Week of the Young Child
STEP Early Learning celebrates with daily activities and PA One Book readings.
Employee of the Quarter

January 1, 2017 - March 31, 2017 - Mellanie Boone

Mellanie is a very dedicated employee and goes the extra mile for STEP Transportation and our customers. She delivers paperwork in the middle of cross-county runs, and when we need people to work medical trips on STEP holidays, Mellanie volunteers to work.

She serves as a great STEP ambassador in Clinton County, representing both the transportation department and STEP. She is a pleasure to work with and always has a smile on her face - her cheerful attitude translates into how she performs her job tasks and the perception she has with the community.

Mellanie also makes a positive difference in creating a safe work environment at STEP. She is an active member of STEP’s Safety Committee, an assignment she takes very seriously.

Success

“When you greet Mellanie, she has a knack for making you feel better as a person. Her cheerful attitude makes her an excellent ambassador for STEP Transportation.”

Dan Merk, STEP Transportation Program Manager
Master Gardeners Program

“I was very enthused when we began the gardening program, and I have not been disappointed! We’ve enjoyed lively conversations on many different garden topics.”

Ann Bering, Penn State Extension Master Gardener

AARP Tax Aide

“Filing taxes is confusing for all of us, but the Tax-Aide volunteers relieve the anxiety, put the information in order, and file the forms. This program is fantastic!”

Fred Shrimp, STEP Office of Aging Director

Partnership

Engagement

Success

Early this spring, STEP and the Penn State Extension debuted the Master Gardeners Program. Taught by Penn State Master Gardeners Sandy Murray and Ann Bering, lessons on indoor seed starting, composting, herbs, succulents, house plants, transplanting, watering, and lasagne gardening (a no-dig, no-till organic gardening method achieved by layering wet cardboard, yard clippings, compost, and soil) have been covered thus far.

Stay tuned for more, or join us at the workshops! Classes are held from 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM every Thursday at the RiverWalk Center, 423 East Central Avenue, South Williamsport, and will continue until early November.

Picture above: program participant Gerta drills air holes into the center’s community compost container with the assistance of Master Gardener Ann Bering.

Picture above is the lettuce started indoors at the RiverWalk Center, grown from seeds planted by the participants of the Master Gardeners Program.

Pictured above from right, standing are Master Gardeners Ann Bering and Sandy Murray, instructing the class on raised garden beds. Participants added soil and their own center-made compost to the raised bed before transplanting their lettuce.

Picture above: Clinton County resident Gary Fisher (left) is assisted by AARP Tax Aide volunteer Pat (right) at STEP’s Clinton County Community Center.

The STEP Office of Aging annually sponsors the AARP Tax-Aide program in conjunction with the IRS. The volunteer-driven program offers free tax help for taxpayers with low and moderate incomes, with special attention to people aged 60 and older. The volunteers complete federal, state, and local tax returns, and applications for Pennsylvania’s Property Tax/Rent Rebate program.

Retired Pennsylvania College of Technology accounting professor Phil Landers volunteers as the Tax-Aide site coordinator in Lycoming County. His team of 8 volunteers filed 670 federal returns this past tax season, resulting in a total of more than $416,000 in tax refunds. The group uses space at the Office of Aging Lincoln Senior Center at the STEP office building in Williamsport.

Working out of STEP’s Clinton County Community Center in Lock Haven, Clinton County Tax-Aide Site Coordinator Alice Bryerton enlists 19 community volunteers, including students in the accounting program at Lock Haven University, to help with tax returns. Clinton County tax volunteers filed 560 federal returns this past tax season, resulting in a total of more than $425,000 in tax refunds.
Week of the Young Child

Early Learning Pathway to Success

Partnership Engagement

In honor of Week of the Young Child, the Lycoming County Commissioners gave a proclamation to recognize the formation of the Lycoming Early Learning Team, which is comprised of 15 school and community agencies that serve young children and their families. The commissioners declared the week of April 23-30, 2017, as The Week of the Young Child in conjunction with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The Week of the Young Child is an annual observance hosted by the NAEYC, celebrating early learning, young children, their teachers, and their families across the globe.

