

ProJeCt

Helping People Help Themselves

MEETING CRITICAL NEEDS

2020 and 2021 were unlike any years in recent history for most Americans. Never before did we have to don a mask to grocery shop or bump elbows with neighbors and friends rather than shake hands or give hugs. The COVID19 pandemic changed our world forever and placed obstacles in front of even the most stable of households. For ProJeCt of Easton, the year certainly had its fill of challenges, but like every year, the agency stuck to its mission of helping people to help themselves. We continued to provide services and programs to our clients with adapted delivery methods to ensure safety. Virtual learning became the norm for our students, both adults and children. Our instructors



learned to teach via Zoom and livestream. Our administrative team worked remotely and met via the computer to keep the organization running for those who needed ProJeCt at this critical time.

We partnered with many agencies to meet our clients' needs. Funding sources opened to allow us to expand our Emergency Assistance programs and we accessed over \$1 million in emergency rental assistance to individuals and families to prevent homelessness. Those funds kept landlords, most of whom represent small businesses, paid and families with roofs over their heads during the pandemic. Our Food Pantry adapted from a choice pantry to pre-bagged food delivered via a conveyor belt. The generosity of the community was overwhelming in assisting us to meet the needs of our neighbors as the fear of growing numbers of those with food insufficiencies increased. We served 3,103 households nutritious food to keep them and their families stable.

Considering the added challenges many families were facing at home, including employment and children's educational needs, academic schedules for some were



altered or paused. We have almost returned to pre-pandemic numbers in our classrooms and programs, showing the resiliency of our staff and clients.

Each of our donors and volunteers played roles in helping to keep our programs operational throughout this difficult time. During the pandemic, we had 69 volunteers remain active for a total of 2,572 hours, equating to a value of \$65,101. We received countless donations of food and monetary gifts for our pantry throughout this time to assist in combating food insufficiency. Our pantry received 106,928 pounds of food valued at \$181,778 and delivered 190,728 pounds of food valued at \$324,428 to aid in feeding those in need. We were able to supply our clients with PPE items in order to keep themselves and their families safe thanks to the generosity of the community and federal, state and county assistance programs.

Challenges were ever present but together we answered the call. Adaptation was a key element in our ability to face these challenges and overcome the obstacles. ProJeCt took a one-week pause in March 2020 and re-opened ready to continue to meet our mission of helping others to learn to help themselves.



A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

ProJeCt has been committed to serving others for more than 50 years. Today, our highest calling remains

service to others and building a better community by helping people with compassion, respect and love.

Our work is driven by the belief that a better world is possible and that all members of our community should enjoy safe, secure and productive lives. We believe that human change begins with hope and that many people in need can help themselves when given the holistic, integrated and persistent support and tools they need to advance on an upward path and to achieve their vision for a prosperous future.

When someone comes to us for help we listen before we respond. We help them with the immediate emergency. We attempt to understand the full range of their needs with the understanding that people living in poverty or economic crisis rarely have only one problem. We understand that economic crisis has a cascading effect and that all aspects of the individual or family's need must be understood before we can provide meaningful help. We work to ensure that at the end of every encounter with a person in need we have helped in a meaningful way.

Most importantly, we treat those who come to us for help the way we would want to be treated.

For those who are willing and able, we provide longer term support - developing action plans and support systems - that empower them to move out of crisis and onto a more secure path.

When someone asks us to teach them we celebrate their ambition, appreciate their vision, assess their needs, provide them with high impact instruction and support and graduate them to a path of self-sufficiency.

We read the research, understand the models and methods of best practice, check our work, account for progress, and adjust our work as needed. We develop standards for operating and document our work.

We strive to be measurably excellent in our efforts and if we say we can help, we keep our promises.

With your help, we set the bar high, achieve measurable results, and because of you we change lives.

Thank you for helping ProJeCt, the people we serve, and our community.

