



A proud hub for AmeriCorps service in Northwestern PA



COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER INC.

AmeriCorps

NEWSLETTER

JULY 2025



Keystone SMILES Community Learning Center, Inc is pleased to announce it has been awarded federal funding for the 2025-2026 program year.

Interested individuals, schools, or nonprofits wanting for information to apply to be a member or host for an AmeriCorps program, may go to www.keystonesmiles.org for more information. Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps has been awarded 137 positions to serve schools and nonprofits in Clarion, Venango, Jefferson, Mercer, Crawford, Erie, and McKean. Visit us at www.keystonesmiles.org.

SUMMER PROGRAM UPDATES

Summer Food

Clarion, Mercer, and Venango Counties

June was a very busy month for the summer food program. Staff and AmeriCorps members prepared, served or delivered to homes 6,451 meals for children 2-18 years of age.

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In just 11 days in June:

- Clarion County delivered 2,136 meals,
- Mercer County delivered 2,063 meals and
- Venango County delivered 2,252 meals

Thank you to everyone for your hard work and dedication to this program. We have had many positive reviews from parents thanking us for our service.

"I appreciate you always reaching out to help make sure my daughters are fed in the afternoon. Even a single meal, 5 days a week, helps more than imaginable and we are all so grateful for your time and energy! And your kindness!" - parent in Mercer County



Members and staff prep meals in Venango County.



Members delivering meals to Housing Community residents..

Children's Programs - Clarion County

Children in the Knox area participate in the summer programs located at 420 Main Street or 757 Petrolia Street. Children participate in a variety of outdoor or STEM activities. A new addition to the Knox summer program is the opening of the kids' Environmental Center. The property was provided by Knox Borough to help with the project start-up.

The House of Trades (HOT) team assisted with revocations of the property. The focus is to educate youth to be conscientious stewards of the environment and the need for preservation and conservation. On average, 35 children attend this program everyday. Some of the topics include wildlife, sports and ocean. With the very hot, humid weather the children (and adults) have enjoyed some relief with water games.



Students in Clarion County exploring environmental topics and staying cool.



Student STEM activities in Mercer and Venango Counties.

Children's Programs - Mercer County

In the first three weeks of July, the MCHA team has about 15 children coming to their two STEM camps at Frank Fay Terrace in Greenville and Centennial Place in Farrell. They are continuing to deliver meals to approximately 100 children each day. At Frank Fay, they are having a great time stretching their creative thinking muscles with Charades. Centennial Place moved their program to an upstairs room, making it more visible to the residents and public at large. Parents of 5 year old children are especially happy to have a program for this children to attend so that they can practice school skills and separating from care-givers to better prepare for attending Kindergarten in the Fall.

"Whatever team you have coming in this area, I just wanted to say that I really appreciated them! [It] makes my heart feel wonderful because I really appreciate everything that all of you guys do." - Frank Fay Parent



Children's Programs - Venango County

Space Week at Hot Spot was a powerful blend of hands-on STEM learning and emotional connection. Through creative science activities like baking soda moon rocks, galaxy slime, puffy paint constellations, and stomp rockets, children explored the universe while building confidence, curiosity, and resilience.

Puffy paint constellations allowed for both science and self-expression. The kids not only learned about constellations but got to introduce their own "new constellation" that represented themselves. Stomp rockets brought excitement and teamwork as kids tested angles and distances. A shy boy took charge of testing and redesigning rockets, exclaiming, "I didn't know I was good at building stuff!"

Beyond the STEM content, Space Week helped our youth build emotional confidence. Kids who often feel disconnected found joy in discovery and collaboration. One child said, "Space is so big, but here I feel safe." At that moment, we were reminded of why our service matters".



Members and staff install flooring at Sharpsville Gardens.

HOUSE OF TRADES

Pre-K Counts Sharpsville Flooring, Mercer County

The House of Trades team was able to lay the bulk of the new flooring in June and just finished putting a new floor in the Preschool in Sharpsville. This included the office space. The team will return in August to put a new floor in the kitchen area and finish the trim. Members traveled from Knoxville for one week to help with this service project.



Completed flooring.

Senior Breakfast, Clarion County

The House of Trades has been prepping, cooking and serving breakfast as well as calling bingo for the Seniors who attend the monthly brunch & bingo event. This is a monthly fundraiser which benefits the Horsethief Festival fund coordinated by the community volunteer committee in Knoxville. Not only does the House of Trades do amazing learning skills in construction but they are also great cooks! Thank you for assisting this summer with these service projects.



Members serve breakfast to area seniors at Senior Breakfast.



Members assist with faith-based food banks.

Faith-Based Foodbanks, Clarion and Venango Counties

Every other month the House of Trades partners with Chapel on the Hill in Emlenton to help distribute food to local families in the area. This involves unloading pallets of food and making an assembly line to package the food into boxes for the families to pick up. This month they helped serve 90 families.

Members also assisted the Edenburg Presbyterian Church's Food Pantry by packing and taking groceries out to the recipients serving local families.



Teambuilding at Mid-Summer Retreat.



Teambuilding at Mid-Summer Retreat.



Eastyn Kopas,
Youth AmeriCorps,
Punxsutawney
School District

SUMMER AMERICORPS, “FINISHING STRONG”

Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps members and supervisors serving in Mercer County Housing Authority communities, Oil City and Knox came together in June for a Mid-summer training retreat. Topics included diversifying interventions with behaviors, adversity, perseverance, and common ground as part of their AmeriCorps oath taken at the beginning of their term. The training hosted Erin Cameron, guest trainer.



R: Allen Clark, AmeriCorps member,
Girard School District; Above: More
Mid-Summer Retreat.



SCHOOL BASED AMERICORPS MEMBERS CONTINUE WITH SUMMER SUPPORT

Erie, Clarion, Mercer, and Crawford Counties
We would like to thank the 1700 hour AmeriCorps members who served during the school year and are continuing to support students in summer academic programs. It has been a very tough year with DOGE interrupting AmeriCorps service programs, however, a special thank you to these members who persevered through the transitions and unknowns. You have made an incredible impact on the lives of the students keeping with us and your host sites.

A total of 3,164 students have received academic support services from Keystone SMILES AmeriCorps this program year!