

Providing
HIGH QUALITY
early childhood
education and
family services

SINCE
1965



**LUZERNE COUNTY
HEAD START** INC.

Annual Report 2021-2022

Moving Families Forward

www.lcheadstart.org

570-829-6231

800-551-5829

SERVING PREGNANT WOMEN, CHILDREN BIRTH TO AGE FIVE, AND THEIR FAMILIES
IN LUZERNE AND WYOMING COUNTIES



“As proven leaders in early childhood education and family development, Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for low income children and families in Luzerne and Wyoming Counties. Our knowledgeable and caring staff accomplishes our mission by providing early care and education for pregnant women and children from birth to five, emphasizing healthy outcomes and school readiness; promoting family self-sufficiency; and partnering with individuals, school districts and our community.”

from our LEADERSHIP TEAM:

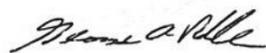
Every person in the Head Start workforce plays a critical role in supporting young children and their families. Luzerne County Head Start (LCHS) is privileged to have a team of dedicated and outstanding staff who continuously maintain a safe and positive learning environment for children and who provide the resources, skills, and knowledge necessary for families to develop and prosper. Our staff's combination of experience and new enthusiasm is what helps us to be successful each year.

As we begin a new program year, LCHS will focus on advancing equity; supporting our program's pandemic response and recovery; investing in our workforce and reaching children and families most in need within the communities we serve. The diversity of our staff, our children, and their families, has allowed us to bring new ideas and experiences to the table and has helped us to meet the ever-changing needs of young children.

Implications from the COVID-19 pandemic continue to affect our families, staff, and children. It is not without struggle that we made it through the 2021-2022 program year. For the better part of two years, many of our children and their educators participated in virtual services. When our classrooms fully re-opened for in-person services, new problems arose. As a leadership team, we will continue to work together to find solutions, and to make our program stronger than it was before.

As we begin a new program year, we remain focused on our vision: children growing and thriving in a supportive, nurturing environment of parents, family, neighborhood, and community where they and their families have options and opportunities for optimum growth, development, and learning. As leaders in early childhood education we believe that every child, regardless of their circumstances at birth, has the ability to reach their full potential. Head Start work is heart work. The work that we do at LCHS helps to bridge gaps, build relationships, support families and better our community. We remain deeply committed and proud to lead and serve this organization.

Sincerely,



George Rable
President, Board of Directors



Lynn Evans Biga
Executive Director



children & families WE SERVE:

Funded Enrollment



- Early Head Start Infants, Toddlers and Pregnant Women
 - United Way Early Head Start Infants, Toddlers
 - Head Start Children*
 - Pre-K Counts Children*
- *includes 71 children in blended funded classrooms*



Head Start/Pre-K Counts Sites **23**
Early Head Start Sites **5**



Head Start/Pre-K Counts Classrooms **59**



Number of Head Start Children Who Received Transportation **155**



Pregnant Women **14**



Number of Meals Served **206,101**

SCHOOL DISTRICTS SERVED

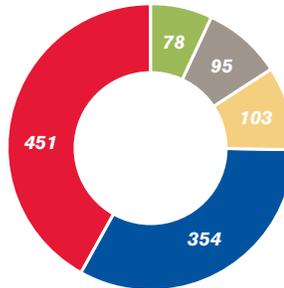
- Crestwood
- Dallas
- Greater Nanticoke Area
- Hanover Area
- Hazleton Area
- Lake-Lehman
- Pittston Area
- Tunkhannock Area
- Wilkes-Barre Area
- Wyoming Valley West
- Wyoming Area

DEMOGRAPHICS

(numbers represent those served in the Early Head Start and Head Start programs)

Total Number of Families **1020**

- Under 1
- 1-year-old
- 2-years-old
- 3-years-old
- 4-years-old



- Children Experiencing Homelessness **49**
- Foster Children **39**
- Families Receiving Public Assistance **200**
- Children with Diagnosed Disabilities **161**
- Single-Parent Families **629**
- Dual-Language Learners **389**