Janice

Janice D. Komisor, CEO

2020 & 2021 GRADUATES HONORED FOR EXCELLENCE

June 16, 2021 was a special day for some very special people. The alumni family of ProJeCt of Easton grew by 39 as the Classes of 2020 and 2021 were given their certificates and recognized for their achievements. All of our students overcome obstacles to obtain their GED or Citizenship status but these two graduating classes had the added burden of completing classwork during a world-wide pandemic. This forced many to slow their class schedule to meet family demands or even pause their classes. But at no time did this pandemic dim their desire or drive to be successful in completing their goals. Their stories all have a similar storyline - they went through challenges, decided education was important to make a better life for themselves and their families and ProJeCt of Easton and their teachers would not let them fail. Some shared stories of addiction, others faced illness and others yet spoke of poor life choices. Each one agreed that the key to moving forward was education. ProJeCt can't change the situations that our students have encountered and it cannot change the world they face, but it can change how students face the world and how prepared they are for life. For Erin Roman, GED teacher, it's easy: "We understand everyone has value. Everyone has skills," Roman



said. "We have to start where they are and give them a sense of hope and confidence. It sounds like talk but our staff trains to understand it." Janice Komisor, ProJeCt CEO stated "Our graduates have a whole new view of their place in the world. They're hopeful. That is what ProJeCt does," Komisor said. "We work with everyone to guide them on a path with new skills and hope for the future."

Did you know:

- More than half of homeless veterans suffer from mental or physical disabilities
- 40% of homeless school age children have mental health issues
- Every year 2.5 million children experience homelessness, almost the population of Chicago
- You can fill 5 football stadiums with the homeless population in the U.S.
- In a single night in 2019, homeless service providers set aside 48,000 beds for victims of domestic violence

Source: National Coalition for Homelessness

\$1M+ IN AID THROUGH ASSIST

Since the start of the pandemic, financial difficulties have been in the headlines. Loss of jobs. Reduction in hours or salaries. Business closings. Lack of child care. All of these challenges forced families to make difficult decisions and sacrifices. Those most at risk were those living on the verge of poverty or already below the poverty level. These households didn't have sacrifices left to make. Basic needs of food, shelter and utilities were already difficult on the wages they were bringing home so any reduction or elimination only made the situation more dire.

With the help of federal stimulus packages, funds were put into place to give assistance for these basic needs. The problem was getting to people in need in the most effective and efficient manner. The staff at ProJeCt quickly jumped into action and became the needed liaison between access to the funds and the clients and landlords. Case managers worked diligently day and night, in-person and remotely to complete all of the necessary paperwork to help qualify individuals and families. Through September 30, 2021, ProJeCt has been able to help 100 households with over \$1.2M in government financial assistance for rent and utilities.



WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT

ProJeCt of Easton works diligently to secure funding from individuals, corporations, foundations and governmental programs 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 program 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.

"Giving is not just about making a donation. It's about making a difference!"

