



ANNUAL REPORT

2016-17

With a Little Help From Our Friends



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STEP (Solutions That Empower People) is a community action agency that provides programs and services in Franklin and Patrick counties, as well as Bedford, Martinsville and Danville. Our focus includes Early Head Start and Head Start; youth services (LIFES Academy and Project Discovery); senior services (Meals on Wheels, transportation); supportive services (re-entry, homelessness prevention); housing and weatherization; and financial services (tax preparation assistance, financial education, individual development accounts).

STEP celebrated 50 years of serving our community in the fall of 2016. The agency was founded in 1966, just two years after President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act, an iconic piece of legislation that envisioned a new way to fight poverty in America. From this act a national movement was born, a movement designed to provide opportunities for every American regardless of their economic situation.



Known first as the Franklin County Community Action Program, the name changed to Support to Eliminate Poverty (STEP) in 1990. In 2016 STEP changed its name to Solutions That Empower People to better reflect the changing face of our programs and the communities that we serve. Today, STEP serves over 3,500 of our friends and neighbors in the community.

Our Mission: STEP, and our partners, facilitate Solutions That Empower People to overcome their barriers to economic, educational and developmental success within the communities we serve.



www.facebook.com/stepempowers

www.stepincva.com



www.twiiter.com/step24151

Message



With a little help from our friends . . .

The Greek philosopher Aristotle once said “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”

Poverty is very real. You can’t change it by wishing it away. And you can’t change it alone. It’s a complex issue that requires complex solutions.

STEP engages in very strategic collaborations and partnerships and leverages a broad range of

In the following pages you will come to see that here at STEP we embrace the synergy that is realized through our broad collaborative network of partnership agencies, businesses and more than 100 passionate volunteers. This allows us to provide holistic strategies that address not only the symptoms, but the root causes of poverty for the more than 3,500 of our friends and neighbors that we empower each year.

And, as you can see, we are moving the ball.

We are seeing positive results.

With your help, WE are empowering people and (profoundly) changing lives.

Marc Crouse
Executive Director

*“...the whole is greater
than the sum of its parts.”*

resources in order to arrive at complete and sustainable solutions that help our client partners overcome challenges and improve their lives and their futures.

We take our Mission and our client relationships very personally as we work together, with a little help from our friends, to help each individual lift themselves up, and realize their fullest potential.

Peggy Morrison
President, Board of Directors



The Whole Bean: A Caffeine Shot to the Community

Kylee Robinson is looking for coffee geeks.

She understands that if coffee connoisseurs know that her brew is consistently good, her clientele will grow and business at the Whole Bean Coffee Shop will expand.

Planning for that is what spurred this native New Zealander to apply for Virginia Individual Development Account (VIDA) funding through STEP in 2016. (She immigrated to the U.S. in 1991.)

The VIDA program is for eligible low-income individuals saving for a down payment on a home, business equipment and inventory, or post-secondary education tuition costs. Eligible participants receive training, support and \$8 in matching funds for every \$1 the participant saves, up to \$4,000 in match.

The Whole Bean is barely a year old and the fact that it exists at all is still a surprise to Robinson.

"A year and a half ago, I had no intention of opening a business. I stayed at home, worked as a crisis worker for the Family Resource Center, and sold cupcakes out of my kitchen," she said.

"Then I thought, 'Let's just knock on some doors and see what opens, and everything just fell into place.'"

Working with STEP's Supportive Services' Yvonne Anderson, Robinson filled out the application and made her down payment of \$500 to qualify for \$3,750 to pay for computers and printers to create and print menus, fliers and such, and to have pantry cabinets built to store equipment and supplies needed to keep the kitchen well provisioned. She also took several required classes in basic money management, business expansion, and customer service.

"I consider it a miracle..."

"Taking the classes is equally important as the down payment," said Anderson. "Homeownership, an education, or a successful business are all positive steps away from poverty, and when a client achieves any of them it can serve as a return on investment to the government and to the community. It also demonstrates commitment on the part of the client, since they must complete the training before

the funding is awarded.”

The income eligibility was not an issue as Robinson, her husband and their eight children rely on his income as an electrician. The shop is “successful so far,” and is paying for itself, she said, but she does not yet draw a wage herself.

“I consider it a miracle, this shop,” she said. “I’m really thankful that the funding was available. It gives me the ability to get what I really want and need to grow the business.”

As a local business in Rocky Mount, the Whole Bean contributes to the local economy in more ways than just business-related fees and taxes. The coffee beans are supplied by Red Rooster Coffee Company in Floyd; dairy products come from The Homestead Creamery in Wirtz; and lettuce and other greens are grown by Four Oak Farms, also in Wirtz.

“We try to use local as much as possible,” she said.



Editor’s Note: VIDA was funded through the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Community Services’ Assets for Independence Grant (AFI), but has stated on its website it is no longer accepting new applications from savers or prospective intermediaries. We are hopeful that applications will resume with approval of the next federal budget.

Responsible Rides Provides A Set of Wheels

Life can be hard without a set of wheels.

You become reliant on others for the simplest of things: running to the grocery store; keeping a doctor’s appointment; checking on loved ones. If your “borrowed ride” doesn’t pan out, you are plain out of luck.

Out of luck is not how Joyce and Brian Baker of Penhook feel about their transportation situation these days, however. After almost two years without a car, they kind of feel like they’ve hit the jackpot.

“I had no idea there were programs like this out there,” said Brian Baker. He’s referring to Responsible Rides, a partnership program between Freedom First Credit Union and community action agencies like STEP, Inc.

The Bakers are both on full disability, still have children (and grandchildren) living at home, and help their elderly parents as they are able. Just taking care of normal day-to-day tasks without transportation was a lot of stress and pressure.

But Responsible Rides is not a freebie. To qualify, applicants must be able to prove a positive pay history through a recurring bill like cell phone or power and be ready to clean up their financial situation by taking care of debt (no more than \$1,500 in outstanding bills excluding medical). They must attend financial education classes, and learn how to take care of the car (oil changes, tire rotations, etc.). They have to be insurable and keep the car insured for the life of the loan. They have to prove that they can make the loan payments and must have a valid driver’s license. And they have to have a phone so that credit union representatives can follow-up with them as needed.

“The point is to prevent credit-challenged people from going to predatory lenders or buy here/pay here car lots,” said Kim English, Responsible Rides coordinator for Freedom First. English helps her clients find a car with a monthly payment they can afford (even going car shopping with them) and eventually they can build their credit, she said.

In rural areas with no public transportation like Franklin County, a program like Responsible Rides has real value, English said. In addition to helping low-income individuals and families become more independent, it supports the economy by purchasing vehicles locally.

For more information about the Responsible Rides program, see page 11.



Eli's Story

By Rachelle Sloane, December 2016

This is a letter from Eli's mother about his experience at STEP. We couldn't do a better job of telling his story, so we have reprinted it here (with permission.) This fall, Eli began kindergarten and the rest of his educational career.

Eli started at STEP Head Start in August of 2015. This is his second, and last year at STEP and he has come a long way.

