. For more information, visit www.nationalservice.gov.

Santa's Seniors

For the past 19 years, STEP Office of Aging has partnered with Backyard Broadcasting, the Pennsylvania State Police, and many other area businesses to coordinate the Santa's Seniors Program. This annual program provides gift boxes to senior citizens who receive Meals on Wheels through STEP's Office of Aging. Often, these gifts are the only holiday items received by our home-bound seniors.

This year, more than 100 Meals on Wheels recipients in Lycoming and Clinton counties received Santa's Seniors gift deliveries over the holiday season!

STEP Office of Aging volunteers, Centers for Healthy Aging Coordinators, and participants of Leadership Clinton County sorted donations from the community and packed the gift sets during the weeks leading up to the holiday season. Large tote bags were delivered December 19 and 20 by Meals on Wheels volunteers and Pennsylvania State Police. Hats, gloves, scarves, toiletries, word puzzles, 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.





2024 Community Assessments

The Lycoming-Clinton Counties Commission for Community Action (STEP), Inc. is required to complete a Community Assessment every three years. The last full Community Assessment was completed in 2024. The Community Assessment combines objective and subjective data sets for Lycoming and Clinton Counties including demographic data, community, customer, and partner surveys, partner surveys, and focus group data. The information presented in the community assessment is the comprehensive analysis of the information gathered.

Overall, six key need categories were identified: Children and Youth, Education and Employment, Families in Crisis, Housing and Homelessness, Health and Nutrition, and Seniors and Persons with Disabilities. For the 2024 Community Assessment, lack of affordable housing, lack of affordable child care options, and need for additional mental health supports were recurrent themes across key need categories.

Key Need Categories & Themes

Children and Youth

- Early Care and Education Crisis
- Behavioral Issues
- Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting
- Mental Health Needs

Education and Employment

- Quality Early Care and Education Opportunities
- Recruitment and Retention of Employees
- Employability and Life Skills Training

Families in Crisis

- Mental Health and Substance Abuse Supports
- Housing Instability and Emergency Supports
- Parenting and Life Skills Development
- Domestic Violence

Health and Nutrition

- Medical and Dental Care Options for Vulnerable Populations
- Mental Health Crisis
- Cost of Care
- Access to Fresh Food

Housing and Homelessness

- Housing Affordability
- The State of Housing
- Homelessness

Support Services for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities

- Aging in Place and Affordable Housing
- Awareness of Protective Services
- Outreach Services
- Services for Persons with Disabilities
- Services for Seniors

VIEW THE FULL REPORTS ONLINE!
www.stepcorp.org/CommunityAssessment





Mark Your Calendar!

AARP Tax Aide

Now through Early April 2025

The AARP Foundation is providing tax assistance and preparation through its Tax-Aide program — and it's completely free. Help is available starting in February at STEP's Lincoln Street office in Williamsport and STEP's Clinton County Community Center in Lock Haven. Appointments are required. You may call 570-323-3096 in Lycoming County and 570-858-5800 in Clinton County, weekdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. to schedule an appointment.

Raise the Region

Wednesday, March 12 at 6:00 PM
through Thursday, March 13 at 11:59 PM



Raise the Region is a 30-hour online fundraising event held by the First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania. Raise the Region gives community members an opportunity to support our local nonprofits by helping them raise as much money as possible! Donations from this strategic and unified effort will support our local nonprofits in addressing the increasing needs of our region. Your contribution will help them in creating more vibrant communities and ultimately help our North Central Pennsylvania region thrive!

ELRC7 Provider Appreciation Conference

Friday, April 11 and Saturday, April 12
Holiday Inn | 100 Pine Street, Williamsport

The Early Learning Resource Center Region 7 in partnership with STEP will celebrate Early Care and Education (ECE) Professionals at the 3rd Annual ELRC7 Provider Appreciation Conference. This conference offers free high-quality professional development, delicious food, ECE resources, and a place to share ECE stories. In addition, the conference provides an opportunity for partners and ECE professionals to gather and network.

Building Green Futures

June 2025

The Building Green Futures program provides training and unique access to hands-on work experience and credentials in the home energy and construction industries. This paid three-week career exploration program is expected to begin mid-June 2025, Monday through Friday during daytime hours. The program is offered through Pennsylvania College of Technology's Clean Energy Center in partnership with STEP and SEDA-COG. Secure your interest and stay up to date on this unique opportunity by visiting cecpct.com/BGFForm.



facebook.com/
STEPPathways

facebook.com/
STEPHeadStart

facebook.com/
STEPELRC

facebook.com/
STEPHousingOptions

facebook.com/
STEPAmeriCorpsPA

facebook.com/
STEPOfficeOfAging



STEP, Inc.
2138 Lincoln Street
Williamsport, PA 17701
570.326.0587

**STEP Clinton County
Community Center**
124 East Walnut Street
Lock Haven, PA 17745
570.858.5800



Visit us at
www.stepcorp.org

This publication is available electronically or via US Mail. To change the status of your delivery, including unsubscribing, please call or email STEP.