

A Special Supplement to | 2020
TIMES LEADER



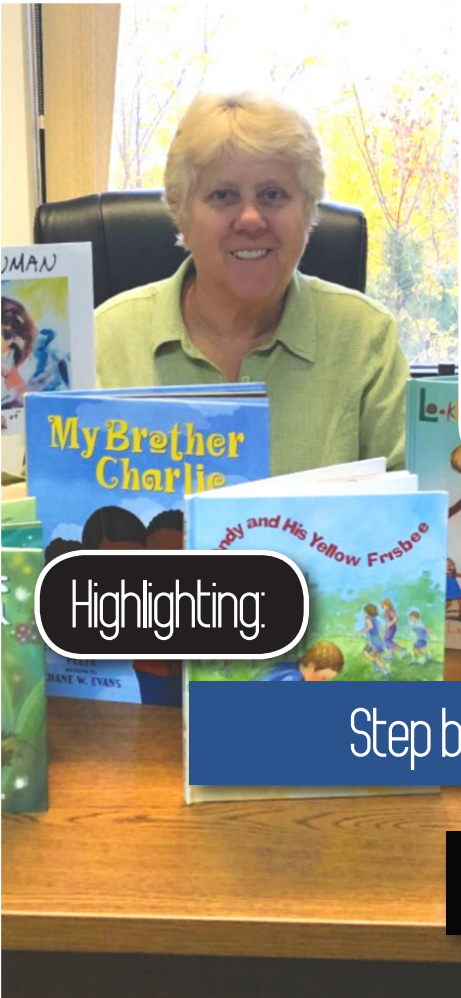
We're a

Valley Heart

with a

LEARN • SUPPORT • ENGAGE

with local nonprofit organizations



Step by Step

Wyoming Valley CYC

Care & Concern Ministry

North Branch Land Trust

Thanks for Giving

Charles M. Barber
President and CEO of The Luzerne Foundation

This month, I'd like to share with you a different type of story than the kind I typically submit in the newspaper. If you've read any of these columns in the past, then it's no surprise to you how I and everyone at The Luzerne Foundation firmly assert that anyone can be a philanthropist. This simple truth could not be any more evident than in my own unexpected journey to fulfill my present role with The Luzerne Foundation, which connects everyday donors with causes that hold meaning for them.

Growing up as the youngest of six children, I observed my father take on a second job as the longtime mayor of our small village north of Pittsburgh. His work and volunteerism engaged him in all facets of community life, whether it be on a local, statewide, or even national level. He'd frequently depart for civic engagements, only to return home and promptly be summoned to his next neighborhood event. My mother also embraced community work by volunteering for the local library, hospital, art groups, and other organizations. As the youngest, I'd frequently tag along with them (admittedly, sometimes unenthusiastically) and yet was often struck by the dedication of adults who went the extra mile to make our hometown a better and stronger place.

These events made a lasting impression on me. As I grew up, my parents expected me to work. Even as a middle schooler, I swept floors at a barber shop and stocked shelves at a grocery. However, I also felt it was important to give back

where I could. I thought of the example my parents set for me, although I hardly imagined my path would take me in the same direction as theirs. I came to understand that my strengths lay more in math and science, so I began to move towards those areas of interest as I headed towards college.

The truth is, my formal education didn't start in philanthropy at all. I earned my undergraduate degree in physics, which you might consider as fundamentally disparate from philanthropy as you can get. I quickly came to recognize the common denominator between the theoretical aspects of my education (which focused heavily on math and rational problem solving), and the very real practical applications for addressing social problems, particularly in the case of finance and nonprofit funding.

After college, I went to work for a mutual fund and financial services group that facilitated socially responsible investing. There, I learned first-hand how donors could find ways to invest in a manner consistent with their personal ethics and beliefs without jeopardizing the return on investment that their dollars could produce. That early experience laid the groundwork for a decades-long commitment to leveraging math, science, and finance to create practical solutions for nonprofit management, funding, and long-term sustainability.