When he started over a year ago, he was speech delayed; so much so that, at almost 4 years old, he could barely speak more than a handful of words. He always did so well communicating to me what he needed that, even with my prompting and encouragement, he had no interest in learning how to communicate more effectively.

Eli's teachers noticed his delay. Naturally, because he could not understand what was asked of him a majority of the time, he could not follow most basic instructions that children his age could follow.

His teacher administered a routine Brigance screening that all children must go through each year. The results of the screening confirmed that Eli was delayed

in more areas than just speech. He was academically delayed due to the challenges he faced with communication. His teachers suggested that Eli go through evaluation for special education services to help him catch up in the areas he was behind.

This evaluation led to a long year of emotional roller coasters for me. As a mother, the last thing you want to hear from others is that your child is not a "normal" child. By no means was I told this.

Everyone at STEP has been beyond helpful and encouraging through the entire process. I guess I just had to go through a mourning stage. I had to accept that there were problems, and then I had to set my mind on fixing them in the correct way so as to not overwhelm Eli. I had many moments when

I wanted to back out of the evaluation just because I felt like my child was being held to standards that were unrealistic. In reality though, it was just tough to have my son be evaluated and to come to terms with all of the specific things he could NOT do. I had meetings with Eli's teachers, Head Start staff, and those involved in the evaluation directly. There were phone calls, tears, and many long nights pouring over paperwork. I cancelled the evaluation and started it back up. It was difficult for all of those involved, but anytime I seemed too stressed or

overwhelmed, staff at STEP were right there with me and taking time out of their busy schedules to have meetings with me. They wanted me to be confident in the choices I made for my child and I couldn't be happier with their help. I tell them all the time, "I don't know what I would do without you!"

The evaluation was finished and we all met to discuss results and recommendations. We began speech services in February of 2016, but just by going to class regularly throughout the week, Eli had already improved in speech and understanding. The routine of following rules and regular class instructions helped him more than anything! He became more social, he played better with children, and he learned many new words just by the social interaction he received

at STEP Head Start with the other children.

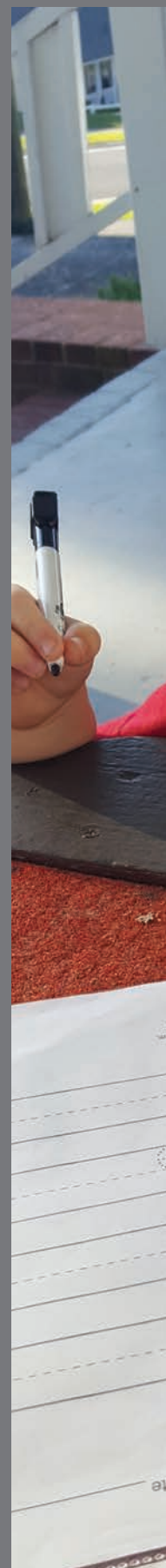
Eli was put in private speech therapy over the summer and he took off!

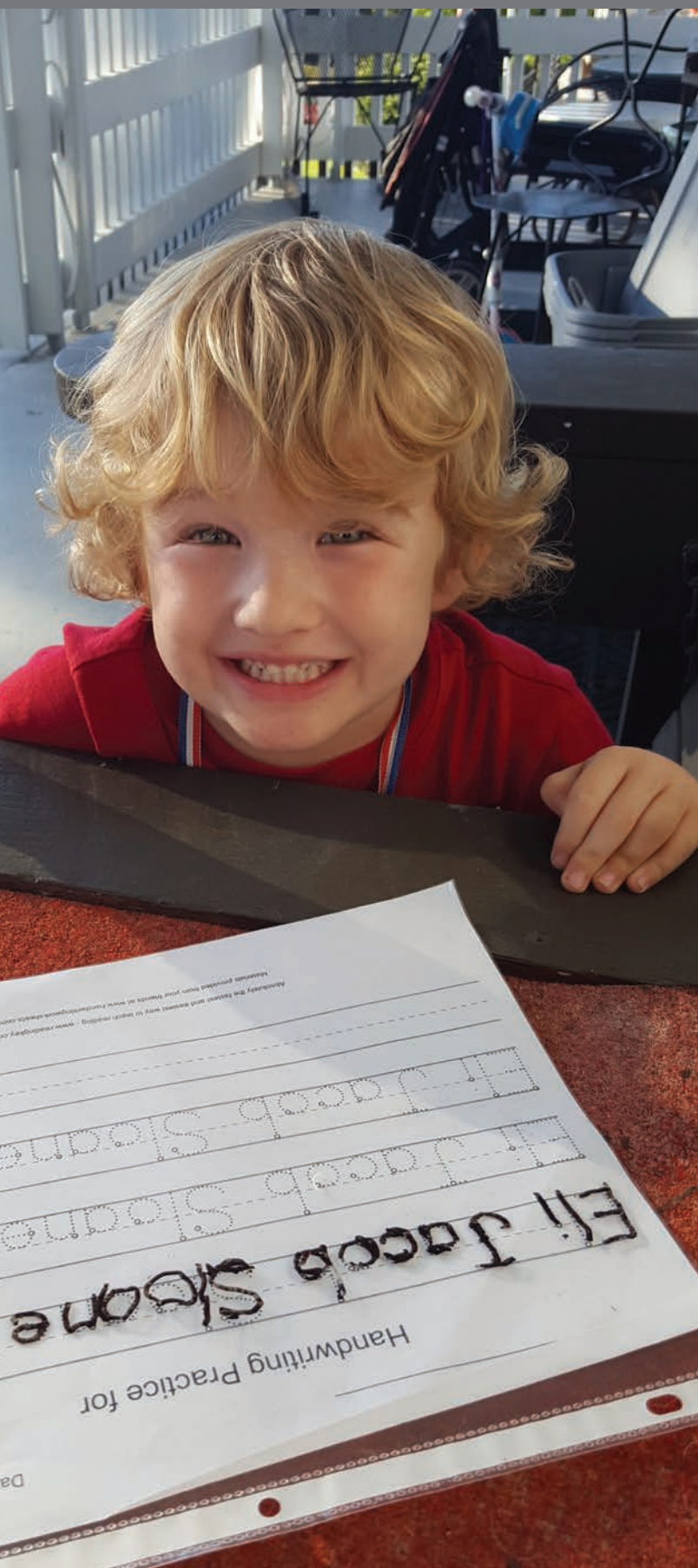
He had already begun

to improve, but something in his therapy made all our other activities/exercises just click! He began to enjoy learning. We had MANY play dates over the summer and even used technology to help keep him interested in conversation practice. (For example, while playing Xbox, he would ask for help and I would use conversation to guide him through it instead of just doing it for him. He understood basic words like "jump" and "run" and even learned letters of the alphabet by the names of the characters on the screen.) I continued to study on my own, talk to friends and family about his progress, and prayed a lot!

Eli began this school year with a bang! Instead of being transferred to another school as discussed, we decided that he should stay at STEP because he improved so much in such a short time. We were blessed to have the option to be at STEP for one more year and keep him in his routine with his same teachers as the year before. Eli went from starting the previous year barely speaking and now, I am so happy to say, Eli has full conversations! He knows all of his ABC's and many of their sounds! He counts beyond 20! He writes his name and draws recognizable figures and pictures freely!

