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Step By Step, Inc.

Newsletter - Winter 2024

Step By Step Earns Three-Year CARF Accreditation

Step By Step has proudly been accredited for a period of three years for its exceptional programs in Behavioral Consultation Services for Autism Spectrum Disorder in Children & Adolescents and Community Housing for Autism Spectrum Disorder in Adults. This marks the consecutive Three-Year Accreditation awarded by **CARF International** to Step By Step.

This accreditation decision signifies the highest level of recognition given to an agency, showcasing our substantial conformance to CARF standards. It follows a rigorous peer-review process, affirming Step By

Step's commitment to offering measurable, accountable, and high-quality programs and services.

Eric Lindey (President/CEO of Step By Step) shared: *"We are thrilled to receive another three-year accreditation from CARF. This affirms our commitment to quality services for our consumers and helps us to continue to challenge each other to provide best practices in our work. I thank all our employees for their professionalism and dedication and CARF for being a partner who not only challenges us to be better but lifts us up by recognizing our hard work."*

CARF International, an independent, nonprofit accreditor of health and human services, seeks to promote the quality, value, and optimal outcomes of services. Established in 1966 as the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, now known as CARF International, the accrediting body sets consumer-focused standards to help organizations measure and enhance the quality of their programs and services. For more details about the accreditation process, visit the CARF website at www.carf.org."

Step By Step Foundation Fuels Hope with Donation to United Way's Nurses Pantry Program

We are delighted to share that the Step By Step Foundation recently presented a generous check donation to the **Wyoming Valley United Way's Nurse Pantry Program**, an inspiring initiative dedicated to providing essential support for children in need.



l to r: **Mary Beth Farrell**, Foundation board member; **Bill Jones**, President and CEO United Way of Wyoming Valley; and **George Rable**, SBS Foundation Chair.

The Nurse's Pantry serves as an in-school resource providing clothing, toiletries, and other wellness products to ensure that children have the essentials they need to succeed both in school and in life. For families facing poverty, the lack of simple items like hygiene products and school-approved attire can lead to extended school absences for their children. Lost

school time translates to lost learning time, impacting academic success.

How It Works: Elementary students are introduced to The Nurse's Pantry through school nurses, principals, and guidance counselors. This essential resource not only offers attire but also provides hygiene

items, appropriate footwear, outerwear, undergarments, and lice treatment kits. Currently, The Nurse's Pantry operates in 27 schools across eight school districts throughout the Wyoming Valley, thanks to the facili-

tation by the United Way.

Addressing Chronic Absenteeism: It's crucial to recognize that a lack of access to basic necessities is a leading reason for chronic absenteeism among students. The Nurse's Pantry plays a pivotal role in breaking down these barriers, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to attend school regularly and thrive academically.

Step By Step Foundation's Support: The Step By Step Foundation proudly supports programs and services of Step By Step, Inc. We are a 501(c)3 organization registered with the Commonwealth of PA Bureau of Charitable Organizations. Our recent donation to the United Way's Nurses Pantry is a testament to our commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of children in our community.



Celebrating our 7th Consecutive Platinum Award for “Best Place to Work in NEPA”

We are thrilled to share the exhilarating news that, once again, Step By Step has clinched the prestigious **Platinum Award for the “Best Place to Work”** in the **2023 Times Leader** competition. This extraordinary accomplishment marks our seventh consecutive victory and stands as a testament to the unwavering dedication and commitment of our exceptional staff.

The votes of our staff have propelled us to this remarkable achievement,

solidifying Step By Step’s position as the premier provider of human services not only in the Northeast but across the entire state of Pennsylvania. We extend our deepest gratitude for your steadfast support and dedication, which have played a pivotal role in maintaining our outstanding seven-year winning streak.

Eric Lindey (President/CEO of Step By Step) commented: *“As we come together to celebrate this remarkable*

achievement, we want to express our sincere appreciation for the exceptional work each of you contributes every day. Your efforts make Step By Step a truly exceptional workplace, and we are proud to be a part of such a remarkable team.”

Thank you once again to our employees for your unwavering commitment and for making Step By Step the Best Place to Work.