Even though my arrival at philanthropy may seem a bit unrelated at first glance, somehow, the puzzle pieces just seemed to fit together



perfectly in my mind. My background might appear to have been light-years away from charitable giving, but not when you stop to think about how the various disciplines can coalesce and complement one another. And that causes me to believe that if I could find an unforeseen path to philanthropy, how might others in our community might also tap their own diverse skills to make our region stronger?

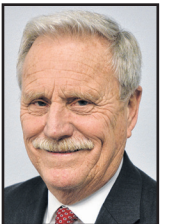
If you're curious about how you can make a difference with your skills, time, or charitable giving, get in touch with the charity of your choice, or e-mail me at info@luzfdn.org, or call (570) 822-2065, or visit www.luzfdn.org. The Luzerne Foundation is here to help you discover how you can make a lasting impact on your community. Believe it or not, you too, can be a philanthropist. Find out how. All of us can be...

Here for good.

A Note from our Publisher

Mike Murray
Publisher, Times Leader
Media Group

As the new Year begins, so does the retrospective look at life behind us and more important, the hopes and dreams for the year to come. We make resolutions, those we wish to publicize and those we prefer to keep to ourselves.



While each of us takes the time to think about the new year, let's change the focus and think more about those whose dreams and hopes may be nothing more than that. Think of all those so much less fortunate who can only take one day at a time. That's where our nonprofit organizations in the Valley are so vital. Large or small, each provides the area with services that are so often, by so many taken for granted.

Support for these important organizations comes directly from all of us. It's up to us to provide what we can, when we can. It doesn't matter what the level of donation is. It can be monetary. It can be volunteering. Everything we do to support these operations means more opportunity to help someone. That someone deserves the same opportunities we have to dream and to hope.

Please read today's Valley with a Heart section. See what some of our nonprofits are doing. And a heartfelt thank you for any support you can lend.

Nonprofit Spotlight — Step by Step



Since its founding in 1977, Step By Step Inc. has endeavored to improve the lives of children and adults with mental illnesses, intellectual disabilities, and autism spectrum disorders throughout Pennsylvania. Formed by a collective of volunteers from the area with the intent of planning a support system for individuals leaving state hospitals, the agency has developed over

the past 42 years to further accommodate its community.

President and CEO of Step By Step, Jim Bobeck, has been part of the organization since nearly its very beginning, having served as its Director of Administrative Services starting in 1978. He later on became the agency's president and CEO in 1986. "Our success has everything to do with the commitment and dedication of our staff. Many have been with the agency up to 40 years," Bobeck said. He continued, "Today, we continue to grow and now provide services in 15 counties and employ over 1,300 staff." Indeed, throughout the northeast, southeast, and Lehigh Valley regions of PA, Step By Step serves over 2,000 clients.

Step By Step offers a wide array of services for both children and adults. For those ages 18 and older, the agency provides residential and vocational services, as well as supervised home settings and supported employment opportunities. This includes job coaching and pre-employment transition services. The agency's residential services comprise of providing community homes, in-home support, and respite services for both caretakers and clients. Step By Step also provides and continues to develop its services for children and adolescents ages 2 to 21, including behavioral health diagnoses in home, school, and community settings. These diagnoses are performed by a licensed psychologist who prescribes hours of intervention based on medical necessity criteria.

Recently, Step By Step received a grant of \$20,000 from Moses Taylor Foundation. Through the grant, Step By Step was able to outfit its Lackawanna and Susquehanna county community homes with 14 staff computers, with the goal of being able to provide even more efficient and quality care to its clients. Step By Step is also a recent recipient of a Times Leader "Best Place to Work in NEPA" award, an accolade they've held for three consecutive years.

Step By Step also participates in various community events throughout the year, including awareness walks for mental health, autism, and suicide prevention. The agency also hosts an annual golf tournament, with this year's slated for August 31st. For those interested in employment opportunities with Step By Step, contact the agency's northeast regional recruiter Sue Kauffman at (570) 829-3477 x7998. Positions range from entry level to Master's level. You can also apply and/or donate at their website, stepbystepusa.com, and stay up-to-date on Step By Step happenings by visiting their Facebook page, @StepByStepUSA.



