Board Chairman's Annual Report 2022





Jim Wansacz William E. Cockerill
Executive Director Chairman, Board of Directors



This past year — 2022 — continued to be full of challenges, as our agency adapted to life after COVID. Staffing, supply chain and enhanced client behavioral issues continued to provide obstacles to "Helping People Prosper." The Agency for Community EmPOWERment of NEPA (ACE) embarked on ways to solve these challenges by conducting community needs assessments, instituting fiscal upgrades and adjusting salaries, while implementing new staff wellness and training programs to prepare for new programs in 2023.

These steps entailed the blending of both in-person and virtual services while exploring ways to be more efficient and flexible. The Board responded by increasing wages and benefits to attract a diverse and talented pool of new employees while expanding our services to address increased consumer behavioral challenges.

Our agency addressed childcare issues by collaborating with community partners to develop new work guidelines and solved housing challenges by building eight additional affordable family housing units using our affiliate agency SLRDC. In addition, ACE began Phase Two of the Scranton Pre-K Center and solidified plans to build affordable housing, veterans housing and to expand workforce training opportunities in manufacturing for 2023.

We are grateful to our skilled, capable, and energetic staff, our experienced and knowledgeable Board of Directors and all the community partners who assist ACE in providing vital services. ACE is fortunate to have their support and is strengthened by everyone's commitment to "Helping People Prosper."

ACE provided services to 14,494 individuals enrolled with our agency during 2022. This included helping 460 families receive crisis intervention services, providing 203 heating crisis house service calls, and improving energy efficiency standards for 3,006 individuals through our Weatherization Department. ACE returned to a full in-person environment for our Early Learning Program (ELP) and enrolled 1,655 children.

William E. Cockerill

Chairman, Board of Directors

20 Cent



THE BOARD AND I COULD NOT BE PROUDER OF HOW THE AGENCY AND COMMUNITY RESPONDED DURING 2022

- Ensured the health and safety of staff and children in Early Learning Programs during a pandemic. Only in such an environment can an effective, researchbased teaching and learning practices achieve quality outcomes for children and families
- Awarded a new five year grant for 471
 State Head Start Children
- Secured 149 Pre K Counts slots
- Raised money for Angel Trees, ensuring children have a Christmas gift to open
- Ensured 721 children were up-to-date on a schedule of age-appropriate preventive and primary health care according to the relevant state's EPSDT schedule for well-child care
- Finished renovating a six-unit rental property for SLRDC in Old Forge.
 Enabling six families to have access to state of the art affordable housing in the borough of Old Forge
- Assisted seniors and other income eligible clients receive food through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)
- Provided 203 households with Crisis Services that included restoring heat and providing health and safety inspections
- Secured employment for 53 individuals by removing barriers preventing them from gaining employment with our newly created Workforce Development Program
- Provided 7,174 background clearances allowing people to maintain or gain employment
- Completed a \$1.6(m) Phase One Renovation of a Pre-K Center in the City of Scranton and started Phase Two, that will eventually educate 120-160 children between the ages of 0-5 years old
- Continued to provide a Rise and Ride program that provided over 80 individuals with rides to work and medical appointments
- 154 families received services for referrals made for housing

About Us

ACE is a private corporation authorized to administer funds received from federal, state, local, and private funding entities to assess, design, operate, finance, and oversee antipoverty programs. The Agency is intended to promote self-sufficiency and depends heavily on volunteer work, especially from the low-income community.

ACE was created by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 as part of a national network of federally funded Community Action Agencies (CAAs) to administer various programs on the community level that assist people of low income out of poverty conditions. Incorporated in 1965, ACE began with a budget of \$430,000 as a grantee for the federal Head Start Program maintaining fiscal and administrative responsibility for services in Lackawanna, Luzerne, Pike, Susquehanna, and Wayne counties.

