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# The Vision

Opening the doors to independence and opportunity



Over 40 years of excellence

**Step By Step, Inc.**



Newsletter - Winter 2023

## Step By Step Welcomes Lynn Miller as Vice President of Business and Program Development

Step By Step is delighted to announce **Lynn Miller** has become the Vice President of Business and Program Development of Step By Step!

**Eric Lindey**, President/CEO of Step By Step shared: *"We are thrilled to have Lynn join the Step By Step team! Her work throughout Pennsylvania and the US is well documented and we look forward to developing new services and partnerships with other providers that will continue our mission under Lynn's direction."*



Lynn most recently served as the national senior justice/WRAP associate and consultant at Advocates for Human Potential. Prior to joining Advocates for Human Potential, Lynn accepted the state's 1st position as the Department of Correction's Mental Health

Advocate where she was responsible for advising the Secretary of Corrections on improvements to the prison's behavioral health care services, including services for individuals with intellectual disabilities and dually diagnosed individuals. Lynn also served as

the Chief of Staff in the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS).

Lynn has a Bachelor of Science degree in behavioral science and earned her Master of Health Education degree from the Pennsylvania State University. Lynn is also a member of the state's trauma informed initiative, which is intended to guide the commonwealth and service providers on what it means to be trauma-informed and healing centered.

Welcome, and congratulations, Lynn. We look forward to having you onboard with us!

## Step By Step Named Best Places to Work in Northeast, PA

Step By Step is proud to announce we were awarded the special honor of **"Best Places to Work in Northeastern Pennsylvania"** 2022 by the Wilkes-Barre *Times Leader*!

Thanks to the continued support of our staff, Step By Step has been recognized for six consecutive years as one of the **Best Places to Work in NEPA**.

This award is especially meaningful because it is obtained as a direct re-

sult of employees' votes. Employees submitted their votes online through *Times Leader's* voting portal over a four-week period from October 28 until November 12, 2022.

**Eric Lindey**, President/CEO of Step By Step shared: *"We're proud to have a culture where employees feel welcome and empowered to build a workplace they want to be part of. Thank you to all of our team members for their exceptional effort."*

Our mission continues due to the support of our staff. Thank you to all who voted and allowing us to be recognized as one of the Best Places to Work in Northeastern Pennsylvania once again!



## New Employee Benefit - Employee Assistance Program

Step By Step is excited to offer a **new free benefit, an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**, to all employees and their family members. The EAP offers a broad array of tools and services to help with problems that might affect your personal or

work life. Examples include the following: marriage and family, stress, legal problems, debt, childcare, elder care, grief, pet problems, education planning, depression, taxes, wills, smoking cessation, wellness, adop-

tion, substance abuse, mental health, and divorce.

In addition, the EAP offers thousands of personal and professional development opportunities, from over

-continued on page 2-

## Spotlight on Property & Risk Management: Springing Into Safety

As spring is creeping up and winter is fading out, it's crucial for us to stay on our toes when it comes to the weather. It's important to remember that weather fluctuations can create problems. Some lingering winter snow, mixed with spring rains can cause issues for motorists.

Don't be fooled by the warmer daytime temperatures! Keep an eye on your local weather, as temperatures can drop quickly overnight and create icy morning conditions. Be observant of environments that could have black ice, such as roadways that don't get much sun or roads that are not frequently traveled. Bridges and overpasses are particularly susceptible to black ice due to air flow both above and below the structure.

Recovering your car after winter and preparing it for spring can help save you time, money, and hassle during the warmer days. Vehicle maintenance is especially important when transitioning from cold weather to warm. Cold and changing temperatures typically cause tire pressures to decline. Making sure your tires are at the manufacturer's recommended pressure can save on fuel consumption, giving you a bit more time in between tank fill-ups. Properly inflated tires also help ensure your vehicle



efficiently handles and brakes to maintain safety.

Making sure your headlights and windshield wipers are in good condition and working properly is important for not only yourself, but for others on the road as well. During foggy, rainy mornings, it's imperative that you can see what is ahead of you, but also that other

drivers can see *you*. Be sure to use your low-beam lights and avoid using your high beams. High beams cause glare in foggy conditions and lower visibility even further.