Kathy Calvin



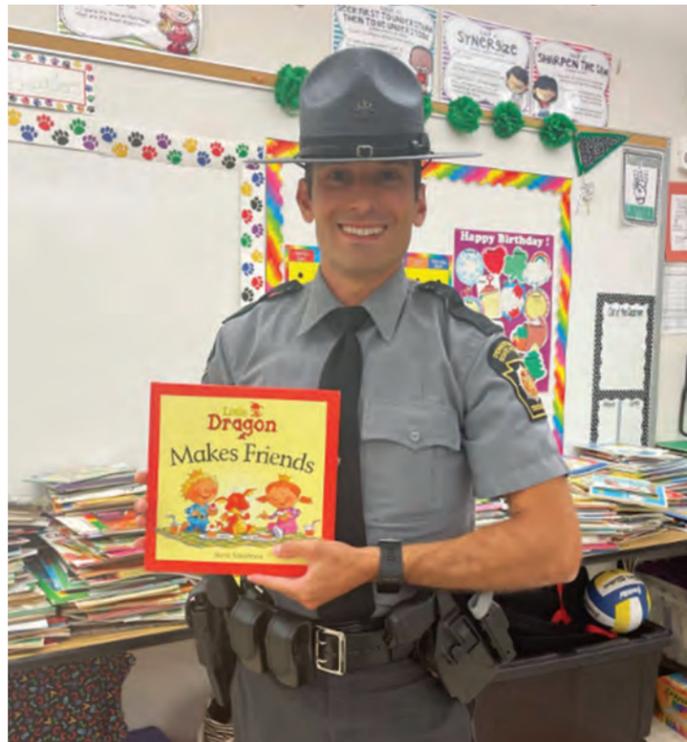
SUMMER FUN AT SIZZLE!®

For some children the words “Summer School” might carry a negative connotation. When the final bell rings on the last day of school, it represents freedom and fun; sunshine and swimming. No child likes the idea of summer school but SIZZLE!® is different.

For students who struggle with reading fundamentals, it's the most important place for them to be. Preventing the “summer slide” is imperative for all children, but for at-risk children who often are behind academically, it is essential in determining if they will be successful in the classroom. ProJeCt's SIZZLE!® is a six-week educational program that provides children with an academic intervention using high quality, evidence-based reading instruction aligned with the Pennsylvania State Academic Standards. The program also provides a fun, developmentally-appropriate opportunity for summer activity, enabling enrolled children to keep up with their more advantaged peers and begin a new school year more confidently.

Throughout the 2021 six-week teaching program, 131 children interacted with our certified staff and volunteers as well as Reading Buddies from the community to help them stay engaged and progressing. We often reward the students' efforts with incentives, which helps to positively reinforce their behavior and ultimately achieve success. This benefits them academically as they enter their next grade level ready to take on new subjects.

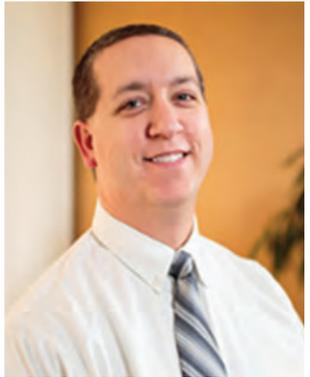
For 2021, we had the opportunity to welcome Reading Buddies from Highmark, Moravian College, Easton Area School District, ASR Media, the PA State Police and even a Ninja Warrior. The children also enjoyed a visit from the PA State Police aviation unit and learned about how they work with law enforcement. The Easton Police Canine Unit provided a demonstration with the special police dogs. It truly was a magical summer for the students as they learned and enjoyed SIZZLE!®
Thank you to the businesses, foundations and organizations who help make this program a success!



ProJeCt **SPOTLIGHT: MEET OUR NEW BOARD CHAIR**

Helping People Help Themselves

On July 1, 2021, ProJeCt of Easton Inc. welcomed a new slate of officers to help strategically lead the organization. The agency counts on these individuals to share their time, talents and treasure as well as promote the mission of ProJeCt in their business and personal endeavors. This year, we welcomed Cary Giacalone as our Chairperson and would like to introduce him to you!



Why did you decide to become involved at ProJeCt?

Cary: I was first introduced to ProJeCt through the prior Board Chair, JoAnn Nenow. She told me about the organization and its focus on education. At the time, I was looking for the right organization to join and education was very important to me given that my wife is a teacher. I learned about the various ways ProJeCt supports the community and I thought it was exactly what I was looking for.

How long have you been involved at ProJeCt and in what capacity?

Cary: I first joined the board in 2014 and became a member of the Finance Committee. In time, I became the Board Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Committee. In our last term, 2019-2021, I held both the Treasurer and Vice President positions.

What does the role of “Chair of the Board” entail?

Cary: Ensuring the organization has a long-range goal in mind and is always pursuing those goals while managing the day to day operations and fulfilling our mission.

What is your vision for ProJeCt in the next year?

Cary: I want to see that ProJeCt continues to increase the number of people that benefit from our programs. I would also like to find ways to expand our programs that make sense for the organization and those we serve.

