



December News 2024

During this "Holiday Season" many of our AmeriCorps members and staff have been involved in community service projects. We would like to thank all of our supporters and those who have helped with the projects!



Knox Light Up Night

Keystone SMILES would like to thank those who collaborated with Knox Boro, Police, Ambulance, Fire, businesses and community service organizations to make this a very successful evening for children and their families.

It has been reported that approximately 219 children and 194 adults attended the event with more than 50 volunteers this year.

The event was free with food, music, drink, games, and crafts with the main event of "Lighting Up the Town."

Keystone SMILES Preschool children dressed up as reindeer and rode on a float with Santa and Mrs. Claus in the first ever parade.

We hope to generate more participation next year. The Grinch was spotted causing mischief in the town and the Boro Police put him in jail. Money was raised for the Grinch's release. Funds donated will be used for Light Up Night 2025.





Light Up Sharpsville Night, Mercer County

"Light Up Sharpsville Night " was a night to bring the community together. Children from Keystone SMILES Sharpsville Gardens Pre-K Counts Learning Center and children from the community participated despite the cold weather. The children and staff enjoyed their time in the parade. AmeriCorps members and staff walked with the children in the parade handing out candy and flyers.



Operation Christmas Child, Venango County

The Crossing Free Methodist Church in Oil City asked the Weed and Seed program for assistance in setting up for the "Operation Christmas Child ". Staff and AmeriCorps members helped set up tables and chairs. They also sorted and organized all the donations the church had collected and laid them out on the tables. 117 shoeboxes with hats, socks, hygiene products, school supplies, and toys were prepared for children ages 2-17.



Holiday Sing-A-Long, Mercer County

The preschool children at Zion Education Center held a Holiday Sing-A-Long at Stey Nevant Library in Farrell, PA. Local public servants, first responders, law enforcement and city officials were invited. This event was a way of thanking everyone for the hard work they put in to keeping the students and community safe.





Preschool Christmas Concert, Clarion County

Keystone SMILES Preschool/Pre-K Counts children in Knox held a Christmas concert in the park on Main Street. The children sang a variety of holiday songs for their families and friends.

A huge thanks to all who assisted with the concert in the park.



Santa Baskets

For 31 years Keystone SMILES CLC has continued the tradition of making Santa Baskets for families in Clarion and Venango Counties. This year SMILES staff and AmeriCorps members assembled and distributed food for 118 families. This year's service project provided meals for more than 500 children and adults. A special thank you to the Clarion and Venango County organizations, churches, businesses, and individuals who donated the funds to help keep this tradition to be successful. Without their support this service project would not be possible.



Christmas Shopping, Venango County

Staff and AmeriCorps members from the Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps Weed and Seed program in Oil City were able to take children Christmas shopping. Funds from the Wright Promise grant were utilized to allow the youth from the program to purchase presents for others. This support provided an opportunity for children to participate in a service-learning project during the Christmas season and experience the season as more than about receiving but be a beneficiary of the season of "giving".

Wheelchair Ramp, Mercer County



The House of Trades team along with Zion Education Center AmeriCorps members and volunteers from Mustard Seed Ministries recently helped to install a wheelchair ramp and fencing at the Hadden House in Farrell, Pa. Generous donations from Mercer County State Bank and The Maple Lane Farm Foundation helped to make this project possible to ensure the social service home is ADA compliant.

AmeriCorps Great Stories



"I have had a great influx of students who have come to me for help in their Algebra1 classes, and what makes this difficult is that math isn't my strong suit. However, this is why I started up the peer tutoring program....Some of the students the peer tutors have worked with have become dear friends to (them). It is amazing getting to not only watch those students grow in their understanding of math but also to watch friendships blossom."

Amanda Crowl-Fairview High School
(Student pictured is not depicted in story)



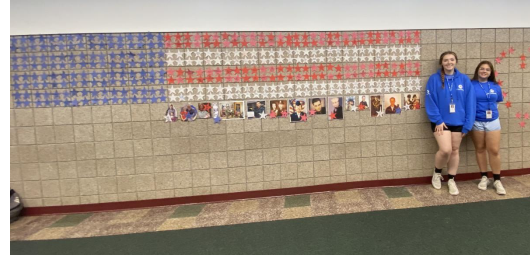
"I worked with a student who came to me as unconfident, yet very kind, sweet and a hard working student. She struggled with reading, specifically her fluency. Everyday she came to me excited to work, which was refreshing to me. Although she struggled, she never let that get her down...Eventually, it was like something clicked for her. I'm not entirely sure if it was a particular reading strategy I showed her, or if she finally just felt confident in knowing that she could do it. (Now) she is what every teacher wants for their students...I couldn't be more happy for her and I'm so happy to see her thriving."

Brett Horn-Edinboro Elementary
(Students pictured are not depicted in story)



"I'm writing about my experience I had with a new student who started...He started off being very shy and reserved around me and was not really willing to work with me. But now he is a lot more used to me, and he actually does really well...I really enjoy working with him and I hope he continues to keep developing."

Bailey Pentz-Youth AmeriCorps member at AC Valley school district
(Students pictured are not depicted in story)



When we first started the AmeriCorps program I was put into a Kindergarten class. I was switched to a different classroom 3 weeks into the program. Switching classrooms makes me realize the difference in teaching each teacher does. I have loved being in this program and I can't wait to be a teacher. This program has helped me a lot with what I want to do in the future.

Kenzie Lehman-Youth AmeriCorps serving at Elk Valley Elementary School.



Keystone SMILES Community Learning Center | 525 Main Street PO Box 352 | Knox, PA 16232 US

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