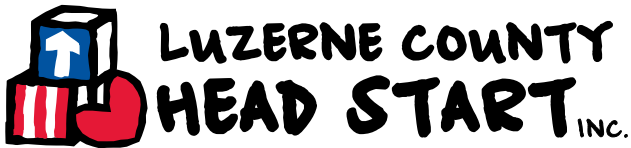


Providing
HIGH QUALITY
early childhood
education and
family services
SINCE
1965

ANNUAL REPORT *to the community* **23-24**



**Leading
THE WAY
to School
READINESS**



www.lcheadstart.org

570-829-6231

800-551-5829

SERVING EXPECTING PARENTS, CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO AGE 5, 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 accomplish our mission by providing early care and education for expecting parents and children from birth to 5 years old, emphasizing healthy outcomes and school readiness, promoting family self-sufficiency, and partnering with individuals, school districts, and our community.



from our LEADERSHIP TEAM:

Being a part of Luzerne County Head Start has been my life's work for 46 years.

In 1978, I fell in love with the LCHS mission as a teacher right out of Penn State University. Soon after, I became the agency's education coordinator, and by 1989, its executive director. After 35 years of leading this organization, it feels bittersweet to announce my retirement.

I am so proud of our Head Start program in the way we have grown and thrived. When you serve an organization for this long, countless memories come to mind at the end of your career. There are a few that stand out and remind me how we've never hesitated to take initiative and innovate to best serve our community.

In 1994, we were the first Head Start program in Region 3 to receive funding to purchase our own building. Now known as the Beekman Street Center, it's the largest of our sites and home to 14 classrooms, an Early Head Start location and our administrative offices.

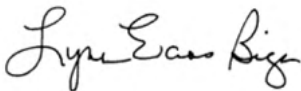
We also extended our reach by forming an Early Head Start home visiting program in 1999. We started with 32 expecting parents, infants and toddlers, and now serve 182 between five EHS locations.

Multiple expansions over the years have allowed us to serve additional children and families, and most notably, we were among the first Pennsylvania programs in 2005 to be awarded state funding for preschool services. That same year, we were proud to be selected as one of the "40 Outstanding Head Start Grantees" in the U.S.

However, what's most significant about my time at LCHS has been the relationships, from our staff and families to our Board of Directors, Policy Council and community partners. It has been an honor and a privilege to work alongside such talented individuals as we brought success to our organization as a strong and resilient team that cares deeply about the children and families we serve. I am so passionate about this work and thankful for the opportunity to do it every day. These have been, and will remain, the best years of my life.

While I may be stepping away from my role, I am not saying goodbye completely. I will support and mentor Assistant Executive Director Beth White as she transitions into my role and, most importantly, be a lifelong advocate of LCHS. I am excited for what lies ahead, and I am grateful for the career that has been afforded to me, bringing me to this moment.

Sincerely,



Lynn Evans Biga
Executive Director



Luzerne County Head Start has been leading the way in high-quality early childhood education and family development services for nearly 60 years.

We're proud to continue offering comprehensive education, health and family support services at no cost to expecting parents, children from birth to age 5, and their families in Luzerne and Wyoming counties. Our Head Start and Pre-K Counts classrooms focus on kindergarten readiness while our Early Head Start home visiting program supports expecting parents and the healthy development of infants and toddlers.

Using a two-generation model and leveraging community partnerships, our programs are meant to strengthen families and ultimately guide them to self-sufficiency. These services have a lasting impact and allow our community's most vulnerable children to get a "head start" in school and in life.

As LCHS approaches its 60th anniversary, we're reflecting on the past while looking ahead to continued success in the future. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express our deepest gratitude to Lynn Evans Biga for her remarkable 46 years of service to LCHS. We have seen significant milestones under Lynn's leadership, and her commitment to the children and families we serve has set a standard of excellence that will guide us for years to come. Her legacy will continue to inspire the future of LCHS every day as we carry out the Head Start mission together.