Snowmelt and heavy spring rains also bring a higher chance of flooding roadways and hydroplaning. To help prevent hydroplaning, be sure to keep your tires rotated and balanced, reduce your speed in wet conditions, and avoid puddles and standing water as much as possible. If you do start to hydroplane, follow these steps: remain calm and slow down- do **not** slam on your brakes (gently pump them); steer into the skid to help your tires realign; wait until you regain traction.

The road isn't the only place where

precautions need to be taken this time of year. With spring, comes spring cleaning for many people. When lifting heavy objects to or from storage, remember to lift using your legs, not your back. Get someone to help you lift whenever possible and use a supportive back brace or lift belt. To prevent slips, trips, and falls while cleaning, make sure the floor around you is free from clutter. Stairways and landings should be clear at all times.

As we transition from winter to spring, it's important for all of us to remember to make safety our top priority- both on the road and at home. This is a great time to check all smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers. It's time to spring into safety!

The above information comes from various external organizations with expertise related to this subject. This information is meant to provide guidance to you and is not meant to replace Agency policy and procedure and/or any regulations under which the programs or Agency must operate.



## New Employee Benefit - Employee Assistance Program (continued from page 1)

8,000 trainings to one-on-one telephonic coaching in the following areas: certified financial coaching, balancing life at work and home, resilience, effective communication, home purchasing, student debt, yoga and relaxation, workplace conflict, retirement, succeeding as a supervisor.

A comprehensive Wellness Coaching benefit is also available, designed to help you tackle issues that are most detrimental to your overall health and well being. The program includes assistance with losing weight, improv-

ing nutrition, getting fit, stopping tobacco use, and reducing stress.

To access your EAP, simply call the **toll-free number 1-800-252-4555** to talk with a counselor or coach who will work with you to address your issues. You can also visit your EAP online at **www.theEAP.com** for thousands of problem-solving resources and self-help tools.

**Your EAP is a free benefit and your confidentiality is assured.** No information about your use of the program is given to us as your

employer unless you sign a release of information authorizing this. If you have personal difficulties of any kind, we encourage you to take advantage of this no cost, confidential benefit.



## Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) Training Offered

Step By Step is excited to offer employees Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) training! The first two-day WRAP training was held in the Wilkes-Barre office mid-February.



ships, accomplish goals and build better relationships. Oftentimes, individuals who attend a WRAP seminar tell us that they didn't realize how much they needed WRAP and that attending the seminar helped to put their own wellness as a priority.

The Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) is a simple and powerful process for creating the life and wellness that you want. With WRAP, you can discover simple, safe, and effective tools to create and maintain wellness; develop an organized plan to identify stressors or triggers and how to use action planning to address these stressors and triggers; develop a daily plan to stay on track with your life and wellness goals; identify what throws you off track and develop a plan to keep moving forward; and gain support and stay in control even in a crisis.

The WRAP process supports you to identify the tools that keep you well and create action plans to put them into practice in your everyday life. WRAP helps you to incorporate key recovery concepts and wellness tools into your plans and your life. WRAP is an evidenced-based practice that has helped thousands of people around the world to improve their quality of life, improve their personal wellness, improve relation-

Step By Step believes that it is important for staff and individuals we serve to have an opportunity to focus on personal wellness. The effects of COVID-19 vastly impacted our lives in numerous ways. Many people experienced adverse effects of isolation and changes to their personal and professional lives that continue to be felt. People have found WRAP to be helpful in countering this. Step By Step is offering an opportunity for staff to participate in a WRAP seminar to connect with peers, learn about a personal wellness plan in a supportive environment, and learn about a wellness tool that can support and empower the individuals we serve.

Whatever your goals or challenges, WRAP can help you make a plan that really works, with results you can really see. For more than 25 years, people around the world have used WRAP to support their goals and transform their lives. No matter how you define "wellness," WRAP can help you to achieve it, your way,

and on your terms. WRAP can help you to shape every aspect of your life the way you want it to be. WRAP can help you gain freedom from troubling thoughts, behaviors, or patterns that repeat in your life. WRAP empowers you to make decisions about your life and build a strong support network of people and resources to help you reach your goals.

