

# Success Through Engagement & Partnership



2021-2022

Annual Report



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# Agency Profile

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, 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

# Message from the President & CEO

## Investing in our future

This tag line jumps out at me for this year's welcome. STEP leadership, along with help and support from the STEP Board of Directors, has taken significant steps to invest in our staff; our future. We finished up an internal equity and external market wage and salary study on the 113 STEP positions and have increased compensation for over 150 employees.

We have invested in our employees with trainings that help increase workplace satisfaction, mindfulness, and work-life balance. We created and filled a new position, STEP Recruitment and Retention Specialist, helping all our programs more effectively attract and retain great employees. Among many other employee-centered activities and initiatives, we established the STEP Wellness Committee. This employee-led group will have a real impact on the health and wellbeing of our dedicated staff.

This year, the entire STEP team has dutifully served and had a tremendously positive impact on the success of our customers. The pages that follow highlight the impact, and I am so thankful we were able to invest back into the reasons why STEP has experienced such success: our staff.

**Jim Plankenhorn**  
President & CEO  
STEP, Inc

# GOVERNANCE

## Message from the Board Chairperson

### Social Justice

Social Justice has always been a natural thing for STEP to do. It has been taken to the next level with the development of a Social Justice Task Force which has led to a strong Diversity Statement and Code of Ethics.

This illustrates that STEP is setting an example for everyone to follow! I personally enjoy reading the “On the Walls” posters each time I walk through the office. I also know that Social Justice is embedded in the culture of STEP which is reflective in the hiring practices, personnel policies, and the training and videos offered to staff.

I couldn't be more proud of STEP and its employees for being so focused and caring about ALL individuals in our community. As Angela Davis stated:

**“I am no longer accepting the things I can't change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.”**

Keep up the great work!



**Brenda Nichols**  
Chairperson  
STEP Board of Directors

### 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



**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 Weinhover**  
STEP Aging  
Advisory Council  
Representative



**Patti Wylie**  
Williamsport Area  
School District

## Head Start Policy Council

**Alicia Leathers, Chairperson**

*Parents & Community Members*

- Aron Carter**
- Felicia Lore**
- Ruth Love-Schooley**
- Becky Swinehart**
- Patti Wylie**

*STEP Head Start Staff Participants*

- Denise Baney**
- Shannon Cohick**
- Melissa Edmonds**
- Carolyn Hawk**
- Krista Snyder**

## Aging Advisory Council

**Jack McKernan, Chairperson**

- Janet Blachek**
- Sharon Cashwell**
- Lucille Evans**
- Ray Humphrey**
- Rochelle Keefer**

- Scott Metzger**
- Jeffrey Snyder**
- Joseph Sohmer**
- Edward Weinhover**

# 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.

- **474** STEP Head Start, Early Head Start, and Pre-K Counts parent and community volunteers contributed **8,473** hours.
- **190** STEP Office of Aging volunteers provided **11,258** hours of service.
- STEP Board of Directors members gave over **290** hours through meetings, training, events, and planning.

# EMPLOYEES

## STEP Star

STEP Star is a peer recommendation and recognition program. 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.

During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, **78** employees have been presented with STEP Star awards.



## Employee Milestones



**Kathy Moltz**  
40 Years of Service  
STEP Head Start



**Jean Sullivan**  
35 Years of Service  
STEP Office of Aging



**Dan Merk**  
35 Years of Service  
STEP Transportation

**Tammy Powell**  
25 Years of Service  
STEP Head Start

**Sally Lomison**  
25 Years of Service  
STEP Head Start

**Julie Shaible**  
25 Years of Service  
STEP Head Start

**Melissa Kerschner**  
25 Years of Service  
ELRC Region 7

**John Lewis**  
20 Years of Service  
STEP Housing Options

# 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

**Raelyn Jackson**  
Director, STEP Service Navigation

**Dan Merk**  
Director, STEP Transportation

**Carrie Bruning**  
Director, STEP AmeriCorps

# 2021-2022

## Agency Highlights



### Utilities Assistance Program

STEP's Utilities Assistance Program works with individuals and families toward solutions for improving their quality of life, alleviating crisis situations, and assisting with making informed decisions about their utilities. In addition to providing assistance to residents within Lycoming and Clinton counties, STEP's Utilities Assistance Program has extended its expertise to the Harrisburg area.



### Early Learning Resource Center Asset Mapping

STEP's Early Learning Resource Center has launched an interactive map of resources from care for children to veterans services, food and clothing needs, health care, and many more social services. The map was completed with technical support from the County of Lycoming Department of Planning and Community Development GIS Division, and can be accessed at [www.stepcorp.org/map](http://www.stepcorp.org/map).