Sincerely,

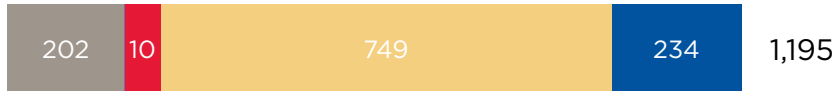


Stacey Kile
President, Board of Directors



children & families WE SERVE:

Funded Enrollment



- Early Head Start infants, toddlers and pregnant women
 - United Way Early Head Start infants and toddlers
 - Head Start children*
 - Pre-K Counts children*
- *includes 126 children in blended funded classrooms*



Head Start/Pre-K Counts sites **18**
Early Head Start sites **5**



Head Start/Pre-K Counts classrooms **46**



Number of Head Start children who received transportation **230**



Pregnant women **13**



Number of meals served **151,478**
Number of EHS snacks served **246**

SCHOOL DISTRICTS SERVED

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

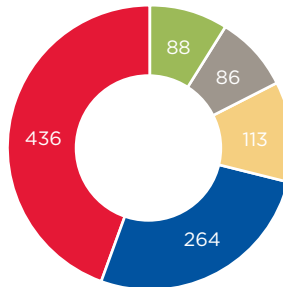


DEMOGRAPHICS

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

Total Number of Families **922**

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



AVERAGE MONTHLY ENROLLMENT

(as a percentage of funded enrollment)

Head Start - **84%** Early Head Start - **100%**



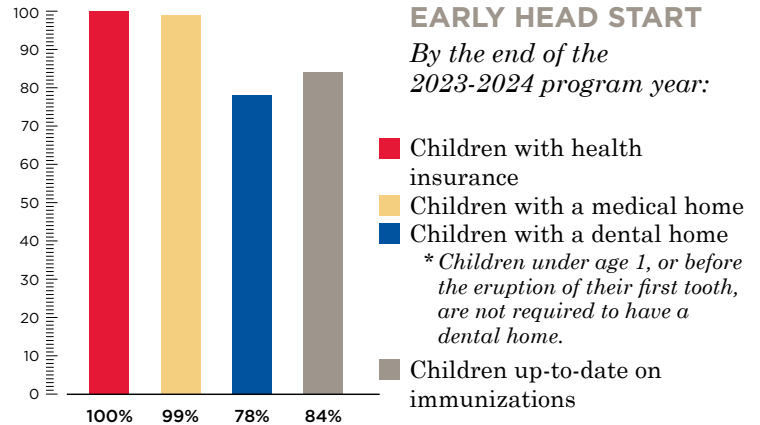
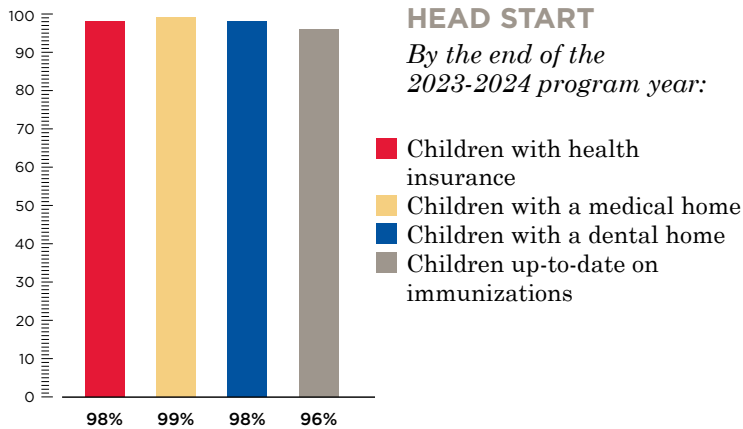
	22/23	23/24
Children experiencing homelessness	67	65
Foster children	27	25
Families receiving public assistance	549	707
Children with diagnosed disabilities	221	197
Single-parent families	613	517
Dual-language learners	450	417



*According to the most recent data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, 26% of children in Luzerne County and 15.9% of children in Wyoming County from birth to age 5 were living at or below 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL) in 2022. Statewide, 16% of children from birth to age 5 were living at or below 100% of the FPL. Data also shows that in 2023 to 2024, 35.4% of children ages 3 to 4 living at or below 300% of the FPL in Luzerne County had access to publicly funded, high-quality pre-k in PA, while 31.8% of this population in Wyoming County had access. Statewide, 46.1% of children ages 3 to 4 living at or below 300% of the FPL had access to high quality pre-k programs. High-quality pre-k programs include PA Pre-K Counts, Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program and Child Care Works enrollments in Keystone STARS 3 and 4, Head Start, and school district pre-k.