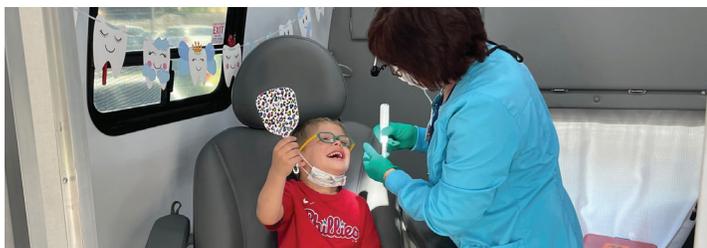
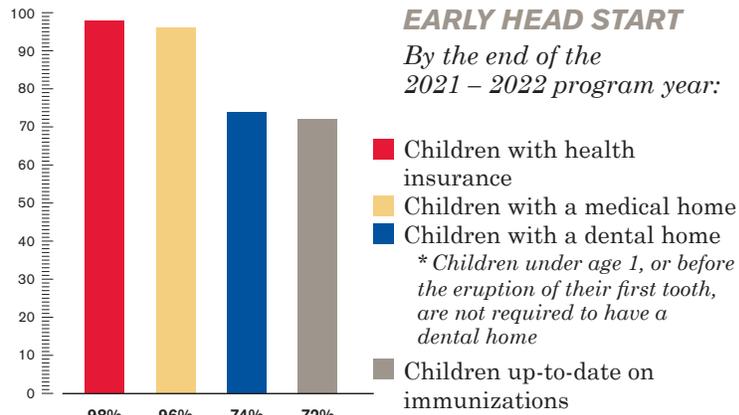
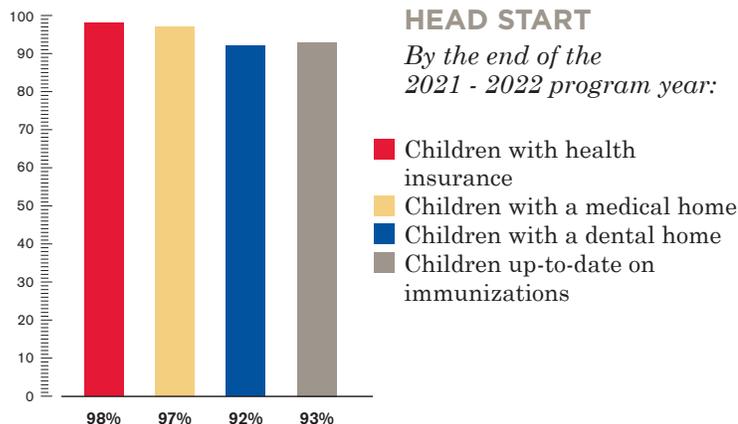


*According to the most recent Family Supports Needs Assessment (FSNA) put together by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, approximately 38% of eligible 3 & 4-year-old children in Luzerne County and 41% of eligible 3 & 4-year-old children in Wyoming County have access to a publicly funded, high-quality pre-k program. The FSNA shows approximately 31% of children in Luzerne County and 17% of children in Wyoming County under the age of 5-years-old are living in economically high-risk families with incomes at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). This report shows Luzerne County ranks as the 5th highest county in the state of PA in terms of percent of children who are under 5-years-old and living in households at or below 100% of the FPL.

Recognizing that children, families and staff have roots in many cultures.



health & dental OUTCOMES:



BRUSHING UP ON ORAL HEALTH AT HEAD START

Good oral health habits are crucial to a young child's overall health and well-being and are an important part of the Head Start program. In the spring of 2022, LCHS partnered with The Wright Center for Community Health, Geisinger and St. Luke's to provide dental services to Head Start children and staff who did not have a dental home or insurance. The Wright Center brought its "Driving Better Health" mobile van to LCHS's Beekman Street center in Wilkes-Barre. Staff from St. Luke's visited children at LCHS's Carson Street and HIP centers in Hazleton. Geisinger visited all other Head Start locations. This project helped to advance our mission by improving the oral health and wellness of children/staff who live in poverty and/or are uninsured.

SNAP PARTICIPANTS NOW ELIGIBLE FOR HEAD START SERVICES

The Office of Head Start announced in the spring of 2022 that families who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits are eligible to apply for Head Start/Early Head Start services. This policy change allows Luzerne County Head Start to reach more families, minimizes the burden on families seeking public assistance, and coordinates benefit programs so that families eligible for one program can more easily participate in other services for which they qualify. The inclusion of SNAP benefits as public assistance expands the pool of eligible participants in Head Start programs nationwide.



screening, assessment & child OUTCOMES:

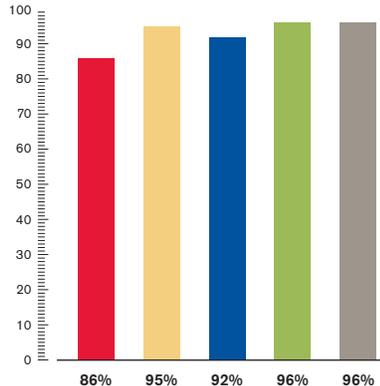
LCHS is committed to supporting children and families with school readiness, self-sufficiency and success in life. Our program provides children with comprehensive health, nutrition, and other family support services, as well as a developmentally appropriate early childhood education.