If it were not for Eli's incredible teachers, I don't think he would be where he is today.





He went from a very immature fist grip to an age appropriate pencil grip!

He's formed friendships, follows instructions with 2 and 3 step commands, and is one of the most well-mannered children you will ever meet. Eli's recipe for success was an hour of homework every day. This involved going over ABC's, counting, writing, completing worksheets from school, and flash cards provided by his teachers, and reading a book or more every day. I may be biased, but he is simply a joy! He always has been, but now we can talk and learn more every day because of STEP and their staff.

Eli's teachers, Mrs. Quinn and Mrs. Domica, have played the biggest role in his improvement aside from the work we have personally put in at home. We have had many talks and they have helped me tremendously in bridging the gap of the unknown.

The hardest thing we struggled with was trying to understand where Eli's disconnect really was. Was it just speech delay and that caused his other delays? Was it behavioral issues? Did he just not understand, or was he not WANTING to listen? This is especially hard for them because they don't know him like I do. If it were not for Eli's incredible teachers, I don't think he would be where he is today.

*I feel confident and prepared for
Eli's entire educational career.*

They took me aside and shared concerns of behavior, gave tips on activities to do to strengthen his hands, provided links to websites for further resources, and were always there to talk to. I applaud them for their sacrifices, creativity, and patience in teaching our children every day. They do a fantastic job and they are most definitely making a difference.

STEP Head Start's mission statement is as follows:

"STEP, and its partners, facilitate Solutions That Empower People to overcome their barriers to economic, educational, and developmental success within the communities we serve."

This statement is true! This is exactly what they have done for our family. I am grateful for the kick start they have given my son academically and socially. They have been supportive and helpful for me as well. If it were not for their help and their experienced staff, I would have been lost. I have learned much through almost 2 years, and I feel confident and prepared for Eli's entire educational career....our success is because of YOU!

Head Start/Early Head Start Annual Report

Vision – To provide exceptional services to young children and their families, empowering them to take control of their lives and reach their potential.

STEP Head Start is a proud member of the Virginia Head Start Association, the National Head Start Association, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

STEP, Inc. continues to be funded to provide services to 218 infants, toddlers, pregnant women, preschoolers and their families.

Early Head Start is funded for 80 infants, toddlers, and pregnant mothers. Over the course of the 2016-17 program year, we served a cumulative total of 90 infants, toddlers and pregnant women.

Head Start is funded for 138 preschool age children. Over the course of the 2016-17 program year, we served a cumulative total of 145 preschool aged children.

Both programs serve children and families through 21 classrooms and 2 home-based case-loads across Franklin county and Patrick County. These classrooms include 9 Collaborative Classrooms through partnerships with Franklin and Patrick County Schools Virginia Preschool Initiative Program.

Policy Council 2016-17 Comprised of 51% parents

Chair - Deanna Goad (Franklin)

Vice-Chair - Chris Turner (Patrick)

Secretary - Antron Brown (Franklin)

Treasurer - Nicole Montgomery (Patrick)

Community Representatives

Megan Peters (Ferrum College)

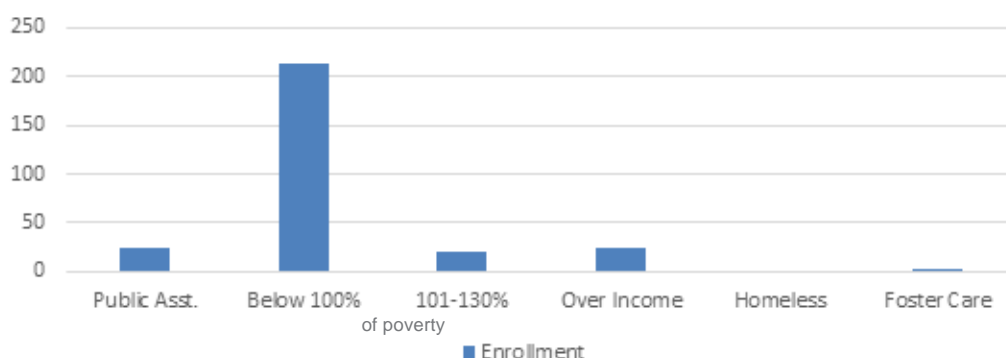
Jaclyen Peters (Franklin County Schools)

Kristin Dulaney (Patrick Henry Community College)

Enrollment 2016-2017					
Program	Site	Classrooms	Home-Base	Enrollment	Age
Early Head Start	Rocky Mount	5	1	52	Pregnant To 3 years
	Stuart	2	1	28	
	Funded Enrollment			80	
	Cumulative Enrollment			90	
Head Start	Rocky Mount	3		51	3 to 5 years
	Glade Hill Elementary	2		45	
	Lee Waid Elementary	2			
	Sontag Elementary	2			
	Rocky Mount Elementary	2			
	Stuart	1		17	
	Patrick Springs Elementary	1		17	
	Blue Ridge Elementary	1		8	
	Funded Enrollment			138	
	Cumulative Enrollment			145	

Funded enrollment for both programs was 218 with a cumulative enrollment of 235 children and pregnant women and their families during the 2016-2017 program year.

2016-17 Enrolled Eligibility



Head Start/Early Head Start 2016-17

Budget Categories	Budget	Actual
Salaries	\$1,095,869	\$1,130,600
Fringe Benefits	257,761	252,072
Training/Technical Assistance	37,368	37,403
Insurance	8,550	5,766
Consulting-Contractual	3,100	48,952
Nutrition/Kitchen Costs	163,029	164,673
Program/Classroom Supplies	21,926	21,896
Equipment	-0-	28,000
All Other	<u>207,133</u>	<u>207,021</u>
Total Direct Costs	\$1,794,736	\$1,896,383
Indirect Charges	350,678	361,791
Non-Federal Match	506,353	560,046
Total Expenses	<u>\$2,651,767</u>	<u>\$2,818,220</u>

Head Start/Early HeadStart

Operating Grant Funds	\$1,988,046	\$2,035,481
Private Contributions	-0-	69,099
Training/Technical Assistance	37,368	37,403
USDA	120,000	116,191
Non-Federal Match	<u>506,353</u>	<u>560,046</u>
Total Grants & Contributions	<u>\$2,651,767</u>	<u>\$2,818,220</u>



Preparing Children for Kindergarten

- Contracts with Patrick County & Franklin County public schools to assist with education, including transporting children to and from classroom locations.
- Partnerships with Franklin County & Patrick County schools Virginia Preschool Initiative Program to operate blended Pre-K/Head Start classrooms. Approximately 60 Head Start children were enrolled in these classrooms during the 2016-2017 school year.

Qualified Staff:

- 100% of Head Start Teachers hold advanced degrees in Early Childhood Education or a related field.
- 100% of Head Start Teacher Assistants have a Child Development Associate or other associate degree, or are enrolled in a program leading to state credential, associate or bachelor's degree.
- 100% of Early Head Start Caregivers hold an associate or bachelor's degree, or Infant and Toddler certification.