health & dental **OUTCOMES:**



FIGHTING TO END CHILDREN'S LEAD POISONING

Our health teams visited the Pennsylvania State Capitol to volunteer and support the Lead-Free Promise Project – a growing coalition dedicated to ending lead paint poisoning in the state. The event highlighted the need to prioritize lead poisoning education, prevention, assessment and testing. Our staff participated in a press conference, delivered information packets and met with state legislators to discuss our program and voice our support for change. We continued our efforts to test children for lead during the 2023-2024 school year.



HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START CHILDREN WHO RECEIVED LEAD SCREENINGS

680

APPROXIMATELY 69% OF 2023-2024 ENROLLMENT

*CHILDREN UNDER 9 MONTHS OLD ARE NOT REQUIRED TO BE SCREENED FOR LEAD.

SUPPORTING ORAL HEALTH AT HEAD START

We educate our children on the importance of good oral hygiene for overall health, which includes daily tooth brushing in the classroom. The Benco Family Foundation donated 3,100 toothbrushes this year to support our role in helping children develop healthy oral habits. Also, Geisinger visited all Head Start centers and performed a dental exam, cleaning and fluoride application on 305 children with parental consent. This was offered at no cost to our families.



PRIORITIZING STAFF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

By supporting the health and wellness of our staff, we strengthen our program. This year, we held the first ever LCHS Staff Fun Day at Misericordia University. After a benefits meeting with Geisinger and Creative Benefits, our staff participated in fun activities such as yoga and yard games. Several staff members volunteered to share their talents like chunky hand knitting and canvas painting by teaching a class. Mobile Om Massage offered 15-minute massages.



Leading the way to school readiness ... with healthy children and families.

screening, assessment & child **OUTCOMES:**

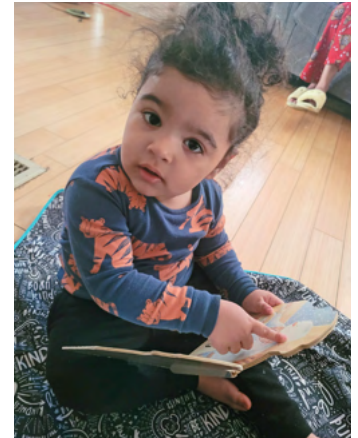
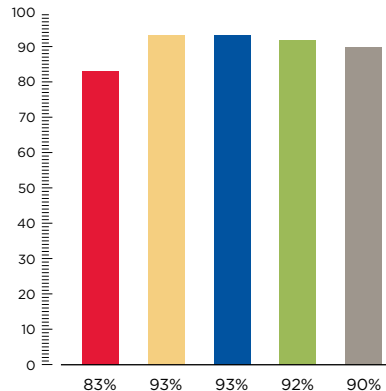
LCHS is committed to supporting children and families with school readiness, self-sufficiency, and success in life. Our program provides children with comprehensive health, nutrition, and other family support services, as well as a developmentally appropriate early childhood education.