LCHS uses Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) as the assessment tool for our Head Start program and Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP) as the assessment tool for our Early Head Start program. Both tools support the goals and objectives of the curriculums we use in our early learning programs.

EARLY HEAD START CHILDREN 0 TO 3-YEARS-OLD

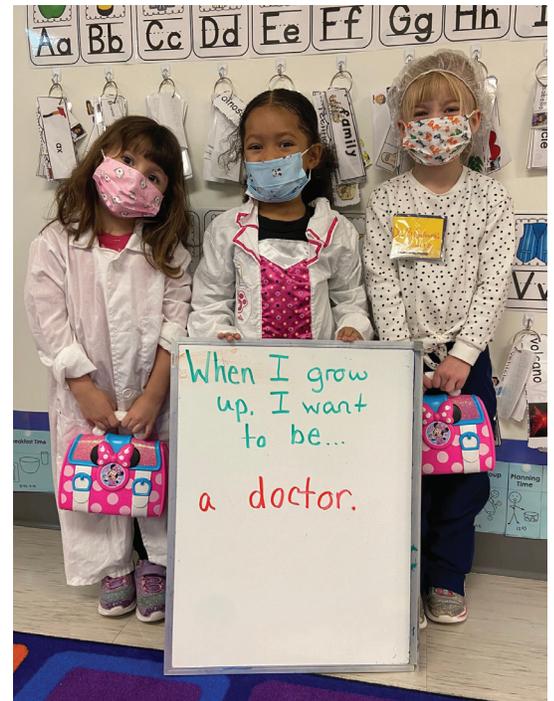
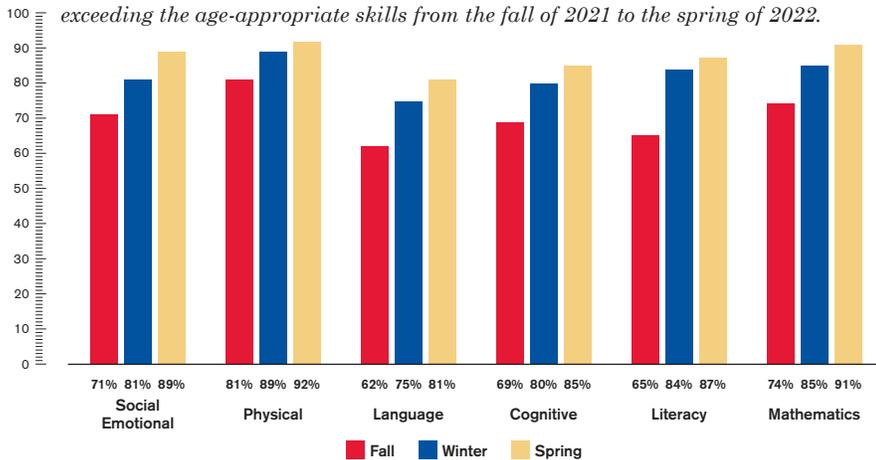
These graphs represent the gains demonstrated by Early Head Start children who were assessed for at least two terms (six months) during the 2021-2022 program year.

- Language and Communication – 86%
- Approaches to Learning – 95%
- Perceptual, Motor and Physical Development – 92%
- Cognition – 96%
- Social and Emotional Development – 96%