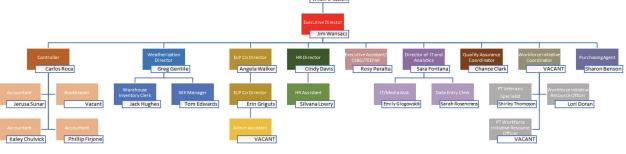
Over the past 50 years, the agency has developed a broad range of additional programs and services that promote school readiness for children and families and help families struggling with the effects of poverty. These range from employment, education, income management, weatherization, crisis and emergency food assistance to parenting support, child care, and Early Learning Programs.

With the support of CSBG funding, states and CAAs work together to achieve the following goals for low-income individuals:

- Increased self-sufficiency
- · Improved living conditions
- Ownership of and pride in their communities
- Strong family and support systems



2022 organizational structure







- ERSEA: Enrollment, Recruitment, Selection, Eligibility, and Attendance
- EHS: Early Head Start (birth to 3 years old and pregnant mothers/ federal funding)
- HS: Head Start (3 to 5 years old/federal funding)
- PKC: Pre-K Counts (3 to 5 years old/ state funding 300% of poverty)
- HSSAP: Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (3 to 5 years old/state funding
- EHS-CCP: Early Head Start—Child Care Partners (birth to 3 years old/federal funding)
- ELP: Early Learning Program
- PBIS: Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (birth to 5 years old)

Our Programs

Weatherization

- DOE/LIHEAP WX Services
- HEELP
- Lackawanna County Act 137
- LIHEAP Crisis
- UGI WX Services (PNG/CPG/ELEC)
- UGI: CAP Programs
- UGI Pilot Smart Thermostats
- WX Deferral Services
- Cooling Program
- Clean and Tune

Early Learning

- Child Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Early Head Start
- EHS Child Care Partnership
- Facilities/Transportation
- Head Start
- HSSAP
- Pre-K Counts
- Pregnant Mothers

Workforce Initiative

- Community Services
- Federal TSA & State Clearance
- Rise and Ride
- Vehicle Assistance
- Veteran Services
- Workforce Training
- Digital Literacy
- Manufacturing

Community Service Programs

- Community Collaboration
- Community Needs Assessment
- Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)
- Veterans Resource Coalition–Stand Down Days
- Childcare Study with PHMC

Rent Payments 151

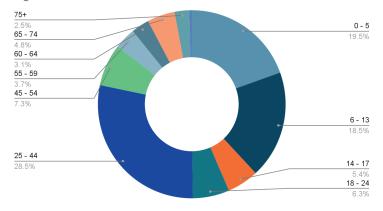
Affordable Housing Programs

- Collaboration with Johnson College
- Community Relations
- Scranton Lackawanna Resources Development Corporation
- Acquired more housing units for future rehabilitation

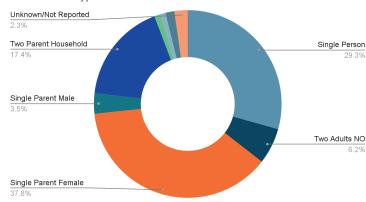




Ages Served



Household Type



Our Programs continued

Early Childhood Education Head Start, Early Head Start, Pre-K Counts

Comprehensive developmentally appropriate programming that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social, emotional and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children while engaging families in learning and progression toward their own educational and employment goals.

Program Capacity & Changing Demand: Community Needs

In line with changing needs and continued demand, families in the ACE service area face challenges associated with poor mental health, childhood trauma, behavioral issues, and developmental delays. Persistent economic insecurity, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, yields additional barriers pertaining to employment, transportation, childcare, housing stability, and access to healthy food. As the landscape and staffing throughout community agencies has changed, efforts to re-engage with community partners as COVID restrictions have been lifted is a top priority for ACE programs. Additionally, there has been a lack of support services throughout the counties served in assisting with mental health, trauma and child behaviors. In order to meet those demands, ACE has implemented a Mental Health/Behavior Team consisting of a Mental Health Coordinator, Trauma Specialist and 2 Behavior Coaches.