Inside our classrooms, Week of the Young Child activities included Music Monday, Tasty Tuesday, Work Together Wednesday, Artsy Thursday, and Family Friday. In addition to the daily themed activities, STEP Early Learning programs introduced this year’s PA One Book, Daniel Finds A Poem, by Micha Archer. With community support, 650 children enrolled in STEP’s programs received their own copy of this year’s PA One Book, and many classrooms invited guest speakers to read the featured book.

Success

“This valuable program highlights the importance of early literacy development in young children, as well as engaging them in conversation and educational activities.”
Sue Evans, Deputy Director of STEP Head Start
STEP Office of Aging volunteers were recently recognized for their contributions at banquet luncheons held at the RiverWalk Center in South Williamsport on April 7 and 21, 2017, and on April 28, 2017, at the Clinton County Community Center in Lock Haven. Many of these volunteers deliver Meals on Wheels, some help out with bingo and exercise classes, while others donate their time and knowledge through the Tax-Aide and Ombudsman programs. All volunteer their time to ensure the success of STEP Office of Aging programs. Dozens of volunteers received certificates for their extended years of service to senior programs.

This year the George C. Meck Volunteer of the Year Award was awarded to Gretta Elliott. Gretta is pictured at left with STEP President & CEO Jim Plankenhorn. She gave 733 hours of service to STEP this past year.

Meals at both locations were provided through Frey’s Commissary. STEP AmeriCorps members served guests at the RiverWalk Center (pictured below left), while National Honor Society students from Central Mountain High School provided service at the Clinton County Community Center banquet (pictured below right).

“Lots of laughter and good times were part of the fare enjoyed by over 300 volunteers.”

Jane Thompson, STEP Office of Aging Health, Nutrition, and Fitness Centers Manager
Recognition of National Service

Community Collaboration Pathway to Success

Engagement

Partnership

More than 4,500 local leaders know national service works. They represent 194 million citizens across America. On April 4, 2017, mayors united in support of AmeriCorps through a nationwide effort to recognize the impact of AmeriCorps during the fifth annual Mayor’s Recognition Day for National Service. Mayors and county officials are increasingly turning to national service as an extremely effective strategy to address local challenges.

Success

“By unleashing the power of citizens, AmeriCorps programs have a positive and lasting impact - making our cities and counties better places to live.”

Emily Gale, STEP AmeriCorps Program Manager

Upcoming Events

In 2017, STEP is establishing the Housing Options Endowment Fund. This permanent endowment will generate income each year that is able to support any of STEP’s Housing Options Pathway programs, which assist individuals and families in securing and maintaining safe, affordable, and energy-efficient housing. The fund will be professionally managed through the First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania to ensure that assets remain strong over time.

The STEP Housing Options Endowment:
» Provides stability  » Grows over time  » Is a permanent funding source  » Facilitates strategic planning  » Creates an avenue for additional support  » Allows vital programs to continue on a long-term basis  » Furthers the mission of STEP’s Housing Options Pathway  » Supports community, family, and individual initiatives to foster self-sufficiency

To support the STEP Housing Options Endowment Fund, STEP is holding an auction!

NEW THIS SUMMER! The STEP Office of Aging is debuting the “STEP’n Out!” program. Funded by a grant from the PA Department of Aging, “STEP’n Out!” is a way for individuals age 60+ to experience local and regional history, entertainment, and landmarks. While a few of the experiences we will travel to may have an admission fee, the transportation for the program is free of charge. Space for each “STEP’n Out!” trip is limited to a number of bus seats, so reserve your spot early!

The official kickoff is slated for July. In the meantime, we invite you to join us for these “STEP’n Out!” pre-events:

Knoebel’s Senior Citizen’s Day on June 7th
Knoebel’s Summer Craft Fair on June 20th & 22nd

To make a donation using PayPal visit: http://www.stepcorp.org/Housing_Options_Endowment_Fund
The mission of STEP is to engage diverse individuals, families, and communities in the pursuit of social and economic success.

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