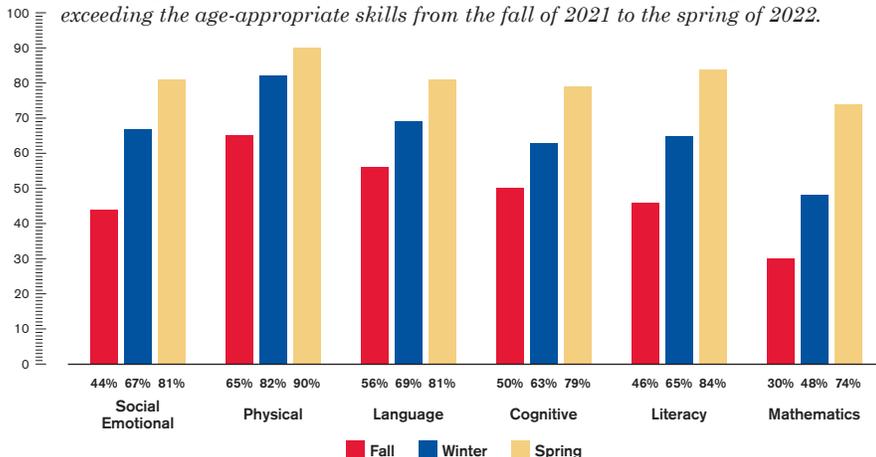
HEAD START/HSSAP CHILDREN 3-YEARS-OLD

These graphs represent the percentage of Head Start children meeting or exceeding the age-appropriate skills from the fall of 2021 to the spring of 2022.



HEAD START/HSSAP CHILDREN 4-YEARS-OLD

These graphs represent the percentage of Head Start children meeting or exceeding the age-appropriate skills from the fall of 2021 to the spring of 2022.



parent, family & community **ENGAGEMENT:**

VOLUNTEERS SPRUCE UP HEAD START AS PART OF 'DAY OF CARING'

Employees from the Greater Wyoming Valley Chamber of Commerce volunteered at LCHS as part of the United Way of Wyoming Valley's 29th annual "Day of Caring." The "Day of Caring" is when representatives from several businesses and organizations across the community join other private citizens to come together as volunteers, roll up their sleeves, and set to work helping nonprofit and charitable organizations throughout the Wyoming Valley. This past year, nine volunteers from The Chamber of Commerce, including LCHS's Board of Directors member, Ahmad Ali, completed outdoor projects including washing windows, raking leaves and planting flowers at LCHS's central office building in Wilkes-Barre.

CRAFTING NATURAL PLAY SPACES FOR CHILDREN

LCHS is incorporating natural play spaces into existing playground areas at our Wilkes-Barre, Beekman Street and LCCC, Nanticoke Head Start centers. A natural play space is an intentionally designed

outdoor classroom that helps to enhance child development. The idea for the project came together following a lecture at Wilkes University that discussed how children are experiencing a

nature deficit disorder. Natural play areas help children reconnect with the environment. These areas allow for more physical movement, and present opportunities for children to enhance their problem solving, critical thinking, language and literacy, math, construction and engineering, and visual-spatial thinking skills. In the fall of 2021, LCHS worked with 'Nature Explore' to develop a comprehensive design for two natural play spaces at our Head Start locations. The company also provided professional development for LCHS's education staff regarding natural play spaces. The Rotary Clubs of Pittston and Wilkes-Barre helped LCHS to clean up the space at our Beekman Street center in

the spring of 2022 in preparation for the natural play space. They also assisted with weeding, removing old garden beds, and assembling materials and outdoor seating. Once these play areas are complete, they will allow for Head Start teachers to extend learning to the outdoors by presenting inviting opportunities for story time, exploration with sand and water, and collaborative play with natural, outdoor materials.



parent, family & community **ENGAGEMENT:**

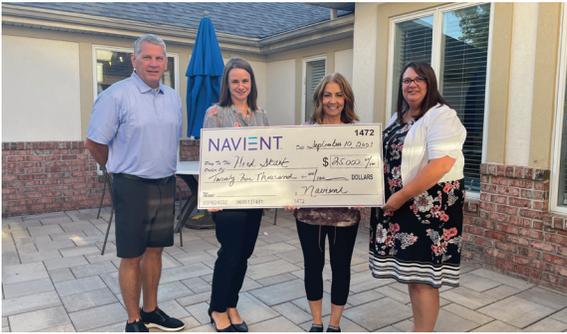
GOLF TOURNAMENT SUPPORTS SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAM

A golf tournament sponsored by Navient, a loan management, servicing and asset recovery company, will provide funds to support LCHS's summer learning experience for children. The annual event held at

Blue Ridge Trail Golf Club in Mountain Top raised approximately \$25,000 for LCHS's Jump Start program. The program is a 4-week-long summer learning experience that offers comprehensive services for 30 eligible 3 and 4-year-old children who will attend LCHS the following fall.