Step By Step Celebrates Inaugural Consumer Holiday Party

We are thrilled to share the joyous success of our very first **North-east office Consumer Holiday Party**, a festive event that brought together the vibrant spirit of the season and the warmth of our Step By Step family.



sitting, l. to r.: **Michael P.** and **Richard M.** standing: **Mrs. Claus (Holly Curran)** and **Santa (Eric Lindey).**

A heartfelt thanks goes out to the remarkable committee members who worked tirelessly across various departments within SBS to orchestrate this unforgettable celebration: **Melanie White, Christelle Hoffman, Jean McGuiness, Colleen Kustrin, Lori Hahn, Holly Curran, Diane Kendig, Brittany Kittle, Savannah David, Colleen Reese, and Nadine Rosenko.** Their dedication and collab-



Party goes dancing the afternoon away.

orative efforts ensured that the party became the highlight of the holiday season for over 200 attendees, including consumers, staff, and administrative members.

The festive atmosphere was enhanced by the creative and spirited costumes donned by committee members, with **Nadine Rosenko** embracing The Grinch, **Jackie Walsh** bringing a gingerbread blowup to life, **Christelle Hoffman** charming as an elf, **Holly Curran** embodying Mrs. Claus, and the jolly **Eric Lindey** stepping into the role of Santa himself.

EJ the DJ provided a lively musical backdrop, transforming the venue into a dance floor where everyone could let loose and revel in the holiday spirit. The party featured delightful music, scrumptious food, delectable cupcakes, and thoughtful gifts, creating a joyous ambiance that resonated throughout the event.

Diane Kendig (Service Director of Developmental Disabilities Services) shared: *“It was so heartening to witness the active participation of numerous individuals at the Christmas luncheon. The dynamic atmosphere, with committee members, staff, and individuals dancing, along with the delightful food, made it a truly memorable event. I hope everyone experienced as much joy as we did planning the event.”*

We thank all for joy and camaraderie shared during the party, leaving a night to remember in the hearts of many.

Lehigh Valley—Designer Bag Bingo April 7, 2024

Step By Step’s Lehigh Valley office’s annual **“Designer Bag BINGO”** fundraiser is set for **April 7, 2024**. Funds raised are used for two annual events held for people receiving services from Step By Step.

Designer Bag BINGO features 20 BINGO games. Participants can buy four Special BINGO games at the event. Designer Bag BINGO prizes include a variety of bags by Coach, Michael Kors, Kate Spade and Vera Bradley. In addition, several vendors will attend

the event, including Pampered Chef, Scentsy, and Tastefully Simple. Food and baked goods will be available for purchase.

Doors will open at 11:30 a.m. and BINGO begins at 1:00 p.m. at the American Club of Coplay Pavilion, 300 Cherry St., Coplay, PA. **Only 200 tickets (\$25 per ticket) will be sold**

For tickets, or to be a promoted sponsor of the event, contact **Kim Orner-Rauch** at 610-867-0688 or [korner@](mailto:korner@stepysepusa.com)

stepysepusa.com.

Prize bags, vendors and sponsors are featured on Facebook at [Designer.Bag.BINGO](https://www.facebook.com/Designer.Bag.BINGO)



WRAP: A Way of Life

Written by Lee Horton, Step By Step Program Development Coordinator.

In Great Falls, Montana, I had the privilege of witnessing the incredible impact of WRAP, an extraordinary program that has become more than just a mere ac-

ronym. WRAP, also known as Wellness Recovery Action Plan, is a life-changing framework that empowers individuals to take charge of their mental health and overall well-being. It is a comprehensive system that guides individuals in setting personal wellness goals, developing effective strategies to overcome challenges, and creating a path towards recovery. But WRAP is not just a program; it is a way of life that inspires hope, resilience, and the pursuit of a truly fulfilling existence.

I had the honor of co-facilitating a transformative WRAP Seminar II during my visit, where I witnessed the impactful power of WRAP. It was humbling to mentor newly trained



WRAP Really Brings People Together: WRAP facilitators travel across the frozen state of Montana to meet for breakfast (far right—Lee Horton).