Community Strengths

There is extensive use of public resources available to Pennsylvania residents, such as SNAP and Medicaid. With the addition of SNAP Benefits to the categories of automatic eligibility for Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) programs, ACE is working closely with local County Assistance offices to strengthen collaboration to ensure eligible families are provided with HS & EHS program options in their communities. In addition to these safety nets, assistance is provided via food banks, religious institutions, children and youth organizations, and other nonprofit agencies. Opportunities for partnership comprise another key community strength. ACE itself represents a key strength in the multi-faceted services offered to low-income families along with referrals to other vital resources.





Barriers to Child Care

In mid 2021, ACE of NEPA Early Learning Programs partnered with Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) to conduct research to provide ACE with information regarding parents' perceived barriers to accessing child care in Lackawanna County and the surrounding region. PHMC provided ACE of NEPA with actionable recommendations and strategies stemming from this project for consideration in the northeast Pennsylvania context, drawing on data gathered via in-depth interviews directly from over 40 ACE staff, parents with young children, and employers in the region.

Recommendations included:

- Strategies to increase the extent to which information about Early Childhood Education is readily accessible to parents
- Explore dedicating funding for a specialized role for dedicated staff possessing a marketing background and specific content expertise within northeast region demographics
- Enhance tracking of media response, application sources and rates, and associated demographics
- Develop systems across agencies to educate parents on ECE and funded slot opportunities
- Lead local stakeholders in implementing a regional response, such as develop resources and training to Human Resources and Employee Assistance Program staff at regional employers and additional stakeholders in health and social service agencies, establish and strengthen cross-agency referral systems, work to offer families the experience of "no wrong door" to preferred child care arrangements, partnering with the Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC), and advocate for shared coordination to establish family placement across publicly-funded programs to prevent competition across agencies and achieve full enrollment within each program line
- Focus on connections to child care services, leading local stakeholder partnerships to build regional knowledge of the continuum of early learning services, financial assistance available, and various eligibility criteria



- Expand and update approaches to educate parents and stakeholders of the unique comprehensive educational and support services Head Start programs offer families.
 In pursuing programming schedules with partners or in adapting ACE program operations, consider impact on quality child development services
- Ensuring services are meaningful for all parents' expressed needs, including marginalized communities, via self-assessment to identify best practices that support families whose home language is not English
- Establishing a community process among stakeholder groups, including child care providers, employers, and community business and development groups, to explore processes to expand the supply of evening and weekend care, alternative and supplemental child care business models such as drop-in or popup care, and ensure that child care is included in community planning for new and expanded business construction and infrastructure, particularly for care for second- or third-shift workers

Number of Families Served & Income Standards

- Head Start, Early Head Start, Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Program and Head Start Supplemental Assistance all operate at 100% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Programs are permitted to enroll children whose income does not fall at or below the Federal Guidelines. Up to 10% of funded enrollment can go to families and children deemed over income. These children and families are at or below 200% of the poverty guidelines
- Pre-K Counts: Provides service to families and children up to 300% of the poverty guidelines.
- In 2022, ACE Early Learning Programs served 1.022 Families

Our Services

Education Services

- ACE ELP returned to full in-person instruction at the start of the school year
- Implemented Ready Rosie, Marco Polo, and My Teaching Strategies Family to strengthen home-school connections
- 489 3-5 year old children and their families successfully enrolled in Ignite by Hatch
- Scheduled small group training and individual classroom observation/training to strengthen knowledge of autism and appropriate strategies to address behaviors
- Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with 20 school districts to strengthen transition efforts between Head Starts/Pre-K Counts and Kindergarten
- Literacy kits that include activities, materials, and directions provided to each classroom to be sent home with children on a rotating basis