This past year marked the 15th year for the event. In addition to the tournament, several businesses

provided sponsorship and gift donations for raffle drawings. The Navient Community Fund also awarded an \$8,000 grant to help support the summer learning program.



UNITED WAY OF WYOMING VALLEY PROVIDES FUNDING FOR EARLY HEAD START PROGRAM

LCHS's Early Head Start (EHS) program is a weekly home visiting program that provides comprehensive child development

and family support services to pregnant women, children from birth to age three, and their families. Our EHS program is funded to support 212 children and their families. The United Way of Wyoming Valley funds one EHS

caseload of ten children from birth to age three in our Wilkes-Barre center. Home visiting programs promote positive parenting practices that help parents better prepare their children for school.



caseload of ten children from birth to age three in our Wilkes-Barre center. Home visiting programs promote positive parenting practices that help parents better prepare their children for school.



LCHS POLICY COUNCIL

LCHS believes a parent is a child's first and most important teacher. Families are encouraged to be part of Head Start & Early Head Start program planning. Policy Council members are elected each year and meet monthly. Those involved participate in meetings and provide feedback on services we provide. Members can be currently enrolled parents, as well as community members.

2021-2022 Chairperson: Felicia Pursel, *Head Start Parent*

transition:

Preschool children make the transition into kindergarten more successfully when their schools and families prepare together, and when their preschool and kindergarten teachers connect. LCHS has a system in place to help children transition from one program to the next. This includes the transition from Early Head Start to Head Start and Head Start to kindergarten.

MOUs

Luzerne County Head Start has 13 Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with school districts in the two counties we serve. These signed agreements recognize the importance of facilitating a process between school districts and LCHS, which allows children to successfully transfer from our program to kindergarten and beyond.

- Crestwood
- Dallas
- Greater Nanticoke Area
- Hanover Area
- Hazleton Area
- Lackawanna Trail
- Lake-Lehman
- Northwest Area
- Pittston Area
- Tunkhannock Area
- Wilkes-Barre Area
- Wyoming Valley West
- Wyoming Area



of children who aged out of Early Head Start **83**

of children who transitioned from Early Head Start to Head Start **66**

of children who transitioned from Early Head Start to another child care program **7**

of children who did not enter another early childhood program **10**

SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAM PREPARES HEAD START STUDENTS FOR KINDERGARTEN

Following the 2021-2022 program year, LCHS offered a summer learning experience for Head Start students transitioning to kindergarten in the fall of 2022. This opportunity allowed children to make up for missed time in the classroom. Five classrooms of children attended LCHS's Wilkes-Barre and Edwardsville Head Start centers five days a week for three weeks in July. Transportation was also provided to and from school for most children. The summer learning session was made possible by funds received from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act.



Head Start work IS HEART WORK:

BLANKETS OF LOVE

Alexandria is a 5-year-old student at Luzerne County Head Start's Tunkhannock center who is headed to kindergarten in the fall. She spent two years in the



Head Start program. Her family worker, Julianne Pettit, or "Miss Julie," says Alexandria loves to help her classmates.

The 5-year-old girl lives with her grandmother, who experienced some hardships this past winter that put the family in a state of homelessness. Miss Julie learned about Project Donate Joy (DJ) from Luzerne County Head Start's family engagement team. The group provides handmade quilts for children. Each quilt is crafted with unique material, so no two are alike. Without reliable transportation and a temporary housing situation, Miss Julie thought the personalized blanket would be the perfect sentiment for Alexandria. The volunteers from Project DJ put together a special blanket for Alexandria and Miss Julie brought the blanket to her. Miss Julie said Alexandria was so thankful and loved the new blanket.

Alexandria enjoys spending time with her mother, father, baby brother, and 8-year-old sister, Izabella, who was a former Head Start student. Miss Julie recently helped Alexandria's mother find a high chair for her baby brother and says she does whatever she can to make sure Alexandria and her family have everything they need.

"We are here for Alexandria, and her family. They really appreciate the help that we provide to them."



MAKING A DIFFERENCE AT HOME

Luzerne County Head Start has been an important part of helping Alejandra raise her children. The mother of four first learned about LCHS more than a decade ago. Since then, EHS has taught her that early education makes a difference. Before then, she did not understand the importance of singing, reading, or playing with her children. Now, it is an important part of her daily routine.

"My youngest daughter, Angela, really enjoys reading and singing. When my family educator walks into the room, she sits down and requests her special song."