WRAP facilitators through their first Seminar I, as we delved into the depths of personal journeys and experiences. The

diverse backgrounds of the individuals involved added richness and depth to the conversations, creating an atmosphere of understanding and unity.

One graduate's journey with WRAP allowed them to see themselves through a new lens, discovering a fresh perspective on life. The impact of WRAP extends far beyond a mere program; it offers a transformative way of life, illuminating a brighter path forward for those who embrace it.

The two-day WRAP Seminar left an indelible mark on all who participated. With its unwavering belief in limitless recovery and respect for each

individual's unique journey, WRAP meets people exactly where they are.

At a restaurant, a Native American graduate shared their vision of bringing WRAP to Native American communities, recognizing its potential to profoundly impact lives.

As discussions about WRAP unfolded, a curiosity from other patrons grew, and after explaining what it was some expressed their eagerness to incorporate this life-changing approach into their own lives. The ripple effect of WRAP's influence began to spread, igniting a spark of intrigue within the hearts of those who listened.

WRAP holds the key to transforming lives, reshaping society, and creating lasting change. It is not merely a program, but a profound philosophy that empowers individuals to reclaim their well-being and build a support network that sustains them on their journey. Let us embrace the power of WRAP and embark on a collective path towards a brighter, more fulfilling existence.

Step By Step Hosts Special Olympics Night



Special Olympics Pennsylvania Northeast Region hosted *Special Olympics Night* on January 6, 2024, as the

Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins took on the rival Lehigh Valley Phantoms at the Mohegan Sun Arena at Casey Plaza, Wilkes-Barre Township!

The event, proudly sponsored by Step By Step, promised an evening of exhilarating hockey, camaraderie, and philanthropy. Proceeds from each ticket purchased supported local Special Olympics, along with the option to add on additional do-

nations to show support.

The festivities commenced with the reintroduction of the beloved "Freezin' for a Reason" dunk tank at the Penguins game. Thanks to the generous sponsorship by Step By Step, each individual supported by the organization attending the game had the opportunity to dunk a volunteer from the Pennsylvania State Police, fostering a light-hearted atmosphere in support of a noble cause.

Beyond the dunk tank excitement, attendees had the privilege of interacting with Special Olympics athletes and mingling with Penguins hockey heroes. As a demonstration of

commitment to inclusivity and unity, one individual from Step By Step participated in the opening ceremony torch lighting, continuing the tradition from the previous year.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to everyone who played a part in and attended this memorable evening of sports and community. We deeply appreciate your support.

Please note, the agency has arranged ticket exchanges for individuals who were unable to attend this event. Kindly return all unused tickets to **Patti Blazaskie** for replacement with tickets to a later spring date game.

Workplace Communication: Email Etiquette

This installment of the **Quality & Compliance "Communication"** series focuses on email etiquette, or the code of conduct recommended for email composition and exchanges. In addition to causing confusion and sometimes offense in the workplace, poor email etiquette wastes valuable time, so please try to be aware of the following email tips and use them daily:

1) Compose your email before adding addresses. Sending an unfinished email causes confusion for the recipient and embarrassment to the sender.

2) Use standard formatting for your email. Avoid using emojis and difficult-to-read fonts and check all spelling. Overuse of bold-faced text, underlining, and italics can confuse the recipient. Try not to use abbreviations unless you know that all recipients will understand them. Be sure that your salutations/greetings and closings are professional. When in doubt, choose a formal salutation and closing. Before adding a salutation, double check the person's first and last name for spelling and use the person's full first name for introductory emails.

3) Be concise and relevant. It is best not to use humor or mention controversial subjects within your email.

Assure that your communication causes no offense and is not misunderstood by keeping the communication short, professionally worded, and to-the-point.

4) Proofread your email twice. Don't send an email out before carefully reading it. Identify areas that can be clarified and remove/rewrite any lines that are unnecessary or have a negative/hostile tone. Emails that are sent to clarify mistakes should be neutral in tone, addressing the mistake in a way that is not defensive or accusatory.

5) Use a clear and professional subject line. This is the line of text that recipients read to determine the priority of the email, so it needs to be precise, short, professional, and attention grabbing.