### STEP'N Out!

STEP Office of Aging resumed its popular bus trip program, STEP'N Out! Registered participants age 60 and older had the opportunity to experience local and regional history, entertainment, and landmarks. This year's trips included the American Music Theatre, Dutch Apple Dinner Theatre, Kitchen Kettle, Hershey Farm, Sight & Sound Theatres, Flight 93 National Memorial, Shanksville, and Queecreek Mine Rescue Site.



### Wellness Committee

A group of STEP Head Start staff worked to reenergize the discussion related to staff wellness. This group, as well as members from STEP administration, met throughout the year and many recommendations and suggestions have been implemented. From this, the STEP Wellness Committee has evolved into an organization-wide initiative with representation from all STEP programs and pathways.



### Partnership with River Valley Health & Dental

STEP and River Valley Health & Dental teamed up throughout the year to offer COVID Vaccine Clinics in coordination with "Let's End COVID!" They also provide annual dental check ups for children enrolled in the STEP Head Start program. In addition to these ongoing partnerships, River Valley Health & Dental is breaking ground on its new location inside STEP's Clinton County Community Center in Lock Haven, filling a vital need for health services to the residents of Clinton County.



### Juneteenth: Living Free & Healthy

STEP's Social Justice Task Force continues to partner with the Lycoming Tri-County NAACP for the annual Juneteenth celebration in Williamsport. The event welcomes people from all walks of life to celebrate and recognize Black culture, struggle, and triumph. This year's celebration was full of unifying activities that began as a Freedom Walk from Freedom Road Cemetery and ended at Brandon Park, where local businesses and social organizations lined the area around the bandshell.



STEP provided many of the promotional materials for this year's event including the Juneteenth 2022 Living Free & Healthy logo, t-shirts, and bookmarks. STEP's Social Justice Task Force provided and distributed this year's Juneteenth t-shirts, the first in a series set to continue each year in commemoration of the event!

# 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.

- **940** children demonstrated skills for school readiness.
- **970** children improved their attention skills.
- **960** individuals demonstrated improvements in cooking, shopping, or growing food.
- **55** caregivers demonstrated increased sensitivity and responsiveness toward their children.
- **414** children were up to date on immunizations.
- **3** children were referred for mental health services.
- **309** family partnerships were established, leading to **234** family goals being achieved.
- Total Early Head Start, Head Start, Pre-K Counts, and MIECHV enrollment: **543** children.
- **995** children were enrolled in a child care facility with a level three or four Keystone STARS rating.
- **40** child care providers obtained or kept a STAR designation; **15** providers moved up to a higher designation.
- **\$4,563,322** was issued in child care subsidy to local providers.

## STEP Head Start Dental Kits

In an effort to uphold health and safety best practices surrounding the COVID pandemic, STEP Head Start refrained from brushing teeth when children were in their care during the 2021-2022 program year. However, there is an imperative need to still support dental hygiene!

STEP Head Start Health Specialist, Buffy Neese, ordered and sorted individual take home dental kits for all pre-enrolled and enrolled children in the Head Start program. With the assistance of education and support staff, approximately 430 dental kits were distributed across both Early Head Start and Preschool Head Start programs. Each kit included an age appropriate toothbrush, toothpaste, and dental floss in a clear plastic zipped tote bag for easy storage and safe keeping.

In addition STEP Head Start hosted the River Valley Mobile Dental Unit at the STEP Round Hills Campus in October for Dental Hygiene Month. In total, 50 children were seen, and 12 children are scheduled for restorative dental care to address a total of 29 cavities. STEP Head Start is dedicated to partnering with local resources and families to encourage the practice of good dental hygiene at a young age!



# 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.

- **205** households experienced increased health and safety due to home improvements.
- **3,145** households improved energy efficiency and/or reduced their energy burden; **138** did so through weatherization.
- **19** households received code-compliance assistance through housing rehabilitation.
- **317** households enrolled in a STEP program obtained safe and affordable housing for 180 days; **1,264** households maintained safe and affordable housing.
- **1,099** households avoided eviction or foreclosure.
- **3,136** customers enrolled in utility assistance programs to reduce their monthly costs and cure arrearages.

## Housing Options partners with First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania:

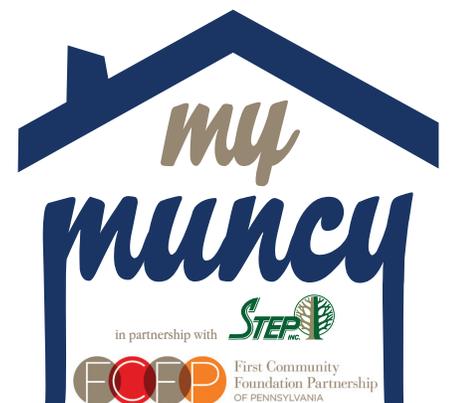
STEP's Housing Options pathway is a 2022 First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania (FCFP) grant recipient. Funds were awarded for the acquisition of a new Housing Options vehicle.