Jim Bobeck

Executive Director

More Info:

- 570-829-3477
- stepbystepusa.com

Step by Step Photos



Nonprofit Spotlight — Care & Concern Ministry



The Care & Concern Ministry of the St. John the Evangelist Parish Community is a collective of volunteer-based non-profit programs, united by the common goal of improving the lives of the Pittston community and surrounding areas. The Ministry consists of various different divisions, the most senior of which is the Free Health Clinic, founded in November of 2007. Since then, the Ministry has grown to incorporate several more programs, including the Greater Pittston Food Pantry in 2008, the Kids Clothes Closet in 2009, a free pediatric clinic in 2010, and the Toy and Book Corner in 2014.

One of the Ministry's key figures is Gloria Blandina, who has served as Director of the Free Health Clinic for the past 11-and-a-half years. Blandina spoke fondly of the clinic's origins: "[The clinic] was the brainchild of Ann Cocco; she worked at the PA Welfare office and she understood the struggles that people in the area were facing, and she wanted to start a free health clinic." After reaching out to several people who she had previously served on committees with, Cocco garnered the support needed to make her dream a reality. Now, and for nearly 13 years, the clinic's doors are open to people with little or no health insurance. "It really has been a privilege for everyone here. It's a wonderful way to give back to the community," Blandina said. "The group of people we have here, it's like we were all born with the same qualities," she continued. "Everyone here has the same outlook on things. You can ask each person, 'Why?' and they have the same answer: 'Because I want to help people.'" The clinic is located at 37 William Street in Pittston, and is open the first three Wednesdays of each month, with registration starting at 5:00 p.m. "We're happy to help anyone who needs it," Blandina said.

In addition to the health clinic are the Ministry's other programs like the Greater Pittston Food Pantry, a member of the national "Feeding America" network. The pantry offers food to qualifying low-income families who reside in the Greater Pittston area. Another program, the Kids Clothes Closet, provides free new and lightly-used clothing for children ranging from newborn to 16, as well as winter coats for adults. The pediatric clinic offers basic healthcare for children aged newborn to 13. The newest agency, the Toy and Book Corner, operates on Wednesday mornings 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., at which children can take books and toys once every few weeks.



Gloria Blandina

Director of the Free Health Clinic

More Info:

- 570-655-6550
- stjohnspittston.com

Each Care & Concern agency is happy to accept donations; contact information for each individual agency can be found by visiting the Care & Concern Ministry page at stjohnspittston.com.

Care & Concern Ministry Photos



Nonprofit Spotlight — Wyoming Valley CYC



**Wyoming Valley
Catholic Youth Center**

For the Young & Young at Heart

For over 70 years, the Wyoming Valley Catholic Youth Center has served the youth population of Wilkes-Barre and adapted to the needs of the community. Founded in 1948 by the Diocese of

Scranton and located at 36 South Washington Street in Wilkes-Barre, the recreation center and child-care facility aims to help shape “the personalities, skills and future goals of thousands of young men and women,” as per its mission statement.

Several generations of Wilkes-Barre residents have fond memories of the CYC from their time growing up in the area, and the same can be said for many of the agency’s staff members, including Mark Soprano, Executive Director. Soprano, who served as assistant director for 26 years before becoming the CYC’s Executive Director in 2011, has had ties to the agency for most of his life, recalling his time refereeing basketball games as a high-schooler. “Originally, there were four or five Catholic youth centers in the diocese,” Soprano said. “And we’re the only one left standing.”

The CYC’s longevity can likely be credited to the variety of services and programs it provides to the youth of Wilkes-Barre. The CYC offers basketball, swimming, and summer camp programs, as well as transport to and from school throughout the Wilkes-Barre, Hanover, and Wyoming Valley West school districts. However, the largest and perhaps most well-known CYC function is the agency’s 24 hour child-care services. Over the last few years, the CYC has become an increasingly popular option for childcare thanks to both its quality and affordability; due to demand, the agency recently transformed a previously vacant space into the entirely renovated Annex Child Care Center. The childcare services at CYC have served as a much-needed helping hand for hundreds of parents in the community, many of whom have to turn to daycare options due to their work hours. “No child is ever turned away from programming due to inability to pay for services,” Soprano said. “We always find a way to make it work.” Currently, over 300 children are registered in the CYC’s childcare program.