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

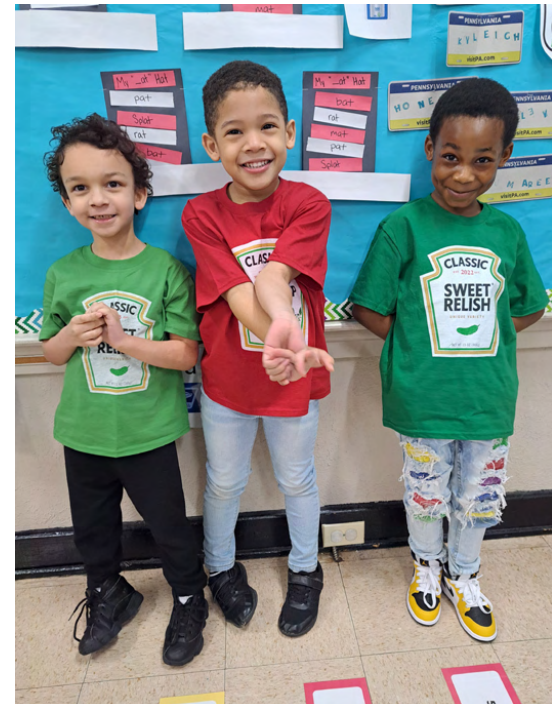
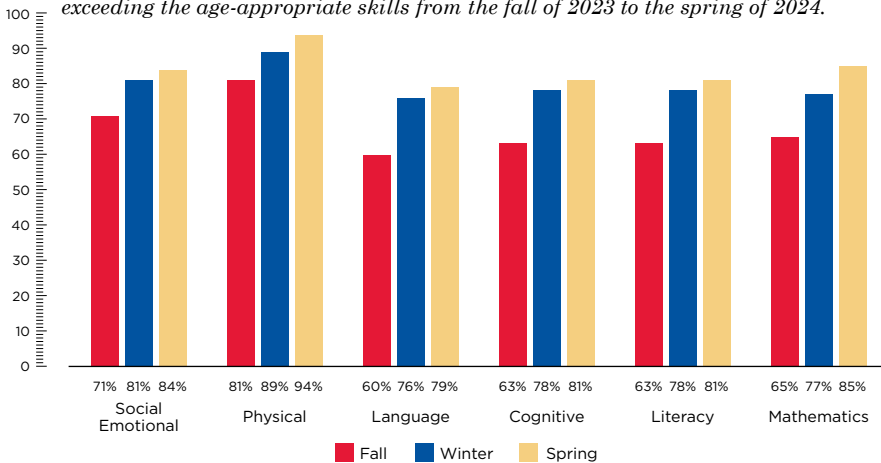
This graph represents the gains demonstrated by Early Head Start children who were assessed for at least two terms (six months) during the 2023-2024 program year.

- Language and Communication – 83%
- Approaches to Learning – 93%
- Perceptual, Motor and Physical Development – 93%
- Cognition – 92%
- Social and Emotional Development – 90%



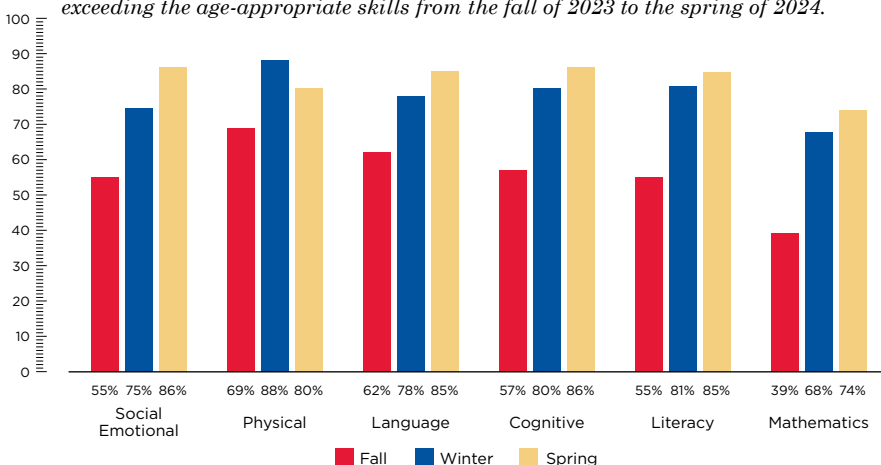
HEAD START/HSSAP CHILDREN 3-YEARS-OLD

This graph represents the percentage of Head Start children meeting or exceeding the age-appropriate skills from the fall of 2023 to the spring of 2024.



HEAD START/HSSAP CHILDREN 4-YEARS-OLD

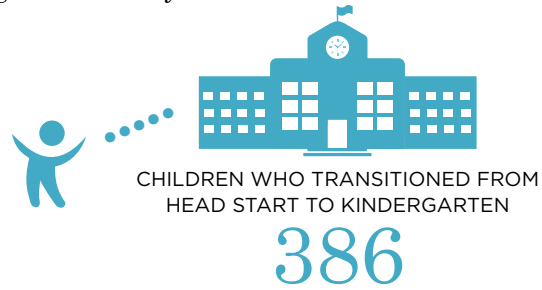
This graph represents the percentage of Head Start children meeting or exceeding the age-appropriate skills from the fall of 2023 to the spring of 2024.