FCFP's grants help sustain nonprofits working to improve all aspects of local life, from healthcare to education and the arts.



My Muncy is a new initiative launched in spring of 2022, focusing on community appearance and environmental stewardship in the Muncy area. My Muncy assists residents with improvements to property exteriors and outdoor spaces, especially along the gateway corridors of Muncy Borough and extending into adjacent neighborhoods. The program provides funding for a variety of needs, such as exterior washing and painting, porch repairs, fence repairs, landscaping, dead tree removal, sidewalk replacement, and storm water issues.

My Muncy is being administered by STEP's Housing Options Program and made possible with funds from the First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania. Acceptance into the program requires an application. STEP completed the first of the My Muncy projects in 2022, and additional funding is expected in subsequent years to extend and expand the program.



# 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.



- **20** unemployed youth obtained employment to gain skills or income.
- **86** adults obtained employment up to a living wage; **6** at or above a living wage.
- **4** employed participants increased benefits.
- **9** employed participants in a career-advancement program increased income through wage or salary improvement.
- **86** individuals obtained or kept employment by accessing reliable transportation options.

## STEP Work Ready

For the first time since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, STEP's Work Ready program participants are back at service sites! The hands-on experience acquired from service sites is crucial for the success of program participants and provides the opportunity to develop the skills needed for gainful employment.

STEP's Work Ready Program assists individuals who are referred by the County Assistance Office. The objective of the program is to assist individuals with stabilizing their barriers to success and with developing skills that prepare them for employment. The program offers successful employment and personal skills development opportunities to help individuals improve their ability to "earn, keep, and grow" a steady family-supporting income.

Once potential employees are armed with important employment tools and skills, they are prepared to be successfully matched with potential employers. Customers are provided with case management and referred to other services such as skill and behavior assessment, support groups, life skills, GED instruction, counseling, substance abuse treatment, and others. These are services that will help them both attain and retain employment and develop the capacity to earn a life-sustaining income.

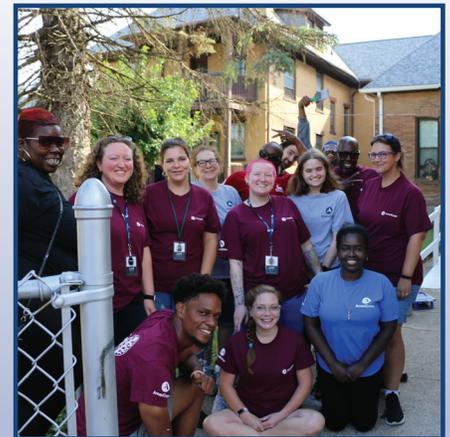


# COMMUNITY *Collaboration*



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.

- **180** individuals achieved and maintained capacity to meet basic needs for 90 days.
- **870** individuals engaged with Community Action reported improved financial wellbeing.
- **93** participants increased skills, knowledge, and abilities allowing them to work with Community Action to improve conditions in their communities.
- STEP worked with **565** partners to eliminate service gaps and duplication.
- **8** AmeriCorps members completed their term of service and received an Education Award.
- **15,142** referrals were made to STEP programs and external partners to connect customers with the services they need.



## Emergency Rental Assistance Program II

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](http://www.stepcorp.org/lycorent). Participants can receive assistance for a total of 18 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 done a tremendous job! The group of **7** employees processed **1,415** applications, and funding totaling **\$6,076,474.80** has been spent on rent and utility payments for **991** 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](mailto: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.

- **2,632** adults age 65+ and **637** individuals with disabilities maintained independent living situations.
- **16** seniors received **33** home modifications and/or assistive devices to maintain independence.
- **940** adults obtained access to health screening services.
- **2,513** individuals registered for STEP Transportation maintained their independence by receiving rides to medical appointments, work, and other activities.
- **93** Adult Protective Services investigations from **416** reports of need ensured the health, safety, and financial security of older adults.

## Designated Stop Program

In 2022 STEP Transportation announced a tiered launch for the Designated Stop Program to assist with public transportation needs of Clinton County residents. The Designated Stop Program is a new public transit service operated with existing shared ride vehicles, with designated stops along currently traveled routes of STEP's shared ride service. Anyone can ride for only \$2.00 per trip. The launch of three new routes will expand STEP's ability to help community members reach even more of Clinton County and destinations in neighboring Lycoming County. The three new routes are described below.



**Mill Hall to Lock Haven** | Service runs Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Key stops include Mill Hall Senior Center, Walmart, Central Mountain High School, UPMC Lock Haven, and Lock Haven University Main Campus.

**Renovo to Lock Haven** | Service runs Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Key stops include the Renovo Senior Center, UPMC Lock Haven, and Clinton County Community Center.