Two participants in the recent Wilkes-Barre training shared their thoughts about WRAP. **Caitlin Jones**, Program Manager, stated: "I am so glad I chose to participate in the WRAP seminar. I gained many tools to support wellness in myself and others, and I can see how the process truly has the power to change lives for the better. It is great to know I work for an agency that is so invested in the well-being of its employees and clients." **Mary Harkenreader**, Psych Rehabilitation Supervisor, expressed: "I really enjoyed the WRAP seminar. A lot of laughter and a few tears, but this will truly be beneficial to all staff and our consumers."

The wellness of Step By Step employees matters! Wrap trainings will be scheduled throughout the year to various locations throughout the state. We hope you take advantage of this important training which has the power to positively change your life.

## "Art From the Heart" 2023 Step By Step Calendar Distributed

Step By Step's 2023 Calendar was recently published and distributed to employees and Agency stakeholders.

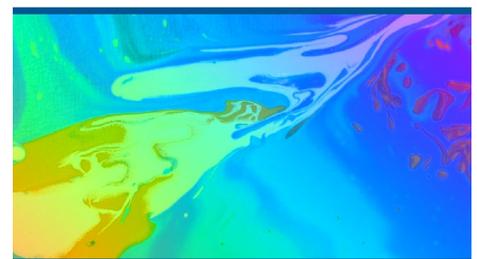
This year's edition showcases unique consumer artwork submitted from individuals receiving services throughout the agency. The calendar also includes Step By Step's 2022 annual report data, a letter from Step By Step's

CEO/President, **Eric Lindey**; donors; and a listing of the Board of Directors and Executive Management team.

To request a hard copy, please call 570-829-3477. To view online, visit <https://step-by-stepusa.com/news-and-events/newsletter-archive/>



**Art from the heart**  
A showcase from our most talented artists!



2023 ANNUAL REPORT AND CALENDAR

## Step By Step Receives Grant from PNC Bank/Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust

Step By Step recently received a \$66,000 grant from the **Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust**, administered by **PNC Bank**. The funds will be used to provide computers to Step By Step's community homes located in Western Pennsylvania.

The computers will help improve efficiency and quality of service delivery documentation, provide access to online trainings for employees, and improve communication with consumer's treatment team, family members, and organizational leadership. **Justin Hymon**, Step By Step's



Sr. VP of Operations, stated: "Step By Step is grateful for the generosity and support of the Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust and PNC Bank. This vital funding will allow us to continue supporting our mission and the individuals we serve."

The funds were administered by PNC Bank, on behalf of the Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust. The Edith L. Trees foundation was established in 1970 and focuses their giving for the care and welfare of individuals with intellectual disabilities in Pittsburgh, PA.

PNC's charitable trusts mission is to implement the legacies set forth by the individual donors who established trust relationships with PNC Bank. Grants are only administered to select regions based on the donor's preference.

Thank you, Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust and PNC Bank, for your generosity! To learn more about PNC Bank's philanthropic efforts visit: <https://www.pnc.com/en/about-pnc/corporate-responsibility/philanthropy.html>.

**Philanthropy at PNC:** Through PNC Foundation, Charitable Trusts and Charitable Sponsorships, PNC seeks opportunities to enhance communities and do right by those they serve.

## Step By Step Foundation Golf Tournament - Save the Date 8/28/2023

The **Step By Step Foundation** is proud to announce that the 2023 golf tournament is scheduled for Monday, August 28, 2023, at the **Huntsville Golf Club** in Dallas, PA!

The annual golf tournament offers an exciting day of golf, followed by dinner and auction items; all while supporting the Step By Step Foundation. The Foundation is a 501 (c)3 organization and supports the pro-

grams and services of Step By Step. The golf tournament is always one of the most enjoyable days of the year!

Be sure to check back to our website at [StepByStepUSA.com](http://StepByStepUSA.com) for forthcoming tournament information.

For sponsorship opportunities, or other related inquiries, please contact **Patti Blazaskie** via email at [pblazaskie@stepbystepusa.com](mailto:pblazaskie@stepbystepusa.com) or call

570-829-3477 extension 7909.