School Readiness

Percentage of 4 year olds who met/exceeded the School Readiness Guide

Domain	Fall 2016	→ Spring 2017
Approaches to Learning	48%	93%
Language Literacy	17%	80%
Physical Skills	40%	94%
Social Emotional	53%	93%
Math	37%	93%

Parental Involvement

Activities

- Blooming Up Good Health Conference
- Male engagement activities
- Family events (art show, Trunk or Treat, Christmas celebration, summer picnics, fieldtrips)
- Policy Council
- In-school conferences

Engagement

- 25 % - Fathers involved in family assessment & goal setting
- 35% - Fathers involved in child development experiences
- 5% - Fathers serving in program governance
- Up to 39% - Parents receiving educational services (financial, health)

90%+ Average HS/EHS daily attendance

Health Information

Percentage of children/pregnant women with health insurance	98%
Percentage of children with a primary medical home	96%
Percentage of children with up to date immunizations	78%
Percentage of children with a primary dental home	70%

Housing & Weatherization



Tammy Bishop was being "nickel and dined to death" with out of control electricity bills until STEP stepped in to help. Now she's able to pay other bills and even take on a car payment.

Nobody would ever claim that Tammy Bishop has led a fairy-tale life. But when you hear her story, certain parts of one well-known fable come to mind, specifically when it comes to climate control.

Now in her sixth year in her rented mobile home, this single parent and her teenage son could never get comfortable.

It was too hot. It was too cold. Sometimes, it was both hot and cold at the same time. It was never, ever "just right." And it was incredibly expensive to boot.

When she complained, her landlord hired someone to assess and repair.

"They did a rigged job. When I cut the heat on the A/C came on with it. When I turned the A/C on the heat came on with it," she said. Her electricity bill for the three bedroom, two bath 1,064 square foot home averaged \$300 a month.

Granted, older mobile homes are not known for their energy efficiency. But that power bill was too high even for a 1994 model. And Bishop, who is on disability, simply couldn't afford it.

In addition to her own health issues, which include osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and fibromyalgia, her son suffers from epilepsy.

"With epilepsy, if you get overheated you have a seizure," she said. "I was always worried about it getting too hot in here. Even with fans going it was hot in here. He was having seizures two or three times a week and taking 13 pills a day to keep his body temperature regulated."

It was too hot.

It was too cold.

It was never just right.

She gave serious consideration to moving, but loves the community she is in. It seemed she was always skipping one bill or another to pay the power bill. Buying groceries was a struggle. As STEP's Steve Hall says, that power bill was "nickel and diming her to death."

Once she learned about STEP's weatherization program, Bishop still had to deal with the situation for a while. Because there is such a high demand for services and limited funding, she had a

two-year wait before any work could be done. In order to make it, she borrowed money from friends and family, and appealed to social services, the Salvation Army and local churches.

"It's opened so many doors . . ."

"It was terrible," she said.

In addition to replacing the electric furnace and central air with a heat pump, STEP installed vapor barriers and insulation, repaired faulty wiring and ductwork, updated ventilation and exhaust fans, and replaced ill-fitting doors.

"The power bill went from \$300 to less than \$150! Unbelievable!" Bishop crowed.

"It was well worth the wait to me."

Since the work was completed about a year ago, Bishop has become more self-sufficient. She has been able to pay people back, pay her bills on time and buy more groceries. She was even able to get a car through Responsible Rides (see side bar).

"It's helped me in so many different ways. It's not just the light bill, it's not just the air and heat. It's opened so many doors to things that I otherwise could not have done," Bishop said.

Perhaps the best part about the whole thing is that her son hasn't had a seizure in over a year, she said.

Bishop is still unable to work because of her disability, but she does try to give back to the community by volunteering at the Women's Resource Center. Having experienced domestic violence in her past, she wants to do "anything I can do to help other women."

As for the help she received from STEP, "I can't go on enough how much I appreciate it," she said.

Responsible Rides Builds Financial Stability

Responsible Rides is a partnership between Freedom First Credit Union and several community action agencies, including STEP, Inc. in Franklin County, as well as multiple auto dealers. The program incorporates financial education and vehicle maintenance classes.

The intent is to help low-income people who have credit challenges (no credit or damaged credit) acquire a vehicle through an affordable cars program so that they can go to work or take care of essential family business. During 2016, STEP and Freedom First helped 12 households become car owners.

"This program is not all about the vehicle. It's about learning financial responsibility. It's about becoming independent and empowering you to better your life because you have reliable transportation," said Kim English, Responsible Rides Coordinator. For more information, contact her at Freedom First Credit Union, (540) 904-4445.

Photo at left: As a member of the STEP Housing and Weatherization team, Steve Hall helped client Tammy Bishop find ways to manage her electric bill.

In 2016-17

324 Individuals in

Franklin, Patrick & Bedford counties provided safe & secure housing through our housing assistance program.

101 People in Franklin & Patrick counties provided weatherization services to lower heating & cooling costs through LIHEAP & DOE.*

* Low Income Energy Assistance Program & Department of Energy



A client's roof gets repaired thanks to STEP and local contractors.

Senior Services



Accessibility Remodel a “God-Send” for Stuart Family

STEP serves as catalyst for community partnership

Jeff Hill was a prisoner in his own home.

It’s a lovely home; older, with 13-foot ceilings, wide and high doorways between the living room and dining room, large windows, and two stories. All things considered, it isn’t a bad place to spend your days.

Unless you are confined to a wheelchair.

Seventeen years ago, Hill fell and broke his hip. The next year, he had surgery on the hip which caused him to rely on the use of a walker. As long as he could be somewhat mobile life wasn’t too bad, said his mother. But when things deteriorated to the point that her special needs son became completely wheelchair-bound, managing became almost impossible, she said.

Consider that Frances Joyce is 83 years old with some health issues herself. She and Hill have lived in the house for 30 years, but Joyce estimates that the house could be about 100 years old. When Hill broke his hip, they moved his bedroom to the first floor so he wouldn’t have to navigate the stairs, but his wheelchair would not fit through the door to the bathroom. This meant that he

had to use a potty chair and brushed his teeth on the back porch. Bathing was another issue altogether.

“We had three years of horror,” Joyce said of the time when things just became untenable. This widow of a veteran spent years trying to get help. Team Nurse sends someone to assist with the daily care of Hill that she can’t handle, and she receives Meals on Wheels through STEP, Inc.’s Senior Services. But that doesn’t get Hill through the bathroom door.

Nonetheless, STEP’s home meal delivery service was Joyce’s ticket to a promise of help.

“Because Mrs. Joyce receives Meals on Wheels and is the surviving spouse of a veteran, she qualified for assistance through the Celebration of Service grant provided by Home Depot,” said Doris Fain, STEP’s Senior Services director.

The grant would cover the cost of the materials needed to renovate Joyce’s bathroom to make it handicap accessible. The old tub, sink and toilet would be replaced, the door would be widened, and the lighting would be improved. Hill’s problem was about to be solved!

Except that no one could be found who would agree to perform the labor for free.

"It was a big job," Fain said. "That is quite an investment of time and expense on someone's part."