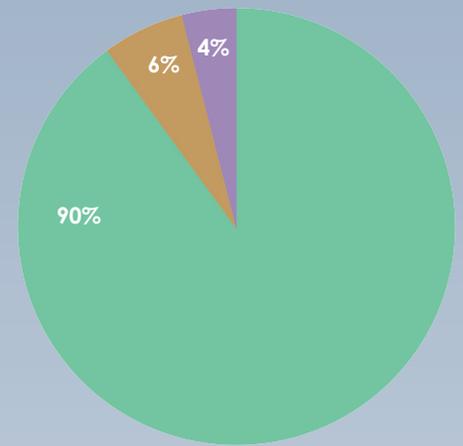
**Lock Haven to Jersey Shore and Williamsport** | Service runs from Monday through Thursday from 6:00 AM to 5:30 PM. Key stops include UPMC Lock Haven, Jersey Shore Hospital, UPMC Williamsport, and Divine Providence Hospitals.

Advanced reservations are required. All reservations must be scheduled by 2:00 PM the business day prior to the requested date of travel. Rides can be scheduled by calling STEP at (570) 326-0587 or by visiting STEP's website at <https://www.stepcorp.org/ride.html>. For route information, maps, and schedules, please visit [www.stepcorp.org/dsp](http://www.stepcorp.org/dsp).

# Financial Position

## Statement of Financial Position

|                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Total Assets.....      | \$16,470,753       |
| Total Liabilities..... | \$6,708,792        |
| Net Assets.....        | <u>\$9,761,961</u> |



|     |                                  |              |
|-----|----------------------------------|--------------|
| 90% | Federal/State Grants & Contracts | \$38,582,622 |
| 6%  | Local Grants & Contracts         | \$2,324,160  |
| 4%  | Service Fees & Miscellaneous     | \$1,728,785  |

## Statement of Activity

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| Total Grant Revenue & Other Support.....    | \$42,635,567    |
| Total Program Expenses.....                 | \$42,582,103    |
| Excess (Deficit) Revenue Over Expenses..... | <u>\$53,464</u> |

## Program Expenditures

**Early Learning 56%**.....\$21,901,557

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

**Housing Options 5%**.....\$1,696,752

- Weatherization & Housing Services
- Outreach Services

**Workforce Development 1%**.....\$182,866

- Work Ready
- Employment Transportation Assistance Program

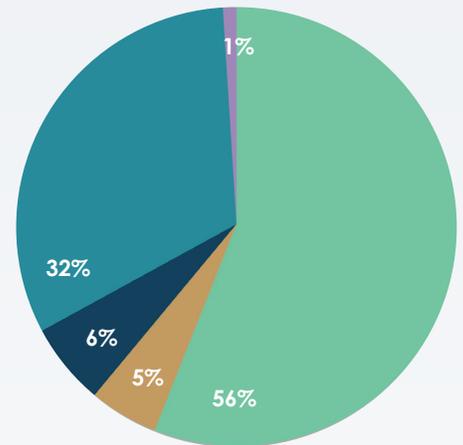
**Community Collaboration 6%**.....\$9,726,528

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

**Independent Living 32%**.....\$9,074,400

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

**Total Program Expenditures: \$42,582,103**



## Message from the Chief Financial Officer

I have so much pride for STEP's accomplishments and the impact we have on the communities that we serve. We grew again this year in the funding dollars that we administer, the services that we provide, and the resulting outcomes of our programs. We did all of this while experiencing the current labor shortage. STEP continued to meet the goals and expectations of our Grantors and maintained our reputation as the go-to leader for Community Action in the community. We also took progressive action in revamping and implementing new employee compensation packages while staying within the state and federal guidelines of our funding sources. I am so proud to say that I am part of this outstanding team.

**Patti Kiessling**  
Chief Financial Officer  
STEP, Inc.



2138 Lincoln Street  
 Williamsport, PA 17701  
 570.326.0587



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 **Donate**  
[www.stepcorp.org/agency-info/community-support/donate.html](http://www.stepcorp.org/agency-info/community-support/donate.html)

 **Raise The Region**  
[www.raisetheregion.org](http://www.raisetheregion.org)

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

 **Volunteer with us**  
[www.stepcorp.org/Get\\_involved](http://www.stepcorp.org/Get_involved)

 **Join AmeriCorps**  
[www.stepcorp.org/AmeriCorps](http://www.stepcorp.org/AmeriCorps)

 **Employment Opportunities**  
[www.stepcorp.org/Careers-Service](http://www.stepcorp.org/Careers-Service)

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

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

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

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## THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS

July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022

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- Nicoya Catino • Dawn Cohen • Mary Beth Croll • Robert & Ardythe Cross • Ruth Croyle • Sarah Ely • Collette & Brad Forney •
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