## Distinguished Programs Donation

Step By Step recently received a generous donation from **Jared O'Donnell**, Regional Sales Executive of **Distinguished Programs**, which will be used to benefit **Step By Step's Children's Program**.

Distinguished Programs is a national insurance program manager providing specialized insurance programs to brokers and agents, with specific expertise in real estate, community associations, hospitality, and restaurants.

**Eric Lindey**, President and CEO of Step By Step shared: "The generous donation by Distinguished Programs

helped make the holiday season much brighter for the children and families supported by Step By Step. We are so appreciative of the donation and again thank Jared O'Donnell and Distinguished Programs for considering Step By Step as a worthy organization of their giving."

Mr. Jared O'Donnell presented the donation, alongside Board Chairperson **Mary Beth Farrell** and Step By Step Foundation Board Chairperson **George Rable**.

We are so grateful for their support in our mission!

To learn more about Step By Step's Children's Services, visit <https://stepbystepusa.com/childrens-services>.



l. to r.: **George Rable, Jared O'Donnell, and Mary Beth Farrell.**

## The Three Ps of Healing: People, Place and Purpose

**Janet Romero**, Vice President of Operations, shares: "During the process of buying a home, I found a home that had the perfect layout, was freshly painted, had new flooring, and the kitchen and bathrooms were all updated. However, a home inspection by a professional revealed that the foundation was cracked and disintegrating, the roof had numerous leaks, the joists supporting the home had been compromised with cuts to run wiring and pipes and the electrical system were not sufficient for all the new appliances and cooling system."

**Thomas Insel**, MD, the former director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), would say this is an analogy of our nation's crumbling mental health system and the inerrant focus of funding on the medical model rather than recovery. During a presentation he was giving, the parent of a young man with schizophrenia yelled out "Our house is on fire and you're telling me about the chemistry of the paint! What are you doing to put out the fire?"

Dr. Insel spent the next five years meeting with innovators of mental health interventions across the country and beyond to discover what works and what doesn't work. Some basic findings of the broken system: 1.) mental health services are predominantly accessed while in crisis, 2.) treatment focuses on the reduction of symptoms, 3.) stays fre-

quently last for days/weeks in local emergency departments, 4.) frequency of multiple tours in the local jail with no treatment, 5.) long stretches of homelessness, 6.) more than half of U.S. counties have no psychiatrists and nearly half of psychiatrists do not accept either public or private insurance and 7.) attitudes toward treatment frequently prevent care outside of crisis. However, Dr. Insel shared there is great news about what works. While visiting a very effective service at Los Angeles Skid Row, the psychiatrists explained that healing and recovery, meaning returning to a full and meaningful life, comes down to the **three P's: people, place and purpose**. In other words, finding people for support, having a place or sanctuary to heal, and discovering a purpose or mission."

**Step By Step's mental health services** have focused on these three areas since the Agency was organized over 45 years ago: **People:** Connections and meaningful genuine relationships with another person are essential to everyone's wellness and builds our resilience. Our role is to support people in building social skills and linking with others with shared interests for those who don't have those relationships. **Place:** The words, "safe and affordable housing," hold real meaning for individuals working toward recovery. Whether providing the housing through LTSR, CRR, or other residential services, supplementing cost for housing, aiding

in seeking housing of their choice or supporting an individual in their home, our role is to ensure the living environment is a healing environment. **Purpose:** Step By Step's mental health programs are all based in the psychiatric rehabilitation principles of recovery, with a person's identified **valued role** the driving determinant of all services. Reframing a person's view of their role from a recipient of care to a valued contributor in their community and/or family is powerfully healing.

Dr. Insel states, "Recovery depends on the three P's. But these factors, crucial for recovery, are often not paid for by health insurance and are usually not offered as part of care. To close that gap between scientific progress and public-health impact, we need to reframe what we mean by care."

Step By Step's mission has been to step into this gap to ensure the three Ps are provided and to be the disruptive agitators to help change our mental health system to prioritize and fully fund the three P's. We are grateful to our state and county systems who partner with us in meeting these needs. Going back to the analogy of the home, we need to ensure that the mental health system has a firm foundation, solid protection from outside threats, sufficient supports and more than adequate resources to operate the system.