Alejandra says the most important aspect of the program for her family is the educational component. Following a routine has also been an important part of early learning.

"My family educator follows a routine that Angela loves. As soon as she sees her, Angela knows there will be singing, dancing and reading. If she hears the family educator's name, she runs to the door to greet her."

Alejandra's family educator has also helped Angela overcome some obstacles.

"Currently, I am dealing with a behavior problem with my daughter. She is assisting me with techniques and resources to help me learn about positive reinforcement. During our home visits, she goes over the tips and demonstrates different techniques."

Alejandra says Luzerne County Head Start's program has made a significant difference in her family's life.

"EHS helps parents learn to be effective teachers for their children, reach their goals, and provides necessary resources in difficult situations."

Head Start work IS HEART WORK: (cont.)



HEAD START HELP FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Maily is a Head Start mom who is a full-time employee working to obtain her associate degree in the criminal justice field. She hopes that by furthering her education she can improve herself and provide a better life for her children. Maily learned about Head Start through the WIC program after the birth of her first child. Her 5-year-old daughter, Juliet, is now a student at Luzerne County Head Start's HIP center in Hazleton. Maily says she enrolled her daughter in the program because it was important to her that Juliet had an early education where she would learn basic concepts, such as letter recognition and writing her name.

“As a full-time worker and student, it is difficult to find time to teach my daughter the little things, such as colors, letters and how to manage her emotions around others. The Head Start program has given her the opportunity to learn, develop new skills and interact with other children her age.”

The Head Start program has also helped Maily to be successful in school. She needed some assistance with payment for books. Maily's daughter's Head Start teacher provided her with a referral that helped her to get the materials she needed.

“My daughter's teacher has shown a continued interest in both my parenting and how I am doing in school. She calls me almost weekly to make sure I have what I need. Her help and concern is greatly appreciated.”

Maily says the Head Start program has helped her to become a better parent and her children to thrive.

“I would recommend this program because I see daily the educational improvements in my children. LCHS also provides my children with a healthy environment to grow.”

nutrition: THE CORNERSTONE OF HEAD START

RIGHT FROM THE START, EAT SMART!

Wilkes-Barre City Health Department in conjunction with Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. (LCHS) and Maternal & Family Health Services held an all-day childhood nutrition event at LCHS's Beekman Street center in Wilkes-Barre in June of 2022.



The event was held to help parents learn about the many benefits that come from healthy eating at a young age. All families who attended were given a \$15 voucher for the Wilkes-Barre farmers market to encourage the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables. Several community partners were

in attendance to provide information, activities and kid-friendly giveaways. The project was funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Health's Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant. Another event is planned for the fall of 2022.



nutrition: THE CORNERSTONE OF HEAD START

SUMMER FARMERS MARKETS PROVIDE FRESH PRODUCE TO FAMILIES

LCHS held a series of outdoor farmers markets this past summer to help families bring farm fresh produce to their tables. The project is part of our agency's farm to early childhood education (ECE) initiative. Farm to ECE is a group of activities that offer increased access to healthy, local foods to enhance the quality of early learning programs and improve the lives of the program's children, families and staff.

Children who are part of LCHS's year-round Early Head Start home visiting program and those enrolled in Head Start preschool summer services received a grocery tote of fresh produce to take home each Wednesday for three weeks in July. In total, \$5,000 worth of produce purchased from Rowlands Pennsylvania Produce, Falls, was distributed to these children and their families. The project provided fresh food to more than 130 children from birth to age five and their families.



Co-owner of the farm, William Banta, said the opportunity to partner with LCHS was a tremendous help for his family's small business.

"The COVID-19 pandemic presented a number of challenges for us. Farm expenses have gone up and our regular sales have been reduced, especially to restaurants. Many never re-opened and others haven't fully bounced back. This opportunity fits right into what we aim to do."

While Banta admitted farming is challenging work, he enjoys the relationships he has formed with charitable organizations like Head Start. This is the second year LCHS has participated in this initiative with Rowlands.

Last year, funding for the project was provided by a grant from the Pennsylvania Head Start Association. This year, the program was supported with funds from the American Rescue Plan – Early Childhood Relief Funds.

Farm to ECE activities support healthy eating habits, provide a connection to local food and agricultural communities, and teach children how food grows.