How would you encourage people to get involved?

Cary: Volunteer at any of our events or programs! We have so many touch points in the community that your time would be very rewarding. Seeing the smiles on the faces of those we serve and celebrating their success will bring you back again and again. It's that easy!

What do you believe is the biggest impact ProJeCt has on the community?

Cary: As with the reason I joined in the first place - education! We provide education to a wide range of children and adults and we see first-hand the success it brings. The stories that we share on social media show how life-changing our programs can be. Our Success Academy is a great way to ensure individuals are getting the well-rounded skills they need to make their own dramatic impact on their community.

Personal Data:

- Married to Kelly; two daughters
- Education: Hofstra University
- Career: CPA for Concannon, Miller & Company
- Hobbies: Watching my girls Irish Dance; movies; medieval related games; play piano
- Last Book: *The Templar Legacy*, by Steve Barry
- Favorite Movie: *Goonies*, *Spaceballs*, *Avengers*
- Other Boards: Ss. Philip & James Church, Finance Committee

HIGHMARK WALK 2021

Once again, the Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community was held virtually in 2021 due to the pandemic. Organizations, individuals and families were encouraged to pick a date and a location and walk to benefit their charity of choice within their own safe circle of walkers. Many of our loyal donors took up the challenge and helped raise almost \$6,000 for ProJeCt of Easton in 2021. The ProJeCt team, made up of staff and board members, walked as a group to promote the agency on May 20, 2021 at the Karl Stirner Arts Trail. The competition for the prestigious "Silver Sole" Award was again intense but once again, the Kiwanis Club of Palmer Township, led by team captain Deb Ashton-Chase, came out victorious.



Thank you to our 2021 sponsors:

- Ashton Funeral Home
- Danny & Nancy Cohen
- Elaine Emrick
- Kiwanis Club of Palmer Township
- Alan & Marsha Abraham
- John & Janice Komisor
- Bill & JoAnn Nenow
- Reimer Bros. Inc.



MAKING A LASTING IMPACT



Planned Giving (sometimes known as Legacy Giving) allows individuals to make larger gifts to charitable organizations than they could make from ordinary income. It is a major gift, made during a person's lifetime or at death, as part of a donor's overall financial and/or estate planning. These gifts can include equity, life insurance, real estate, personal property or cash. Planned gifts can be immediate income, income received over an extended period of time or a delayed gift to be received at a future time. These gifts make use of legal and tax strategies that normally require professional assistance such as an accountant, financial planner or attorney. The benefits to the donor have been put into place to encourage charitable giving in substantial amounts to non-profit agencies. These gifts support worthy agencies and allow donors to help their charitable causes for long periods of time, leaving a legacy.

If you would like information regarding Planned Giving to ProJeCt of Easton Inc., please contact the Development Office at 610-258-4361 or email development@projecteaston.org.

UNITED WAY-DAY OF CARING

Giving back comes in many shapes and sizes. On September 30, 2021, seventeen local professionals representing Guardian Life Insurance, B Braun and Victaulic put on their work gloves, picked up their shovels and helped to make the entrances of both the administrative building and Fowler Literacy Center more welcoming for our staff and clients. The Victaulic Women's organization also raised the funds to purchase the supplies for the event. Thank you to these companies and individuals for stepping up and making a difference at our sites!



PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: STUDENT SUCCESS PROGRAM

ProJeCt's Student Success Program (SSP) is designed to close the achievement gap for at-risk elementary and middle school children and ensure their ultimate school success and graduation by promoting life skills and positive school engagement. SSP provides two forms of intervention to students in the Easton Area School District, grades 4-8. One is the Botvin Life Skills Training (LST) curriculum, a prevention-focused initiative that teaches skills related to peer pressure resistance and enhancing social and personal competence. LST has been extensively tested and proven effective at reducing tobacco, alcohol, opioid, and illicit drug use by as much as 80%. LST is designed to influence the school climate and establish a school culture that supports positive decision making. LST is open to all students.