ERSEA & Family Engagement

- ELP maintained paperless/online applications and added Parent Portal to the COPA database system
- Increased in-person services to better enhance a more personalized and trusting method of service delivery, individualizing the strengths and needs of families
- Introduced Ready Rosie as evidenced-based parenting curriculum for individualized family use and as Education Topic at monthly Parent Committee meetings
- Due to several centers/classrooms not opening due to staffing crisis, ELP programs averaged 64% enrollment from January 2022–December 2022
- Percentage of Eligible Children Served: 87.84%
- 460 families received services for referrals made for crisis intervention (including immediate need for housing, food, clothing). 154 families received services for referrals made for housing (including subsidies, utilities and repairs)
- Partnerships with local community agencies continue to be strengthened as in person-services expand due to the "return to normal" from COVID-19 Pandemic. Family Engagement Staff and ERSEA/FE Coordinators continue to focus on specific needs as indicated by families throughout the year, targeting specific resources and agencies based on immediate needs of families. Housing, Food Security, Employment and Utilities Assistance remain top needs as indicated by data collected from Family Needs Assessments
- Developed a working partnership with University of Scranton Department of Counseling and Human Services to offer a Certification program focusing on interviewing, self-care and crisis management for Family Engagement staff hired without a degree or credential to meet the Head Start Performance Standards requirement



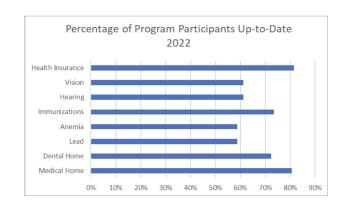




Health & Nutrition

- Program staff works closely with families to ensure that children are receiving necessary medical, dental care and health screenings while ensuring families are up-to-date on the EPSDT schedule. They also work with families to secure medical, dental, insurance, preventive screenings, nutritional and mental health resources for well-child visits appropriate for the child's age
- Health Service Screening Percentages reflect Actual Enrollment for the 2021-2022 year which includes children that were wait-listed and stopped services, along with those that attended during that academic year. COVID restrictions and hybrid and virtual services hindered preventive screenings for some children
- During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Health Services Manager acted as the liaison between the CDC and the Department of Health to aid in contact tracing, as well as establishing and maintaining up to date safety protocols for the program in accordance with CDC and Department of Health guidelines and requirements
- Expanded the Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) for program guidelines and updates and convened the Pandemic Response Team to assist in developing the agency's pandemic plan and COVID mitigation guidelines

- Partnered with Maternal Health and Family Services for the expansion of WIC supplemental nutrition programs and availability of services and C.H.O.P- Organization for weekend food distributions to be sent home for children
- Partnered with NEPA Community Health Center to do Dental screenings for Wayne and Susquehanna County Center
- Partnered with Geisinger for mobile dental clinic screenings, lead and anemia screenings, and dental hygiene education program
- Partnered with Lackawanna College and University of Scranton for nursing students to assist with screenings in each of the center classrooms
- Health Services staff actively participated in the Region 12 Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) Health and Safety Task Force,
- For Managed Care Organization Partnerships with AETNA and Amerihealth



Our Services continued

Workforce Initiative

ACE's Workforce Initiative Program (WIP), is helping individuals overcome the barriers preventing them from becoming selfsufficient. This program works with community organizations, private businesses, CareerLink, Workforce Investment Board and ACE's current programs to help provide wrap-around services to individuals seeking employment.

- Provided 77 rides to individuals for employment and medical appointments
- Repaired 42 vehicles for low income employed people
- Helped 53 individuals gain employment

TEFAP

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a critical community service that addresses the plight of food insecurity. During 2022, TEFAP partnered with 12 community collaborators to provide 16,041 units of emergency food commodities to 55,561 low-income individuals via food drives and food pantry services within the Lackawanna County area.

The Veterans Resource Coalition of NEPA (VRC of NEPA)

VRC of NEPA conducted a Spring and Fall Stand Down in 2022. The Stand Downs provided homeless Veterans or Vets that need assistance with a resource that can help with a variety of services. These services and resources include new clothing, slightly used clothing, haircuts and a delicious lunch. The Stand Downs also offered assistance with referrals to the Rise and Ride program, and other Resource Agencies that provided services like counseling, employment, housing, etc. Some of the Coalition Agencies that were in attendance at the November 2022 Stand Down were: The Vet Center, Equines for Freedom, The Recovery Bank, Outreach, Valor, PA Career Link of Lackawanna County, MWR Moral Welfare (MWR) and Army Community Service (ACS) from Tobyhanna Army Depot, Catholic Social Services and ACENEPA.







