As Easton students head back to the classroom for a new school year, effects from the historic 2020 COVID-19 pandemic still linger in classrooms. After a trying last few school years and switching between virtual, hybrid, in-person with masks, and in-person without masks, the 2022-2023 school year is starting out as what may look “normal.”

Students across the country have been deeply affected by COVID-19 in many aspects of their lives, including in school and at home. Though students proved to be resilient, the inconsistency of learning formats and disrupted scheduling was not without a cost.

A recent analysis explains the impact on K-12 school-age learners, leaving students an average of five months behind in mathematics and four months behind in reading by the end of the 2021-2022 school year. The pandemic had a monumental impact on the learning of all students, but proved inequitable to those who were already behind due to preexisting inequalities. Inequalities such as housing insecurity, lack of technology and broadband access, lack of reliable childcare, and health concerns all played a role in the “unfinished learning.”

The long-term effects of these learning gaps could include a loss of income for students later in life. Without proper intervention, pandemic-related “unfinished learning” could reduce lifetime earnings for K-12 students by an average of $49,000 to $61,000.

In addition to academics, COVID-19 took an immense toll on students' mental health. Nearly 80 percent of parents had some level of concern about their child's mental health or social and emotional health and development since the pandemic began. Research has shown that social and emotional health has a lasting impact on academic achievement and the need to support our young learners social-emotional learning (SEL) is more important, post-COVID, than ever before.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Autumn, for some, represents the end of a carefree summer and maybe apprehension as the beauty of trees in bloom, vibrant flowers, warm temperatures and blue skies recede into the gloom of winter.

Yet, autumn is more than a transition into the colder winter months. It is a season of readiness and preparation, prosperity and ambition.

Although ProJeCt in service all year round, autumn represents the beginning of a new school year at our Fowler Literacy Center and Easton Area School District programs. As we welcome students back after a short two-week break, we hope that they too feel the promise autumn has to offer of envisioning goals, learning new skills, and investment of self.

STUDENT HIGHLIGHT: ADULT & FAMILY LITERACY

Since moving to the United States almost 4 years ago, Irina Sofikitis knew she would have to make significant changes to adapt to her new home. Sofikitis, originally from Russia, lived in Greece for the last 15 years working as a wedding planner and music teacher before settling in Easton at the start of 2020.

“At that time, I didn’t speak English”, Sofikitis admitted. She started researching English classes on the internet and that’s when she found ProJeCt of Easton. After making an appointment to visit the Fowler Literacy Center and meeting welcoming staff on the tour, she tested into Introduction to English course. Sofikitis enrolled into ProJeCt’s Adult and Family Literacy programs where, under the free program, she could have access to foods with low nutritional value often impacts school-age children and adolescents. Contributing factors often involve resource scarcity, little or no transportation to grocery stores, limited dietary knowledge, and affordability (Health.gov).

In our mission to combat food insecurity and increase food knowledge by providing high quality, nutrient dense food to adults and children, ProJeCt’s Food Pantry partnered with local community farms. Through their multi-week initiatives, St. Luke’s Rodale Institute Organic Farm and the Monocacy Farm Project provided residents within Northampton County access to fresh, organic produce. During this summer’s growing season, the farms combined have delivered nearly 5,000 pounds of produce to ProJeCt, contributing to feeding the 5,000 clients we serve annually. In a step to further strengthen the connection between ProJeCt of Easton and the health of the community served, SUCFHN is offering free on-site health screenings and diabetics glucose monitoring at the ProJeCt Food Pantry. On-site services are available the first week of each month during normal distribution hours with no appointment necessary.

Volunteer at ProJeCt

FOOD PANTRY

Days & Times: Mondays: 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM; Thursdays: 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM, 12:30 PM - 3:30 PM

Positions Available:
- Reception/Administrative Support
- Food Pantry Shopping Assistants
- Food Pantry Distribution Runners
- Shelf Stockers

Visit our website for more information and to fill out an application, projecteaston.org or call 610-258-4361 ext. 18.

FOWLER LITERACY CENTER

Days & Times: Monday - Thursday: 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM and Monday - Wednesday: 6:00 PM - 8:15 PM

Shifts vary based on classroom schedules.
- Adult Education Tutors
- Adult Education Classroom Assistants
- Mentorship Program

Volunteer at ProJeCt

The donation of your time, talents, and energy helps us reach more than 5,000 greater Lehigh Valley residents each year. Become a volunteer today!

THE IMPORTANCE OF FRESH PRODUCE IN DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

The access to healthy, nutritional foods is often viewed as a fundamental right to many Americans, however, this is not always true for low-income communities. Studies have shown a connection between food insecurity and obesity as well as other health-related conditions specifically in low-income neighborhoods. Access to foods with low nutritional value often impacts school-age children and adolescents. Contributing factors often involve resource scarcity, little or no transportation to grocery stores, limited dietary knowledge, and affordability (Health.gov).

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WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT

ProJeCt of Easton works diligently to secure funding from individuals, corporations, foundations and government to support the programs we offer each year.

Each dollar we raise directly impacts the clients we serve and changes lives. Each individual and family that enters our programs is offered not only assistance in meeting basic needs but also given the opportunity to make life changes through education to become self-sufficient. We work to end poverty but we need your help!

There are several ways you can join ProJeCt in helping people help themselves.
- Direct donations through our appeals
- On-line giving through our website
- Sponsorship of our events
- Participating in the Pennsylvania Earned Income Tax Credit program (https://dced.pa.gov/programs/educational-improvement-tax-credit-program/)
- Company matching programs
- Donations from IRAs and gifts of RMDs
- Gifts of stock
- Planned gifts
- Insurance gifts

Contact the Development Office at 610-258-4361 or email development@projecteaston.org for information.
ProJeCt of Easton's Simply Savory fundraising event will be back in-person for 2023! The event, boasting an array of delicious foods and beverages prepared and donated by local restaurants, caterers, breweries and wineries, helps to provide essential services to thousands of local families who benefit from the many free of charge programs ProJeCt offers. More information, including the event date, will be announced later this year. If you’re interested in sponsoring or sharing your culinary talents at Simply Savory, please email development@projecteaston.org or call 610-258-4361 ext. 25.