It looked as if Mrs. Joyce and her son were going to have to continue to struggle to perform the simplest of personal daily living tasks.

But things have a way of working out. Just when Fain began to worry they wouldn't be able to complete the job during the time period allotted by the grant funders, serendipity put STEP's executive director Marc Crouse in touch with Lisa Nichols of Henry Fork Service Center, a community service group of the United Methodist Church. A group of United Methodist volunteers from around the mid-Atlantic region were about to arrive in the area on a mission trip.

Their mission? To help those in need.

For one entire week, volunteers from Pennsylvania and New York worked in 90 plus degree weather to replace the old tub, toilet, and sink; close in the window; install an accessible shower; and widen the door so a wheelchair could fit through it using materials provided by Home Depot.

*What was a "God Moment" for
the volunteers was a God-send
for Joyce and Hill.*

"We feel it's a part of our ministry to Christ to help those less fortunate than ourselves," said one of the volunteers.

After they completed the construction and headed back home, local United Methodist volunteers finished up by painting the bathroom and putting on the finishing touches.

The entire project is an example of the good that can come when groups of people form partnerships to address a need, Crouse said.

"Serving as a catalyst to bring partners together is a basic premise of STEP's mission," he said.

What the United Methodist volunteers called a "God Moment" (doing something less for oneself than for others) turned out to be a God-send for Mrs. Joyce and Jeff Hill.

"This has made our lives so much easier," Joyce said. "We are so happy, and so grateful for the help."

Home Delivered Meals 2016-17

9,878 meals in
Patrick County

13,424 meals in
Franklin County

Congregate Meals 2016-17 (meals provided in a group setting)*

3,959 meals in
Patrick County

929 meals in
Franklin County

Senior Transportation 2016-17

46,982 miles traveled
transporting seniors to appointments
Only available in Patrick County.

Home Delivered Meals – Meals On Wheels

Partnering with the Southern Area Agency on Aging (SAAA) our staff and volunteers provide home delivered meals to about 125 home bound senior citizens in Franklin and Patrick counties. We deliver nutritious meals Monday through Friday and offer a friendly face, someone to chat with, and the comfort of knowing that someone cares! Pet food is also delivered to seniors who we serve through our Meals on Wheels program so that they can afford to keep their companions with them in their homes.

***Congregate Meals-** STEP prepares nutritious lunches that are combined with interesting programs and activities. These meals are prepared in our own kitchen and served to some 150 seniors each week at various locations in our community.

Supportive Services



*"Remember
you used
to be
homeless?"*

As a homeless single parent, Courtney Walker was worried people were going to judge her if they discovered her story. They'd think she was lazy and a burden to society, she feared. Worse, they'd think she was a bad parent.

But there's something you'll learn about Courtney Walker when you hear her story. She is a hard worker. She's also determined. She has self-respect. AND she wants the best for her daughter.

Sometimes things don't turn out the way we had planned. Courtney certainly never dreamed she'd be sleeping in her car with a four year old in the dead of winter.

How she got to this point doesn't really matter; it's how she got herself out that shows what kind of person she is.

"We were both crying every night. She (her daughter) was just miserable. I would keep the car running with the heat on and park at places like the city park, somewhere where it was dark," she said. "I was scared but I had no place to go."

For about one month, 24 year-old Courtney juggled going to college (she's enrolled in the Early Childhood Education program at Patrick Henry Community College), working, and searching for a place to live. Relatives and friends watched 4 year-old S'aniyah whenever possible; other times she went to class

with Courtney. Late at night, they'd go to WalMart or some other 24-hour store for a sponge bath in the public restroom. From her car, she managed to get herself and her daughter into a local shelter, but it still wasn't a home and it had a 30-day limit on stays.

*"Mom, why are we not going
home yet?"*

S'aniyah would ask, "Mom, why are we not going home yet?"

Finally, it just got to be too much. Courtney contacted her PHCC teacher to give her a heads up that she might be quitting school. But instead of accepting that, the teacher referred her to Supportive Services, a department at the college which focuses on helping students succeed.

"At first I said, 'Oh no, I don't want you all up in my business. I just want you to know that I might have to drop out,'" Courtney explained. But then she met a college staff member who told her about STEP.

Again, Courtney was reluctant to reach out. It wasn't that she didn't want the help; she just didn't want to be judged.

"You can tell when people think certain things about you," she said.

"That's when I got a call from Mandy (a STEP staff member). I met up with her and she helped me a lot. She didn't judge me at all."

STEP's Supportive Services program works with homeless people to find suitable housing and develop a strategy to sustain them. In Courtney's case, that includes a duplex with two bedrooms, a willing landlady and a helpful neighbor. S'aniyah has her own room, "decorated in Frozen." STEP paid the required deposits and first month's rent to allow Courtney time to get on her feet. This past summer, she worked two jobs to earn a little extra cash. She's cutting back to one full-time job this fall to go back to school.

Her long-term goal is to own a daycare business which would be open 24/7 "for moms who work third shift."

"I had never heard of STEP until I got in my situation," Courtney said. "I absolutely love them!"

She recounted how somebody recently said to her, "Remember you used to be homeless? How did you do it?" I just got great help, and prayers."

"S'aniyah is finally happy. Every time we pass the shelter now, my daughter says, 'Mom, we don't have to go there anymore!'"

VITA 2016-17

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

527

Federal tax returns prepared

\$739,974

federal tax refunds

511

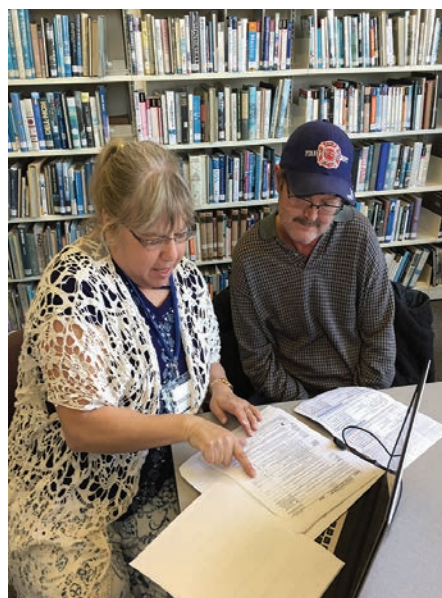
Virginia tax returns prepared

\$119,779

Virginia tax refunds

\$105,400

savings in tax preparation fees



West Piedmont Re-Entry Journey

124 clients

*& one of the lowest
recidivism rates in the
nation - 2016-17.*

West Piedmont Re-Entry Journey (WPRJ)

We assist individuals returning from incarceration and their families to make a successful transition back to the community. We help with: immediate critical needs such as housing, clothing and food; referrals to our community partners (support groups, substance abuse and mental health needs); life skills, healthy family dynamics and conflict resolution counseling; personal finance education and support; transportation assistance, and; restoration of rights. STEP offers these services in Franklin, Patrick and Henry counties, as well as the City of Martinsville.

Virginia Housing Solutions Program (VHSP) Homeless Prevention

We provide financial assistance and on-going case management services for low-income families and individuals who are at risk of losing their home (rentals only).