The VRC currently has over 40 Partner Agencies. During the Annual Veterans Resource Day held at Courthouse square annually. Veterans Resource Day is like a "One Stop Shop" that services the needs of all Veterans. Each Partner Agencies provided a table of literature, handout and information about their agencies that benefit the Veteran and the Veterans family members. If a Veteran or their family members have a problem, The VRC (all 40 agencies) work together to assist in solving that problem in a reasonable amount of time. The goal is to serve veterans and their families.

Weatherization

ACE's Weatherization programs promote energy conservation by adding energy saving measures to low-income households in our service area. A comprehensive energy audit is performed to determine which energy efficient measures are needed to lower a household's energy consumption. Such measures may include: caulking, weatherstripping, insulation, energy efficient appliances, lighting, window repair, furnace repair and health and safety items. In 2022, approximately \$2.3(m) was invested in the community through production of energy-saving jobs and utilization of weatherization materials in ACE's low-income homes. ACE has reduced the waiting list for weatherization services by implementing new programs designed in partnerships with the City of Scranton, Lackawanna County, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to fix deferral issues preventing houses from being weatherized. Contracts with UGI were expanded to allow for additional homes to be weatherized. The Pandemic presented many challenges to normal operations. However, 167 homes were weatherized 244 furnaces were either replaced or repaired during Crisis season through Federal and County grants and 22 homes received deferral services through grant funding provided by the City and State. The CAP program was responsible for helping 1,091 homes throughout Lackawanna County.

Testimonials



Awesome program, love all of the staff. The only thing that is unfortunate for me is the kids aren't eligible to attend head start in the summer.

Couldn't be happier with program.

I absolutely LOVE Headstart. My kids love going to school. The staff is very involved with the kids and actually get to know them, their habits, learning abilities etc. They're also very involved with parents. You know what's going on 100% of the time with your children and not just if they were good or bad, how they're progressing, how they interact with other children, teachers etc. I never have a communication problem. They also work with you the best they can. This truly is the best preschool!!

I always loved the head start program, thank you for what you do!!

I love everything about this program.

I love my child going to head start, she is learning and making friends.

Staff is excellent, very nice. Helped my son with his speech. Could definitely tell a difference.

Thank you for the preschool help. It helps out a lot being a single dad.

The staff at the West Scranton Center are welcoming and kind. They make everyday fun for my child. The high fives in the morning, the hugs goodbye, they make the children feel really special and loved. My child also now knows their colors and how to spell their name.

This agency helps with getting the children involved in everyday activities and getting to learn so they are prepared for the future of their education. The agency is a very family-oriented place!

This is a good agency.

This is our second year at Head Start and we are blown away with the amount of dedication the program has on the growth and development of our child. The teachers both in Brick, New Jersey, and Mid Valley Center, Throop, PA, go above and beyond our greatest expectations of how much they care about each individual child that attends. We are so appreciative of the program and it has impacted our daughter in the most positive way at school and also at home.

Our experience with Jermyn Headstart was wonderful!! Teachers were exceptionally nice and helpful.

Thank u so very much it was a help in every way.

Wonderful program and really helped me keep my only car on the road—so grateful— I just paid \$600 in repairs last week to the same car—never ending—I am glad I had the money last week. I did not have it at the start of the year so this program was a blessing.

SLRDC

Scranton Lackawanna Resources Development Corporation's (SLRDC) goal is to help provide quality affordable housing to Lackawanna County residents. SLRDC began an ambitious construction and renovation of eight affordable housing units in Scranton and Old Forge that were completed in 2022. These projects were completed with the help of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Johnson College, Lackawanna County, City of Scranton and various local funding partners.