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.

We have 12 Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with school districts in Luzerne and Wyoming counties. 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.



Children who aged out of Early Head Start 24

Children who transitioned from Early Head Start to Head Start 19

Children who transitioned from Early Head Start to another early childhood program 3

Children who did not enter another early childhood program 2

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

We maintain relationships with dozens of community partners while continuously seeking new ways to engage and collaborate with others who believe in the Head Start mission. Many of these partners serve on our advisory committees for further collaboration. Parents are also invited to participate in these committees.

The **Transition Advisory Committee**, which includes representation from school district administrators, guidance counselors, kindergarten teachers, early childhood education providers, and community members, ensures a successful transition in and out of the Head Start program.

The **Health Services Advisory Committee** assists in the planning, operation and evaluation of the health services program and seeks input on best practices or research-based health initiatives from staff, families and community partners.

The **Family Services Advisory Committee** brings together community members and agencies whose shared goal is to provide resources to support the families and children we mutually serve.



STUDENTS GET A 'JUMP START' WITH SUMMER LEARNING

We once again partnered with Navient to offer Jump Start, a summer learning program meant to give 3- and 4-year-old children a head start to their early childhood education experience. The 20 children who participated in Jump Start will attend Head Start in the fall. We are incredibly grateful for Navient's support of the program over the past 25 years. Unless we can identify a new sponsor, we expect 2024 to be the final year for Jump Start. Anyone interested in funding Jump Start may contact LCHS Executive Director Lynn Evans Biga at lynnb@hsweb.org or 570-829-6231 ext. 308.



Head Start **HIGHLIGHTS** 2023-2024:



LCHS HOLDS 59TH ANNIVERSARY LUNCHEON

We celebrated our longstanding commitment to children and families at this year's LCHS Anniversary Luncheon. Along with recognizing 40 individuals for milestone years of service, we awarded college scholarships to 16 former Head Start students and honored three community partners. Additionally, we gave special recognition to longtime supporter Thomas P. Leary, who retired as president of Luzerne County Community College this year. Geisinger was the event's Diamond sponsor.



SAVE THE DATE
for our 60th Anniversary Luncheon
Monday, May 19, 2025, at Mohegan Pennsylvania.



SIXTEEN STUDENTS RECEIVE HEAD START ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Now in its 38th year, the LCHS Alumni Scholarship Program – funded by businesses, organizations and individuals in the community – honors the achievements of former Head Start students set to graduate from high school and continue their education. We awarded \$22,000 in scholarships this year, bringing the total to \$355,450 since the program's inception.



ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HONORED WITH BOLD LEADERSHIP AWARD

LCHS Assistant Executive Director Beth White received the Bold Leadership Award at this year's luncheon. This award acknowledges and celebrates exemplary leadership that has a significant impact on the children, families, and staff at LCHS. It recognizes those who demonstrate initiative, serve as outstanding role models, and inspire others to work collaboratively and creatively, while serving as a champion for the children and families in our program.



Head Start **HIGHLIGHTS** 2022-2023:



HEAD START RECOGNIZES OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The Outstanding Community Partner Award acknowledges those who have made significant contributions to our agency. At this year's luncheon, we honored three partners: Lieutenant James Sheridan, Wilkes-Barre City Police Department; UGI Utilities, Inc. & UGI Energy Services; and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Wyoming Valley.



