

ProJeCt

Helping People Help Themselves

SUCCESS IN THE CLASSROOM AFTER THE PANDEMIC

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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MAKING GRADUATION HISTORY



ProJeCt's commencement ceremony is a highlight celebration each year, showcasing empowered, inspiring individuals who've accomplished an achievement despite challenging obstacles. The class of 2022 included graduates and awarded certificates in GED®, U.S. Citizenship, English as A Second Language (ESL), and Early Childhood Education. Though each graduation is special,

among the 45 graduates stands Vivian Fahr, an 88-year-old GED® graduate. Her story not only made local news outlets as the oldest person to obtain a GED® from ProJeCt, but also became an inspiring one to her peers at our Fowler Literacy Center. Fahr married her late husband after dropping out of the 10th grade at Easton Area High School. Though she did not regret putting her family first, she did regret not finishing school and receiving her diploma. Fahr enrolled and finished the high school equivalency program in less than one year. During her time in the classroom, Fahr quickly became someone younger adult learners looked up to and proof that "you can do anything you set your mind to."





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 is in service all year round, autumn represents the beginning of a new school year at in 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.

ProJeCt of Easton continues to provide long-term support in the drive for self-sufficiency through evidence-based proven curricula and the promise of measurable results. We're confident that our students and clients will find new opportunities and increasing prosperity as they build new skills and ProJeCt is ready to celebrate each milestone along the way.

So yes, autumn may be the bittersweet ending to summer, but it is also an exciting new beginning for opportunity.

Thank you for letting ProJeCt offer a new season to the people we serve and our community!

Janice D. Komisor, CEO

STUDENT HIGHLIGHT: ADULT & FAMILY LITERACY



Since moving to the United States almost 4-years ago, Irina Sofikitis knew that 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 her son also attend preschool while she attended class.

Unfortunately, it wasn't long after enrolling that the COVID-19 pandemic started and normalcy was turned upside down for not only Sofikitis, but the entire community. ProJeCt, committed to its mission, moved its classes immediately to online so students could continue their studies.

"The teachers were very supportive", Sofikitis stated. "ProJeCt also helped us with food and other supplies during the time we were only online. Sometimes Jenny [ProJeCt's Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator] delivered groceries for the children. Those days were very difficult for us, but thanks to our teachers, we went through all the difficulties together."

A year later, in-person classes restarted and Sofikitis passed her Introduction to English course moving onto Intermediate and Advanced English as A Second Language courses. "I am learning a lot of information about the structure of the U.S. government, read and analyze American literature, learn words

with Greek roots, and English grammar. We talk a lot about the diversity of cultures of different countries and national American culture."

Since enrolling in ProJeCt's Adult and Family Literacy programs, Sofikitis' son now speaks English fluently, she passed the CASAS academic skills test, and will graduate from ESL and move on to take GED® courses. Sofikitis plans on attending college in the near future to become a music teacher.

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In ProJeCt's decades long commitment to helping people to help themselves and bettering our community, ProJeCt has programs in place to support young learners and their families as we work in partnership with the Easton Area School District. Our Student Success Program (SSP) uses the highly-researched Botvin Life Skills Training curriculum, which builds positive school culture while advancing the essential social-emotional skills of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making in individual students. And our SIZZLE!® summer reading program helps to close the reading achievement gap in at-risk children, allowing them to avoid a summer slide that puts them at further risk of school failure. Both of these programs have measurable effects and increase the likelihood of positive school engagement and graduation.

The need is great and growing. During the 2022-2023 school year, students will undoubtedly need dedicated teachers, school staff, and the community to work together to support a successful year and a successful future. ProJeCt is a committed partner!

Source: Dorn, Emma, et al. "Covid-19 and Education: The Lingering Effects of Unfinished Learning." McKinsey & Company, McKinsey & Company, 1 Aug. 2022. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning>.

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).



In our mission to combat food insecurity and increase food knowledge by providing high quality, nutrient dense food to adults, children, and seniors, 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, SLUHN is offering free on-site health screenings and diabetic 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.



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-eitc/>)
- 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.

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!*

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



Helping People Help Themselves

ProJeCt of Easton
320 Ferry Street
Easton, PA 18042

Simply Savory

IT'S BACK!!!
SIMPLY SAVORY SPRING 2023 -
DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED

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.