Rapid Re-Housing

Our "rapid re-housing" program provides emergency financial assistance to homeless veterans, individuals and families.

STEP provides rapid rehousing and homeless prevention in Franklin, Patrick, Henry, and Pittsylvania counties and the cities of Martinsville and Danville.

2016-17 Housing Services Served

113 Households * 252 Individuals * 103 Children

Youth Services



We Got to Get Him Into LIFES

If there's one life lesson that Brandon Blumberg has learned at LIFES Academy, it's this:

"You gotta work for what you want. Nothing's free."

Brandon knows what he's talking about. He recently graduated from high school, but the road to that diploma wasn't always straight and smooth. In fact, there were a few times when nobody – not even Brandon himself – thought he was going to make it.

"... they said I couldn't graduate. I got in trouble a lot," he explained. He couldn't understand the material in certain classes, felt that he was being picked on by the other students, and had some real anger issues. After numerous suspensions and failing grades, Brandon was placed on home-bound educational services.

Getting out of a big school and its inherent distractions was good for a while, but Brandon missed interacting with other teenagers and having a social life. His grandmother, with whom he had lived since 2011, was having health issues which added to his stress levels. She explained that Brandon needed more one-on-one help than teachers at the high school were able to provide. This was when it was recommended that he try an alternative school environment.

"A couple of teachers who Brandon dearly loves, they said that he can do it, he just needs some help getting motivated. They said, 'We got to get him in the LIFES program', " Regina Tobin said. "That's what saved him."

Brandon's fresh start for the second half of his senior year paid off at first. He rarely missed a day of school and his grades were above average. It seemed like it might be smooth sailing to graduation day.

Then, the bombshell: Tobin, who has always been the rock in Brandon's life, had just received the devastating diagnosis that her liver was failing. His frustration with life and angry outbursts returned. It took a concerted effort on the part of LIFES staff and teachers to help Brandon learn to channel that anger.

"They really helped me a lot - with some of my anger, and they taught me a lot of things that I didn't know. It's kinda hard to explain, but they helped me a lot," he acknowledges.

But it seemed like life was conspiring to make things even more challenging. Algebra raised its ugly head as the academic requirement that would keep him from graduating. Hanging by a thread, Brandon wouldn't know until the last day of school whether he had passed the Standards of Learning exam (SOL). And THEN, on the very last day, Brandon missed getting up with the alarm clock because he spent most of the night in the hospital with Tobin after she took a fall.

But you don't work that hard for so long without someone being in your court. The staff at LIFES drove the 60 miles roundtrip to Brandon's house to pick him up and get him to school just in the nick of time. Only minutes after he took his seat, representatives from the high school arrived to deliver the news about the SOL.

Youth Services 2016-17

90%

average weekly
attendance

100%

LIFES seniors who
graduated with a
high school
diploma

100%

students who
passed to the
next grade

5

field trips to
practice life skills

Brandon had passed by two points. He proudly walked across the commencement ceremony stage three days later to receive his high school diploma.

When asked what the one thing was that helped him the most at LIFES Academy, Brandon said:

“Being successful – that’s what really got me to where I am now. I felt like a failure all through high school. When they stepped in they taught me all these things and that’s where I am now. Happy. Proud of my accomplishment. “

I know now that if I set my mind to it I’ll be able to focus on it and I’ll do it.”



Side Note:

While Brandon is relieved to have finished this journey, he’s not planning to quit learning. He likes to tinker with things and thinks he might enroll in the automotive program at the community college. But that’s later. Right now, he’s earning a few bucks slinging mulch for his uncle’s landscaping company. And he’s just happy to be out of high school.

LIFES Academy

(Lessons in Fundamental and Essential Skills)

LIFES Academy provides an engaging alternative setting for students with special needs. We help students shape appropriate attitudes, behaviors, and life skills so they can realize their fullest potential both academically and socially.

At its foundation, LIFES Academy embraces a partnership approach. We work with each student, family, and our other community partners to ensure each individual student’s success by addressing not only the presenting symptoms but also their root causes. We serve students with developmental delays, emotional and intellectual disabilities, as well as behavioral, health, learning, speech and language challenges.

LIFES Academy is licensed by the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education and is an accredited member of the Virginia Association of Independent Specialized Education Facilities (VAISEF). Students are referred to LIFES Academy through their Local Education Agency’s special education department in cooperation with the locality’s Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT) and Community Policy and Management Team (CPMT).

Project Discovery

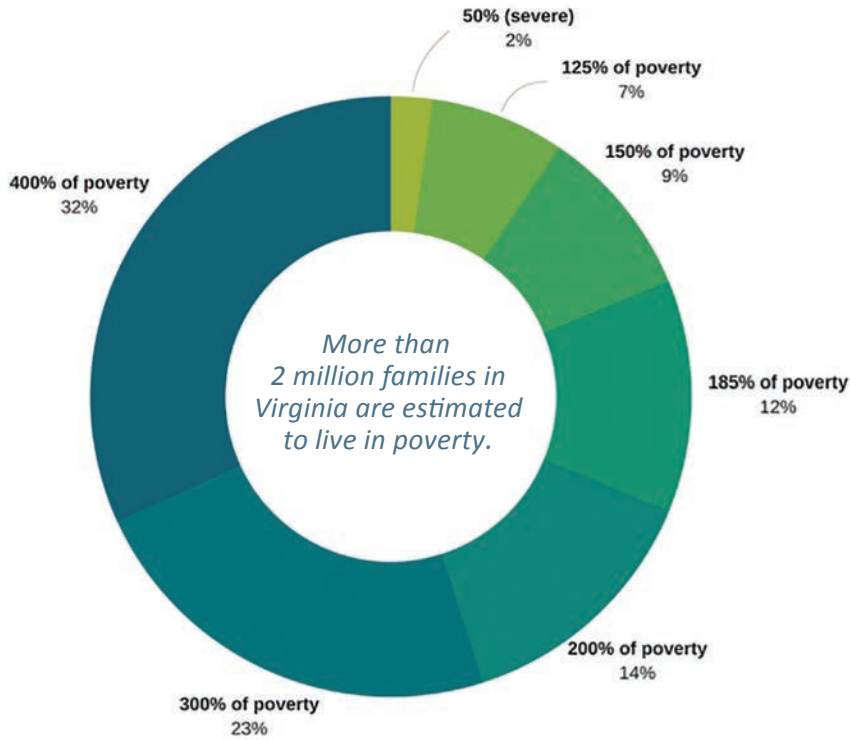
STEP provides tutoring, educational support, SAT and college application preparation, college visits, and other related assistance to low-income middle and high school students who want to go to college (and are often the first in their family to attend college). Through Project Discovery we help students enrolled at Franklin County High School, Benjamin Franklin Middle School and, of course, LIFES Academy.

**STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS**

for the year ended June 30, 2017

	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Temporarily Restricted</u>	<u>Total</u>
SUPPORT & REVENUE			
Grants	\$ 3,518,066	\$ 8,456	\$ 3,526,522
Contributions	146,293	--	146,293
Program service fees	2,991	--	2,991
Rental income	--	--	--
Dividend income	--	--	--
Interest income	3,355	--	3,355
In-kind contributions	654,630	--	654,630
Miscellaneous income	116,204	--	116,204
Net assets released from restrictions	--	--	--
Total Support & Revenue	<u>\$ 4,441,539</u>	<u>\$ 8,456</u>	<u>\$ 4,449,995</u>
EXPENDITURES			
PROGRAM SERVICES			
Head Start	\$ 2,786,635	--	\$ 2,786,635
Youth Services	277,856	--	277,856
Housing	393,356	--	393,356
Senior Services	434,376	--	434,376
Homeless Prevention	237,153	--	237,153
CSBG	224,269	--	224,269
Financial Services	28,518	--	28,518
Total Program Services	<u>\$ 4,382,163</u>	<u>--</u>	<u>\$ 4,382,163</u>
SUPPORT SERVICES			
Management & General	94,857	--	94,857
Total Support Services	<u>\$ 94,857</u>	<u>--</u>	<u>\$ 94,857</u>
Total Expenses	<u>\$ 4,477,020</u>	<u>--</u>	<u>\$ 4,477,020</u>
Change in Net Assets	(35,481)	8,456	(27,025)
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	<u>294,200</u>	<u>--</u>	<u>294,200</u>
Transfers of Net Assets	--	--	--
NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR	<u>\$ 258,719</u>	<u>\$ 8,456</u>	<u>\$ 267,175</u>

Demographics



Family Income Below Federal Poverty Ratios

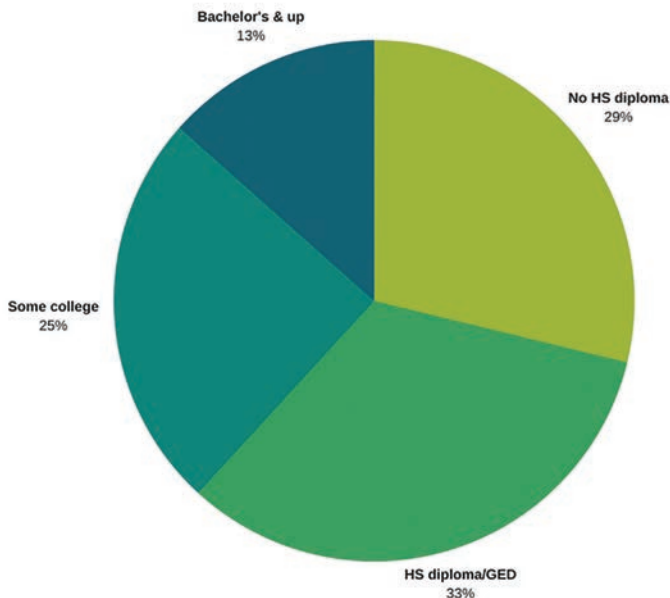
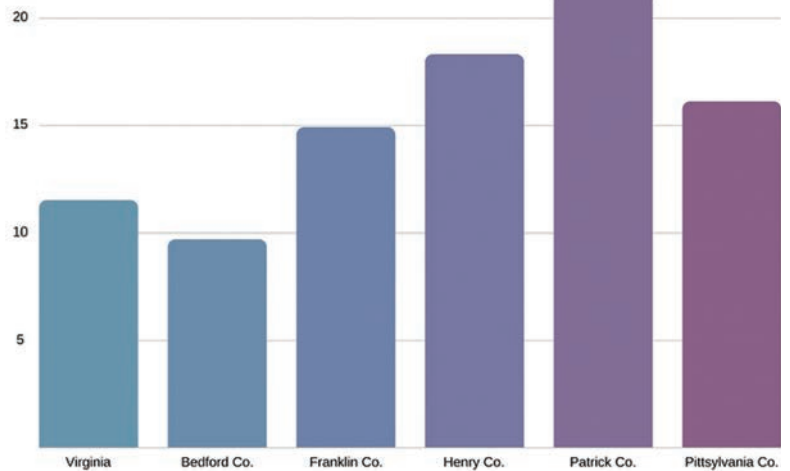
based on 2,054,416 families in poverty in Virginia.

2011-2015 American Community Survey Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau

Percent of People Below Poverty Threshold in STEP Service Area (by County)

based on 2,054,416 families in poverty in Virginia.

2011-2015 American Community Survey Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau



Percentage of Educational Attainment

of the estimated 486,833 people 25 years and older who are below the poverty level in Virginia.

2011-2015 American Community Survey Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau

Our success is a true measure of our most valuable asset of all – people.



Brenda Manning Supportive Services Director

Brenda received the Mountain Mover Award from the Virginia Association of Housing Counselors. The award is given to an individual who demonstrates extraordinary commitment to service. Manning was nominated by her peers.



Paul Doughton Housing & Weatherization Inspector

Paul is STEP's unsung hero, having rescued a family's German Shepherd from their burning home on his way to a routine inspection. The house was a total loss, and a car was severely damaged, but the family's beloved pet survived thanks to Paul's courageous action.



Shirley Wells Early Childhood Education Director

Shirley was named to the Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC) Distinguished Alumni Class of 2017. She earned a certificate in child care, an associate's degree in early childhood education and an associate's degree in education from the community college before attending Averett University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in teaching.



Kristy Pickeral Deputy Executive Director

Kristy earned national certification as a Results-Oriented Management Accountability (ROMA) Implementer. ROMA is a performance-based management system among community action agencies and other eligible entities receiving Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) funds.



STEP could not serve its 3,500+ low-income clients without the help of more than 180 volunteers each year. The value of volunteer hours to STEP is easily in excess of \$500,000, agency officials have determined. "There is no way we can truly put a price tag on what volunteers mean to our communities, but we can safely say that many essential services would not be offered without their help," said STEP Executive Director Marc Crouse. STEP's volunteers donate an estimated 24,000 hours to help serve the community's low-income population through agency programs each year, according to agency reports. Volunteers were celebrated and thanked during Volunteer Appreciation receptions at STEP's Rocky Mount and Stuart offices in April.

STEP uses Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) to ensure great results.

Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) is a national performance based initiative that promotes greater effectiveness and demonstrates results among states and local agencies receiving Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds.

History of ROMA

ROMA was created in 1994 based upon principles contained in the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. In recent years, within a broader national effort to strengthen the performance management culture of the CSBG network, ROMA has been improved and updated. In late 2016 the Next Generation of ROMA was launched providing a system for continuous quality improvement to enable the CSBG network to measure, analyze and communicate performance. Ultimately, ROMA Next Generation will help Community Action Programs generate robust results for the individuals and communities they serve.

Beginning in 2017, the national Community Action Network will be guided by the following three broad anti-poverty goals. These goals replace the previous six Community Action goals used through 2016.

- **Goal 1: Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security.**
- **Goal 2: Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity.**
- **Goal 3: People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities.**

To accomplish these goals, local Community Action Agencies undertake a number of ROMA implementation actions focused on results oriented management and results oriented accountability:

Results Oriented Management

- Assess poverty needs and conditions within the community;
- Define a clear agency anti-poverty mission for community action and a strategy to address those needs, both immediate and longer term, in the context of existing resources and opportunities in the community;
- Identify specific improvements, or results, to be achieved among low-income people and the community; and,
- Organize and implement programs, services, and activities, including advocacy, within the agency and among partnering organizations, to achieve anticipated results.