PHSA SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED TO LCHS ALUMS

Former LCHS students Bara'a Kamal (Wyoming Valley West) and Emily Jacien (Wyoming Area) earned awards from the Jeff Koppel Memorial Head Start Scholarship Fund in partnership with the Pennsylvania Head Start Association. Established in 2021 to honor Jeff's life and valuable contributions to the Head Start community, the scholarship recognizes Head Start graduates with outstanding academic and personal achievements, along with strong leadership and initiative.



parent, family & community **ENGAGEMENT:**

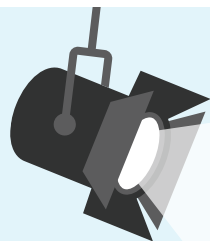


LCHS EMBRACES CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE

Conscious Discipline is an evidence-based, trauma-informed approach to social-emotional learning and behavioral management that emphasizes self-regulation and positive relationships between children and adults. Last year, we introduced Conscious Discipline to our classrooms and soon recognized that it needed to be implemented with all staff and families to create a culture of safety and connection. Staff use Conscious Discipline activities and techniques in the classroom and during home visits. This year, we also began offering Conscious Discipline information sessions to families so they can use these valuable tools at home.



parent, family & community **ENGAGEMENT:**



MILLION FATHERS MARCH A SUCCESS

We encourage the involvement of fathers and father figures in the classroom, home and community. Our centers participated in the Million Fathers March, a nationwide event in which fathers, father figures and male role models demonstrate their commitment to their children's education by escorting them to school. We saw a positive response from the fathers in our program, which set the stage for continued engagement throughout the school year.



LCHS POLICY COUNCIL

It's a core belief of LCHS that parents are a child's first and most important teacher. Parents have the opportunity to participate in Head Start and Early Head Start planning by joining the Policy Council, which acts as a link between our leadership and the families we serve. Members are elected each year and include parents of currently enrolled or past Head Start children and interested community members. These representatives are responsible for the direction of the Head Start program at the agency level. Those involved participate in meetings and provide feedback on our services.

2023-2024 Chairperson: Chelby Glenn

CONNECTIONS THROUGH PARENT COMMITTEES

As part of our family engagement efforts, families of Head Start and Early Head Start children have the opportunity to participate in their center's Parent Committee. Parent Committees meet monthly or bimonthly in conjunction with an educational session or family activity. This year, parents heard from guest speakers on topics such as safety and kindergarten readiness, did seasonal activities with their children, and more.



parent, family & community **ENGAGEMENT:**



AGENCY CELEBRATES FIRST-EVER SENSORY ROOM

As a response to the heightened social-emotional needs of our students – particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic – we collaborated with the Head Start Heroes team of Leadership Northeast Core Class of 2024 to open a sensory room at our Beekman Street Center in Wilkes-Barre. The safe, calming environment is meant to help children with self-regulation and relaxation so they can feel better prepared to learn and interact with others. Students can unwind in a compression “canoe” that feels like a hug, busy their hands and minds with a sensory toy, and more. During the 2023-2024 school year, two of our staff members participated in Leadership Northeast programs.



PARTNERING WITH UNITED WAY OF WYOMING VALLEY

We rely on funding from the United Way of Wyoming Valley to provide comprehensive child development and family support services to expecting parents, children from birth to age 3, and their families through our Early Head Start home visiting program. Our local United Way funds a caseload of 10 children in Wilkes-Barre EHS. United Way also fosters a love of reading in Head Start children by donating literacy kits and sending guest readers to our classrooms.



ADOPT-A-CLASSROOM AT LCHS

Through the Adopt-A-Classroom program, we connect sponsors to our preschool classrooms with the goal of promoting community engagement and strengthening the area’s youth by working together. Sponsoring businesses and community organizations can choose their level of involvement based on their interests and availability. Call 570-829-6231 ext. 356 or email brookew@hsweb.org for more information. This year, we welcomed Pennsylvania State Police Troop P, Wilkes-Barre, to Beekman Street Classroom #16.



Head Start Work is **HEART WORK:**



BUILDING STRONGER FAMILIES: MARION'S SUCCESS STORY

Luzerne County Head Start's comprehensive services focus on not only the whole child, but the whole family. In order to prepare students for success, we must also provide resources to strengthen their families.

We met Marion in 2016 when she enrolled in Wilkes-Barre Early Head Start. Her sons, Melvin, Jayden and Marlon, all came through our EHS and Head Start programs. Marlon has one year left in preschool.

Marion recalled struggling as a new mother. While taking care of her children and others in her life, she was putting her own needs on the backburner. During a home visit, Family Educator Angela Dube offered advice that Marion remembers to this day:

"Marion, you need to start taking better care of yourself."