## Payment Error Rate Measurement (P.E.R.M.) - What It Is and Why You Should Care

**Philip Fritchey**, Step By Step's Quality and Compliance Associate, shares: "Maybe you've heard about **P.E.R.M.** and you've conjured images of hair salons and big plastic curlers. It is, in fact, a type of external audit and one that is occurring more often. In recent years, Step By Step, Inc. has participated in several of these audits."

P.E.R.M. stands for "**Payment Error Rate Measurement**," a federal audit developed by CMS (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services) to estimate errors in billing for waiver-funded services. The submission process for the P.E.R.M. involves Service Providers collecting materials for randomly selected Individuals and providing them to a federal reviewer/contactor. The materials requested can be for a single day of service or for a specified period of service e.g., one

month; one quarter. The documentation submitted to the auditors should paint a clear picture of all facets of an Individual's service.

The following were materials submitted during a recent P.E.R.M. audit: Service Notes/Case Notes; Monthly/Daily Censuses; Billing Summaries; Functional Assessments; SIS (Supports Intensity Scale) documents; ISPs (Individual Support Plans); medical charts; copies of the MAR (Medication Administration Record); Quarterly Progress Notes; Overnight Monitoring Charts; Behavioral Supports Plans and Behavioral Charts; Recreation Charts; copies of Client/Individual Rights.

A successful P.E.R.M. means that the auditor has received documented evidence that all payments for a particular

service have been made correctly and that services have been provided according to an Individual's Treatment Plan, within the parameters of an Individual's Service Authorizations.

If an auditor has reason to question a payment, the company may have to pay back money received for delivering a service. If the errors are numerous, the auditor might request documentation from a larger window of time to establish if there is an error trend. An auditor may also do an extrapolation, or estimate of errors extending over a greater period, requiring a specific payback. To avoid these financial issues, it is essential that censuses are filled out accurately, documentation is thoroughly completed, and services rendered match services approved.

## From the Desk of Human Resources

### Promotions:

Laurie Kivler, Program Director to Service Director/NE Mental Health

Rachel Coriano, Program Supervisor to Program Manager, NE ID/A

Tiffany Lenkersdorf, Direct Support Professional to Program Supervisor, NE ID/A-Diane Drive

Taylor Wren, Community Employment Specialist to Program Supervisor, NE ID/A-Vaughn Street

Ibrahima Traore, Direct Support Professional to Program Supervisor, SE ID/A-Level Road

Congratulations on your next chapter. We are happy to have you part of our team!

### Retirements:

Sandra Pelleschi, Service Director, ID/A of the Northeast gave 31 years of service.

Sue Kauffman, Recruiter of the Northeast gave 24 years of service.

Pat Mentis, Service Director of the Northeast/MH, gave 42 years of service.

Kathleen Dreisigmeyer, Program Administrative Assistant, Mental Health of the Lehigh Valley gave 39 years of service.

Thank You for the years of service and dedication!

### New Hires:

Please welcome 265 New Hires to Step by Step!

### Careers:

We are still hiring! Step by Step, Inc. is currently seeking Direct Support Professionals, Nursing Staff, Mental Health Technicians, and more. Please check out our careers page at <https://careers.stepbystepusa.com>. Step By Step offers a Competitive Benefits Package and \$1,000 Refer a Friend!



*Celebrating over 40 years of excellence*

**Step By Step, Inc.**

744 Kidder Street  
Cross Valley Commons  
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702

We're on the web at  
[www.stepbystepusa.com](http://www.stepbystepusa.com)




**Step By Step Foundation**

## Leave a Legacy

*By making a contribution to the Step By Step Foundation*

Your contribution to Step By Step will be used to wisely enhance our education, training, health and rehabilitation services for those in need. Please consider making a gift to the Step By Step Foundation. Opportunities to leave a legacy and commit resources to help the agency continue to serve those in need are plentiful. And, they can be important components of tax planning.

*Call us at (570) 270-7909 or visit [www.stepbystepusa.com](http://www.stepbystepusa.com) to learn more about charitable giving through the Step By Step Foundation.*

(The Step By Step Foundation is registered with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Bureau of Charitable Organizations.)