The second component is a one-on-one case management support initiative that identifies students at high risk for school failure and drop out. Using the University of Minnesota's "Check and Connect" model, a federally endorsed intervention designed to enhance student engagement at school, a case manager works with students and their families to monitor attendance, behavior and academic performance. A case manager

connects students and their families to needed support systems and develops strategies for preventing disengagement and school failure. ProJeCt currently has an immediate opening for the role of teacher/case manager, who upon hire, will work within the Easton Area School District to assess and assist identified at-risk students.

ProJeCt's Director of Programs, Antoinette Cavaliere states: "The District has expressed their desire for ProJeCt's LST program to expand because of its positive effect on school culture and engagement. This is especially important after the COVID shut down and children now having to reacclimate themselves to being in the classrooms."

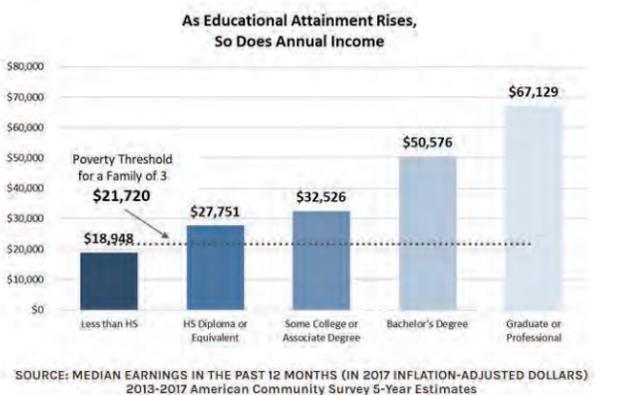
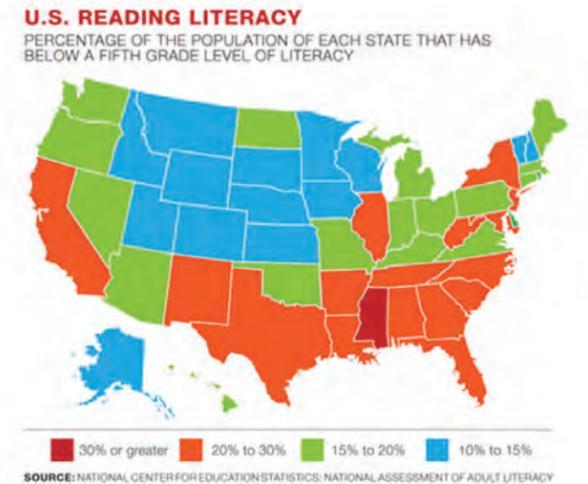
As student's return from the virtual learning model they experienced during the pandemic, they come to the classrooms changed. The impact of the past eighteen months will affect students differently and ultimately may determine academic success, emotional well-being and positive social interactions. It is through programs, like SSP, that ProJeCt can address student challenges and help them to overcome obstacles.

DID YOU KNOW...

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), 21 percent of adults in the United States (about 43 million) fall into the illiterate or functionally illiterate category. Nearly two-thirds of fourth graders read below grade level, and the same number graduate from high school still reading below grade level. This puts the United States well behind several other countries in the world, including Japan, all the Scandinavian countries, Canada, the Republic of Korea, and the UK.

The NCES breaks the below-grade-level reading numbers out further: 35 percent are white, 34 percent Hispanic, 23 percent African American, and 8 percent "other." Non-U.S.-born adults make up 34 percent of the low literacy/illiterate U.S. population. New Hampshire, Minnesota, and North Dakota have the highest literacy rates (94.2 percent, 94 percent, and 93.7 percent respectively), while Florida, New York, and California have the lowest (80.3 percent, 77.9 percent, and 76.9 percent respectively).

Why does all this matter? The risks, daily and for a lifetime, are tremendous to those who struggle with literacy issues. All facets of their lives are impacted including: health, employment, level of poverty, crime, and family matters.





ProJeCt of Easton
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