The Results Oriented Management and Accountability Cycle



Results Oriented Accountability

- Develop and implement strategies to measure and record improvements in the condition of low-income people and in the communities in which they live resulting from Community Action intervention; and,
- Use information about outcomes, or results, with agency board and staff to determine the overall effectiveness, inform annual and long range planning, support agency advocacy, funding, and community partnership activities. Programs and services may be adjusted based on outcomes and findings.

Donors

2016-17

INDIVIDUALS

Anonymous
Kim Adkins
Yvonne Anderson
Rodney Andrews
Angie Austin
Nancy Bell
Becky Bleacher
Mary Bonds
Emily & Billy Boone
Antron Brown
W Cooper Brown
Rachel Cadou
Terry Campbell
Tim Cerebe
Cheryl Cobbs
Anglie Cockerham
Ed Cornbleet
Marc & Cheryl Crouse
Richard & Carol Crouse
Todd & Melinda Crouse
David Cuff
Pat Cundiff
Alixann Davis
Kristin Dulaney
Angela Dupstadt
Missy Dyer
Jane Eaton
Doris Fain
Michael Ferguson
Sandra Ferguson
Mandy Folman
Alise & Oliver Fralin
Tammy Franklin
Roxie Gantt
Gary Gardner
Kevin Gilley
Deanna Goad
Ron & Laurie Guertin
Frank Haerer
Twyla Hambrick
Debbie Hamrick
Daphney Hancock

Crystal Harris
Sharon Harris
Chris Hatman
Harold Hill
Cynthia Hinkle
Latala Hodges
Henry & Nova Holland
Paul Holmburg
Cindy Hostutler
Tanya Huff
Trevor Hughes
Randolph Jennings
Sherrie & Keith Johnson
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Steve Kendrick
Betty Kingery
Tammy Kingery
James F. Kreitzer
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Sharon Lambert
Kristin & Willis Landrum
Dawn Lawrence
Whitney Long
William Loope
Charles Lynch
Brenda Manning
Louise Marshall
Brittany Massey
Dewey McGhee
Jennifer McLaughlin
Melissa McNeely
Elisabet Minter
Larry & Glenna Moore
Jon Morris
Christy Morrison
George & Peggy Morrison
Carol Muse
Tracy Oakes
Patti O'Neal
Andre Peery
Al Peterson
Angela Phillips
Kristy Pickeral
Melissa Pilson
Debbie Price
Donna & Cary Proctor
Leon Puckett
Linda Quinn
Jeff Rakes
Tillman Riddle
Warren Rodgers
Joel Rodriguez
Leslie Sanchez
Jessie Scalf
Janet Schofield
James Shelton

Ann Shumate
Belinda Simmons
Carolyn Simmons
Rodney Simpson
Laura Snyder
Scott Spencer
Allen Stevens
Ted & Diane Taylor
Jackie Thurston
Robert & Dorna Toone
Cynthia Treadway
Mary Trudeau
Rhonda Tyree
Charles Wagoner
Phillip Dale Walker
Jeff & Lori Webber
Bobby Welch
Shirley Wells
Angela & Stewart Werner
Jennie Beth West
Bob & Pat Wetheral
Greg R Winge
Eugene Witt
Gary Wolfe
Justin Woodrow
Pam Worley
Kristin Wray

CORPORATE & ORGANIZATIONAL

Advance Auto
All American Car Wash
Applebees
Auto Zone
Christ Community Church
Coca Cola
Dudley's Truck Stop
Empire Foods
Franklin County YMCA
Freedom First Credit Union
HAWK Advisors
J&R Garage
Jewell Machinery
Jones & DeShon Orthodontics
Kroger
Longwood Signworks
Member One Credit Union
Mount Regis Center
O'Reilly Auto Parts
PAC Interiors
Resurrection Catholic Church
(Joyous Junque)
Roanoke Valley Orthodontics
Ruth's Place
Sigmon Auto Repair
Smile Amazon

Smith Mountain Lake Charity
Home Tour
Stanley Family Foundation
Star City Comedy Club
SunTrust Foundation
The Harvester
thirty-one
TNT Auto Body Repair & Service
Center
United Way: Dancing for a Cause
Wheeler Broadcasting

INVEST IN YOUR COMMUNITY

STEP relies on donations and sponsorships from our community so that we can help our friends and neighbors in need. You can play a role in helping us continue this good and necessary work. You can make a difference!

Ways to Give

- A donation by cash or check
- A donation of appreciated stock or property
- Sponsorship of a program or special event
- A gift in memory of a loved one
- Planned giving with a bequest, charitable trust, or by naming STEP as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, contributions to STEP are tax-deductable.

For more information, please contact Marc Crouse, Executive Director, (540) 483-5142, marc.crouse@stepincva.com.

We ask forgiveness of anyone we may have inadvertently left off our list. Please call (540) 483-5142, ext. 3003 with any corrections.

Board of Directors



All community action agencies (CAA) are governed by a tri-partite Board of Directors, meaning 1/3 must consist of elected public officials or their representatives, not less than 1/3 of members must be chosen democratically and represent low-income individuals/families, and the remaining 1/3 of members must represent the community (business, labor, industry, religious, law enforcement, education, other major groups, and interests).

The STEP board of directors works very closely with the Head Start Policy Council, fulfilling the Head Start Performance Standards requiring that certain governance functions be shared jointly by the STEP Board of Directors and the Head Start Policy Council.

Peggy Morrison, President

Urban Planner, Retired

Pat Cundiff, Vice President

Interior Designer/Operator P.A.C. Interiors

Angie Austin, Secretary/Treasurer

Market Manager, Member One Federal Credit Union

Kim Adkins

Executive Director, United Way of HC/M

Nancy Bell

Population Health Manager, Franklin County Health Dept.

Mary Bonds

Manufacturing Professional, Retired

Antron Brown

US Army Retired

Cooper Brown

Attorney, Commonwealth's Attorney Office

David Cuff

Chapter 60 Commander, Disabled American Veterans

Kristin Dulaney

Early Childhood Professor, Patrick Henry CC

Michael Ferguson

Food Services Director, Ferrum College

Deanna Goad

STEP Head Start Policy Council Chair, Homemaker

Debbie Hamrick

Adult & Career Education Coordinator, Franklin County

Public Schools

Crystal Harris

Patrick County Board of Supervisors

Betty Kingery

Re/Max Mountain to Lake Realty Owner

Patti O'Neal

Day Care Provider, Retired

Angela Phillips

Director, FC Family Resource Center

Leon Puckett

Stuart Town Council

Warren Rodgers, Jr.

Executive Director, Southside Survivor Response Center

Joel Rodriguez

TNT Auto Body Repair & Service Center

Mary Trudeau



Educator, Retired

Charles Wagner

Franklin County Board of Supervisors

Greg Winge

C.S.A. Program Director, FC Government Center



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