North Main Ave, Scranton: SLRDC took a vacant property from the Landbank and developed a new duplex using students from Johnson College to create affordable housing. Funding was provided by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, SLRDC and the

Grace Street, Old Forge: SLRDC renovated an existing six unit property into six great affordable units at a cost close to One Million dollars. Funding was provided by Lackawanna County, Agency for Community EmPOWERment of NEPA and the



North Main Ave. ribbon cutting



North Main Ave. before



North Main Ave. interior

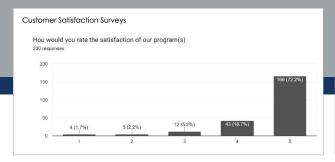


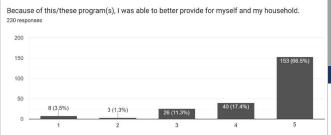
North Main rear unit exterior





Grace Street interior





Utility

Payments

Board Members

Board Member	Alternate/Designee
Commissioner Jerry Notarianni	Doreen Gilbride
Commissioner Chris Chermak	Anna Lena Koruszko
Commissioner Debi Domenick	Ellen Reagan Magnotta
County Treasury Ed Karpovich	John Grzenda
State Representative Kyle Mullins	William Davis
Scranton City Controller John Murray	Corey Egan
Senator Marty Flynn	Angela Jones

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Organization	Board Member	Alternate/Designee
Catholic Social Services	Jolette Lyons	(no alternate)
Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce	Karen Clifford	Laura Toole
University of Scranton	Gerald Zaboski	Julie Schumacher Cohen
Scranton-Central Labor Union	William Cockerill	Eric Schubert
Jewish Federation of NEPA	Attorney Ed Monsky	Natalie Gelb
Lackawanna County Commission for Women	Laurie Cadden	Deborah Peterson
PA Bankers Association Professional Development	Andrew Kudasik	(no alternate)

Sector	Board Member	Alternate/Designee
North Scranton	Kelly Noreika	(no alternate)
South Scranton	Magistrate Joanne Corbett	Attorney Drew Kearney
Mid Valley	Esterina Bevilacqua	Thomas Fiorelli
Carbondale	Nancy Perri	Patricia McHale
Lower Green Ridge	Joseph Murphy	William Gaynord
West Scranton	Marilyn Vitali	Kyle Calvey
Taylor/Moosic/Old Forge	Chris Murphy	Lisa Antoniacci

Approved Grants

We thank the foundations who support our efforts to improve the lives of the consumers we serve with their financial resources. Their financial support enables our staff to expand our services and enhance programs to better meet the needs of our communities.





Pre-K Center support





Pre-K Center support

Pre-K Center support



Pre-K Center support

Pre-K Center support

Pre-K Center support

Pre-K Center support

Financials

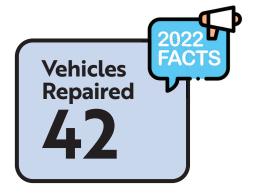
Statement of Activities for the Year Ending June 30, 2022

Support and Revenue	Without Donor Restrictions
Grants and Contracts	\$19,491,125
TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE	\$19,491,125
Expenses	
Program Services	\$17,169,910
Management and General	\$1,211,604
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$18,381,514
Increase in Net Assets	\$1,109,611
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	\$4,133,730
Net Assets - End of Year	\$5,243,341

Budget

07/01/21-06/30/22

	Annual Operating	% of Total Budget
Budget Line Items		
Salaries	\$7,623,538	38.73
Subcontracted Services	3,524,881	17.91
Fringe Benefits	3,113,833	15.82
Facility Costs & Lease Improvements	1,265,595	6.43
Consumable Supplies	868,385	4.41
Student Transportation	827,254	4.20
Equipment & Equipment Maintenance	307,906	1.56
Weatherization - Material Supplies	305,052	1.55
Professional Consulting Services	302,403	1.54
Office Expenses	273,591	1.39
Staff Training & Development	271,415	1.38
Administration Expense	235,786	1.20
Computer & Technology Expense	170,685	0.87
Local Travel	148,004	0.75
Meetings, Conferences, & Memberships	147,722	0.75
Depreciation	86,688	0.44
Insurance	59,606	0.30
Advertising & Marketing	50,605	0.26
Vehicle Assistance	36,929	0.19
Garbage Fee Assistance	30,000	0.15
Vehicle Maintenance	23,917	0.12
Transportation Assistance	10,000	0.05
Total Budget	<u> </u>	100%







Our Mission

To empower people with the skills needed to become self-sufficient and enhance their lives through education, training, life skills, and support services.



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