Head Start HIGHLIGHTS 2021-2022:

HEAD START ALUMNI RECEIVE SCHOLARSHIPS

Each year former Head Start students graduating from high school and moving on to post-secondary education have the opportunity to apply for an LCHS scholarship. Traditionally, these awards are presented to students during LCHS's annual alumni scholarship luncheon. This year, LCHS held a small ceremony at its central office location in Wilkes-Barre, where the 2022 student scholarship winners had the opportunity to meet with other scholarship recipients, their sponsors, and receive their awards. Thanks to the support of our community, LCHS was able to provide 12 high school seniors from six school districts in Luzerne County with scholarships totaling \$18,100. To date, Head Start alumni have been awarded \$311,350. The scholarships are funded through private sponsors including local businesses, organizations & community leaders.



Head Start HIGHLIGHTS 2021-2022: (cont.)

NEW HEAD START CLASSROOM OPENS AT COLLEGE IN HAZLETON

LCHS opened its newest classroom at Luzerne County Community College's (LCCC) Hazleton Center in January of 2022. The location was chosen because of the high need for Head Start services in Hazleton. The classroom provides comprehensive services to 18 qualifying 3 and 4-year-old children who live in the Hazleton area.

College President, Thomas Leary, said he is pleased to continue the valuable partnership with LCHS through the addition of the classroom at LCCC's Hazleton Center. The newest classroom is LCHS's fourth classroom on the campus of Luzerne County Community College.

Three other Head Start classrooms are located on the college's main campus in Nanticoke. LCHS also provides Head Start services in Hazleton at its Carson Street, HIP and Vine West locations. The EHS center is located along West Chestnut Street in the city.

LCHS HONORS STAFF & OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY PARTNERS

LCHS held a virtual recognition ceremony in May to celebrate our agency's dedicated employees and our 2021-2022 Outstanding Community Partners. Staff who celebrated a milestone year of service received a personalized gift and were recognized during a special video presentation. The 2022 Outstanding Community Partners were also celebrated for their significant contribution to the program.

LCHS also awarded maintenance employee, Charles Josulevicz, with the second annual Bold Leadership Award for his outstanding service to the agency. The 2022 virtual recognition ceremony for LCHS's staff and Outstanding Community Partners took place on the 57th anniversary of Head Start's founding.

TEEN PURCHASES BILINGUAL BOOKS FOR HEAD START CHILDREN

Fourteen-year-old, Lizzie Shacklett, an eighth grade student who currently resides in Montgomery County, purchased several bilingual books for children in LCHS's Head Start preschool program. The young woman, who was recently named "Miss Luzerne County's Outstanding Teen," is focused on raising awareness about the importance of literacy in young children.

The Head Start program was in need of bilingual books for children who are dual language learners. The young woman sold some of her preloved clothing in order to raise money to purchase these books.

Profits obtained from the sale of her preloved clothing allowed Lizzie to purchase three dozen books for 3 and 4-year-old children at LCHS's Beekman Street location in Wilkes-Barre. Lizzie's goal is to donate as many books as possible to schools, educational centers and shelters.



2021-2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: George Rable – *Benco Dental*
Vice President: Stacey Kile – *Geisinger Health Plan*
Treasurer: Andrea Caladie, CPA – *Baker Tilly*
Secretary: Angela Ferri – *PNC Financial Services*

Ahmad Ali – *Greater Wyoming Valley Chamber of Commerce*
Lars H. Anderson, Esquire – *Hourigan, Kluger & Quinn P.C.*
Cynthia Feng, MD, MPA – *Neurogene, Inc.*
Carl F. Goeringer, Jr. – *Century 21 Smith Hourigan Group*
Dan Landesberg – *Geisinger, Northeast Region*
Francis Langan – *Keystone College*
Mainet Mejia-Arroyo – *Community Representative*
Phyllis Mundy – *Former State Representative*
Lori Nocito – *Leadership Northeast*
Terri Ooms – *The Institute for Public Policy and Economic Development*
Lisa Stashik – *Navient*
Mike Tomalis – *Fran Tomalis & Son, Inc.*
Gary Williams – *Community Representative*

EXECUTIVE STAFF

Lynn Evans Biga, *Executive Director*
Beth White, *Assistant Executive Director*
Travis Black, *Director of Finance*
Kelly Chamberlain, *Director of Education*
Sharon Dougherty, *Director of Family Strengthening and Community Engagement*
Lisa Malarkey, *Director of Human Resources*
Brittany Shoemaker, *Early Head Start Director*
Dawn Smith, *Director of Operations*