Given the size and scope of the CYC’s mission, these operations are not exactly inexpensive to maintain. Because of this, the agency holds an annual March Madness-themed fundraising event each spring (the largest fundraising event held by the CYC each year). This year, the event is scheduled for April 4th at the Westmoreland Club, where sponsors and supporters gather to socialize and watch the NCAA Final Four together on several televisions throughout the club. “Any support received goes to help low-income children in your own community,” Soprano said.

To learn more about the CYC’s programs and stay up-to-date, visit their website at wyomingvalleycyc.org and their Facebook page, Wyoming Valley Catholic Youth Center.



Mark Soprano

Executive Director

More Info:

- 570-823-6121
- wyomingvalleycyc.org

Wyoming Valley CYC Photos



Nonprofit Spotlight — North Branch Land Trust



**North Branch
Land Trust**

North Branch Land Trust (NBLT) is an accredited, non-profit land conservation organization focused on permanently protecting natural lands in northeast Pennsylvania. The group’s beginnings date back to 1993, when it was founded as the Back Mountain Regional Land Trust by a group of concerned Back Mountain citizens in response to the rapid development they had observed in the area.

The organization changed its name in 2000 to more accurately reflect the areas it seeks to conserve; since its foundation, NBLT has conserved more than 21,000 acres of land throughout eight counties in northeast PA.

After she started volunteering with NBLT in 2008, Barb Romanansky later became the organization’s Director of Development. “From the time I was five years old, my family spent our summers on a pristine 700-acre property bordering the Susquehanna River in Vosburg,” Romanansky said. She continued, “I grew up loving that land and the river and developed a deep connection with nature.” Romanansky’s passion lies in getting other people to feel that same sense of connection, love, and respect for nature.

NBLT accomplishes its mission in a few ways. This is primarily done through educating the public about maintaining a sensible and healthy balance between land conservation and development. In addition, NBLT works with state agencies, private landowners, and other non-profit organizations to target and conserve select areas. Through the negotiation of conservation easements, NBLT is able to protect scenic and natural areas from further development. These efforts not only help preserve plant and animal species, but they often open up passive recreation opportunities for the surrounding population, as well as improve the area’s water and air quality.

NBLT relies heavily on donations from both individuals and businesses; the Trust’s only fundraiser of the year, the NBLT Annual Dinner & Auctions, falls on May 6th in 2020 from 5:30 to 9:00 p.m. at the Westmoreland Club. The event features a silent auction, cocktail hour, and dinner; all funds raised through the event go directly toward conservation projects and public outreach activities. Tickets are \$125 and are also available by contacting the NBLT office at (570) 310-1781. With regards to upcoming events, Romanansky added, “There are also many hikes, workshops, and a special kayak trip coming up in 2020.”

Romanansky quoted famous anthropologist Jane Goodall to summarize the motivation behind NBLT: “Conservation has to become an absolute priority, because if we lose nature that’s the end of us. We can’t live without it.” Romanansky added, “We need land for good health! We need the natural land for vibrant communities!” You can learn more about NBLT, and find out information regarding upcoming events, volunteering opportunities, and how to donate by visiting their website at nblt.org.



Paul Lumia

Executive Director

More Info:

- 570-310-1781
- nblt.org

North Branch Land Trust Photos





Step By Step, Inc.

Join our #1 Caring Team!

NOW HIRING!



All positions available. No previous background/training required. Master's level positions also available.

ABOUT STEP BY STEP:

Step By Step, Inc., is a non-profit devoted to the providing support services to individuals with intellectual disabilities, behavioral health difficulties, autism spectrum disorders and physical disabilities.

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or visit stepbystepusa.com/careers/

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Your Hour, Her Power

Friday, March 6, 2020

International Women's Day Luncheon at the Westmoreland Club from 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

Featuring Guest Speaker

Gisele Barreto Fetterman

Access and equity advocate,
Founder of Freestore 15104, and
Co-Founder of 412 Food Rescue and For Good PGH



7TH ANNUAL
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TIMES LEADER** 2020



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