"If it wasn't for Miss Angela to take time out of her day to find me resources that would help me, I think I would still be going through it," Marion said.

Marion also credits her next Family Educator Hazel Alba with supporting her journey. She's been able to work on her mental health, set boundaries and ensure a positive environment for herself and her family. There are still challenging times, especially having three children with special needs, but Marion now feels equipped to handle anything life throws at her.

"I'm getting everything that my children need, like the right programs to better their futures," she said. "I have a very bright future ahead of me thanks to those who have helped me through my hard times."

Angela, who is now the eligibility and enrollment specialist at LCHS, said Marion and her family exemplify the true purpose and possibility of our programs.

"Marion faced many adversities growing up and in raising her family, but always wanted to learn and grow to be the best she could for them. Through guidance and support, Marion has been able to make sure her children receive great education and all of the support systems needed to make that happen," Angela said. "She has become a great advocate for her boys, always making sure they have everything they need to succeed in school and life. Marion makes us proud, and it is so wonderful and rewarding to see her grow and have a happy, healthy life with her family."

(Shared with family's permission.)



FULL CIRCLE: FROM HEAD START STUDENT TO TEACHER

Dana Weidman experienced what she calls the "full circle of life of Head Start."

Her Head Start journey began in 1999 as a preschool student at our Beekman Street Center. Dana credits the program with setting a foundation for her future success, from academics to socializing with peers. Her teacher even inspired her future career path.

After preschool, Dana successfully transitioned to kindergarten. However, her Head Start story didn't end there. Later, she decided to give back to LCHS as a volunteer. This included being in the classroom with her mother, Aimee Schneider, a teacher with 25 years of service to LCHS.

As a senior at Coughlin High School, Dana earned an LCHS Alumni Scholarship for her first year at Wilkes University. She originally pursued nursing, but it just didn't feel right. Knowing her heart was in early childhood and elementary education, Dana switched majors and graduated.

After college, she heard of a job opportunity at LCHS where it all began. Our Mehoopany Center needed a teacher, and Dana had no doubt that she would be the perfect fit.

"It's actually really emotional for me because that's where my roots started," she said.

Knowing firsthand the importance of giving children a head start, Dana appreciates being a part of the mission for future generations. She wants students to think of school as a safe place to learn and have fun.

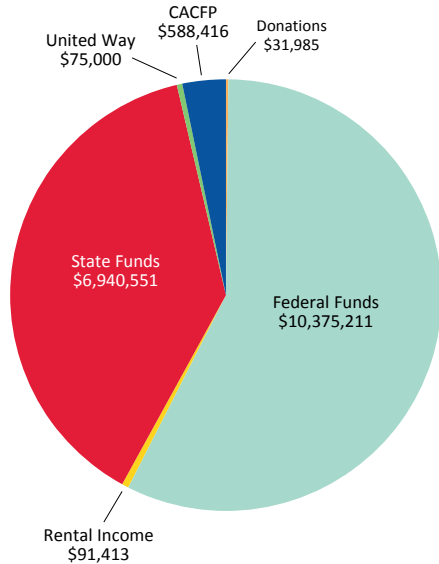
"The best part about being a Head Start teacher is to see the growth from Day 1 to Day 180," she said.



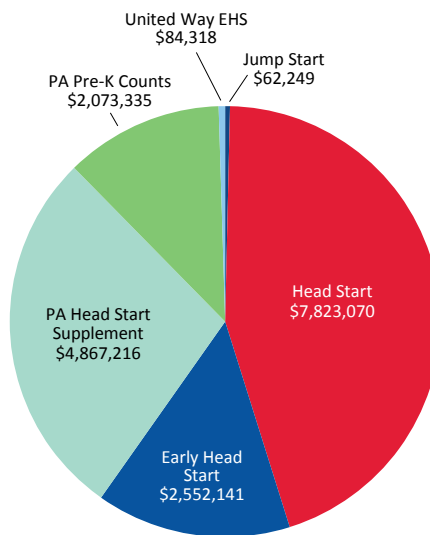
budget & FINANCIALS:

Results of the 2023 financial audit of Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. reported no findings or material weaknesses.