IN MEMORIAM: LCHS REMEMBERS LONG-TIME BOARD MEMBER, DAVID KOWALEK



Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. (LCHS) would like to acknowledge David Kowalek (June 18, 1953 - June 24, 2022) for his years of service as a member of the LCHS Board of Directors. Dave joined the Board of Directors in January of 1989 and was an active member until his passing in June of 2022. He served as both Vice President and Treasurer during his 33-year tenure. We would like to sincerely thank Dave for

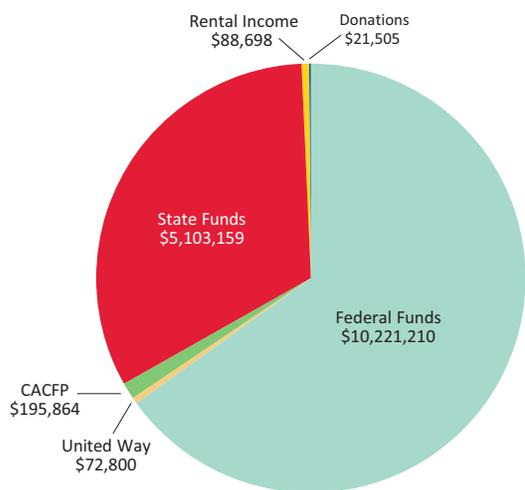
his service to the children and families at LCHS and for his dedication to carrying out the mission of Head Start.



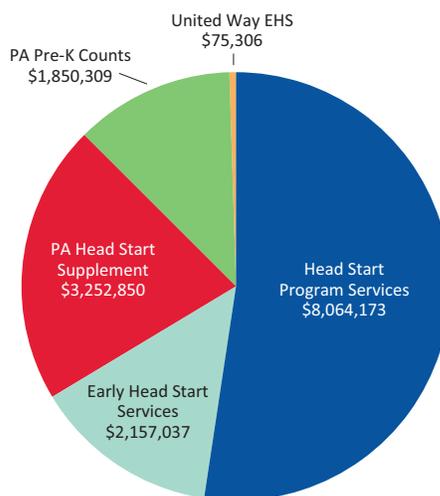
budget & FINANCIALS:

Results of the 2021 financial audit of Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. reported no findings or material weaknesses.

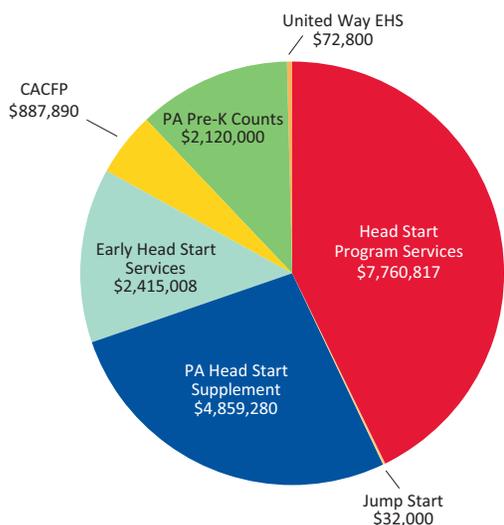
2021 FUNDING SOURCES



2021 EXPENSES BY PROGRAM



2022 PROJECTED BUDGET BY PROGRAM



ACCOUNTABILITY

Luzerne County Head Start, Inc.'s most recent monitoring report dated July 15, 2022 determined our program was out of compliance in one instance of health and safety. All other regulations met and exceeded the standards set forth by the Office of Head Start. A corrective action plan has been developed and will address this oversight by December 19, 2022.

ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- 2021 administrative costs were \$1,976,595 or 10.8% of total expenses
- LCHS has a minimum cost sharing of 20% of our federal funds awarded; in 2021 that share was \$2,856,554
- 2021 transportation costs were \$393,191 transporting 155 children
- *Due to COVID-19, Jump Start programming did not take place during the summer of 2022





LUZERNE COUNTY HEAD START^{INC.}

23 Beekman Street | Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702

2021-2022

annual report **TO THE COMMUNITY**

www.lcheadstart.org



www.facebook.com/luzernecountyheadstart



www.instagram.com/luzernecountyheadstart

Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. is an equal opportunity employer.



United Way
of Wyoming Valley



570-829-6231 • 800-551-5829

Visit www.lcheadstart.org to learn more about the comprehensive services we provide to children and their families.