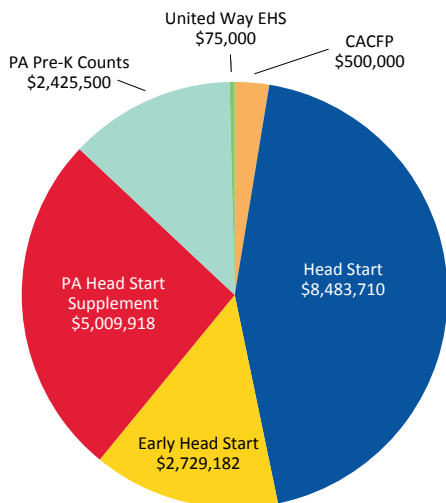
2023 FUNDING SOURCES



2023 EXPENSES BY PROGRAM



2024 PROJECTED BUDGET BY PROGRAM



ACCOUNTABILITY

Luzerne County Head Start, Inc.'s most recent monitoring report dated May 17, 2024, determined our program was in full compliance with all federal regulations.



ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- 2023 administrative costs were \$1,393,934, or 13.42% of total expenses.
- LCHS has a minimum cost sharing of 20% of our federal funds awarded. That share was \$2,191,693 in 2023.
- 2023 transportation costs were \$633,265 for transporting 230 children.



LCHS LEADERSHIP:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Stacey Kile, *Geisinger Health Plan*
Vice President: Andrea L. Caladie, CPA, *Baker Tilly*
Treasurer: Angela Mariotti, *PNC Financial Services*
Secretary: Phyllis Mundy, *Former State Representative*

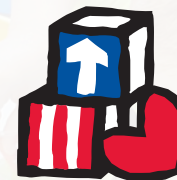
Ahmad Ali – *Greater Wyoming Valley Chamber of Commerce*
Lori Cooper – *Wilkes University*
Cynthia Feng, MD, MPA – *Medical Affairs, Neurogene Inc.*
Phil Gelso, Esquire – *Law Offices of Philip Gelso*
Carl Goeringer Jr. – *Century 21 Smith Hourigan Group*
Frances G. Langan – *Keystone College*
Chris Langley – *Allied Services*
Mainet Mejia-Arroyo – *Community Representative*
Teri Ooms – *The Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development*
George Rable – *Benco Dental*
Jennifer Schweizer-Cebrick – *Little Tykes Learning Center*
Mike Tomalis – *Fran Tomalis & Son, Inc.*

EXECUTIVE STAFF

Lynn Evans Biga, *Executive Director*
Beth White, *Assistant Executive Director*
Maureen Zabolski, *Director of Finance*
Kelly Chamberlain, *Director of Education*
Dawn Smith, *Director of Operations*
Brittany Shoemaker, *Early Head Start Director*
Sharon Dougherty, *Director of Family Strengthening/
Community Engagement*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

We would like to acknowledge our outgoing board members for their years of service: Lisa Stashik, Dan Landesberg and Lars Anderson. Thank you for your dedication to the children and families of LCHS.



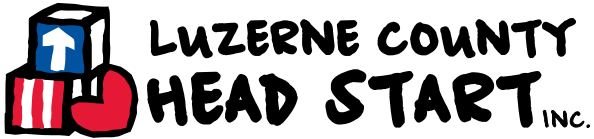
LCHS WELCOMES NEW PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS TO GOVERNING BOARD



The LCHS Board of Directors seated a new executive committee in January, with Stacey Kile as president. Stacey is the sales operations manager at Geisinger Health Plan and a member of the board since 2016. We would like to thank George Rable for his leadership as president and appreciate his continued service to the board.

Also in January, Lori Cooper and Jennifer Schweizer-Cebrick joined the board. Cooper is an associate professor of doctoral education at Wilkes University and a former early childhood education specialist at LCHS. Schweizer-Cebrick is the owner and director of Little Tykes Learning Center and formerly served as chairperson of the LCHS Policy Council.





LUZERNE COUNTY HEAD START, INC.

23 Beekman Street | Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702

2023-2024

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



This report is made available to the public through a mail/email campaign and our website/social media.



Subscribe to LCHS emails

570-829-6231 • 800-551-5829

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