6) Confirm correct email addresses. Sometimes there are multiple recipients with the same or similar names, so be sure that you are choosing the correct recipients before sending. Checking this information also lessens the likelihood of breaching confidential information.

7) Assure attachments are correct/included. Additionally, be sure that the size of the document attached is reasonable for the recipients. Explore other options for sending large docu-

ments if necessary.

8) Maintain confidentiality. There are times when confidential information must be exchanged and this requires encryption. Company protocols may allow individual initials to be used within correspondences, but documents should still be sent with extreme caution. If you are uncertain about what kind of information can be sent, discuss it with your supervisor. Use the bcc (blind carbon copy) feature on emails to protect the privacy of email addresses when sending emails to external recipients.

9) Read emails carefully before replying. Sometimes a question springs to mind upon reading an email and the recipient's first impulse is to ask for clarification. Before doing this, please reread the email; the answer to the question is often there.

10) Decide if a response to an email is required and pick the best method of responding. Sometimes an email is merely informational and does not require response. If you choose to respond, be careful when using "reply all." Each time someone uses "reply all" on an informational email, the content of the original email is pushed further down the email chain and is less accessible/visible to other recipients.

Step By Step Sponsors Special Olympics Polar Plunge

The first-time-ever **Northeast Polar Plunge** was recently held at Montage Mountain to raise money for a great cause, the **Special Olympics of Pennsylvania**. Step By Step, Inc. was a proud sponsor of the event.

The mission of Special Olympics PA is to provide year-round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the

community.

A large crowd came out to show their support and hundreds were brave enough to jump into the frigid water at the January 2024 event. Many of the Olympians were in attendance, attesting to the fun and commitment of being a Special Olympics athlete. Everyone



Eric Lindey, President/CEO, at the January 2024 Northeast Polar Plunge.

supporting the event agreed that it's all about fostering inclusion and celebrating the accomplished Special Olympic athletes.

Eric Lindey, Step By Step President/CEO, stated: "I had a great time attending this cool (pun intended) event. This is the second event Step By Step has sponsored for the Special Olympics. We were glad to be part of it and hope to continue supporting this important organization."

Save the Date: Step By Step Foundation Golf Tournament

The Step By Step Foundation is delighted to announce the upcoming Golf Tournament scheduled for **Monday, August 26, 2024**, at the Huntsville Golf Club in Dallas, PA.



This annual golf event promises a thrilling day on the green, followed by an evening of dinner and exciting auction items, all while rallying support for the **Step By Step Foundation**. As a 501(c)3 organization, the Foun-

dation plays a pivotal role in supporting the various programs and services offered by Step By Step. The golf tournament has consistently been one of the most enjoyable days of the year!

Be sure to mark your calendars and

check back on our website at StepByStepUSA.com for forthcoming tournament information. For those interested in sponsorship opportunities or with any related inquiries, please contact **Patti Blazaskie** via email at pblazaskie@stepbystepusa.com or call 570-829-3477 extension 7909.

Save the date and join us for a day of golf, camaraderie, and unwavering support for the impactful work of Step By Step!

Step By Step Spreads Holiday Joy: A Heartwarming Christmas Gathering

As we reflect on the spirit of the holiday season, we are delighted to share a heartwarming story that embodies the essence of compassion and connection within our Step By Step family.

Our dedicated employee, **Holly Curran**, NE/Administration Receptionist, recently extended a warm invitation to **Barb**, a cherished individual receiving our services, for a special Christmas celebration. This gesture not only highlights the strong bonds formed through our agency but also exemplifies the val-



Barb snuggles with her new furry friend, **Iggy**, while celebrating Christmas in **Holly Curran's** home.

ues that define Step By Step.

Last year, Barb faced the loss of her husband, and she found herself without immediate family nearby during the holidays. Recognizing the importance of companionship during the holiday season, Holly opened her home to Barb on Christmas day. Together, they prepared dinner, shared laughter, and soaked in the joyous atmosphere. Barb's genuine

love for life and her delightful presence added an extra layer of holiday magic. One can't help but be moved by the sentiment shared by Holly, "*Nobody should be alone on Christmas.*" This embodies the spirit of care and inclusion that Step By Step strives to instill in every aspect of our services.

As we navigate the challenges of the world, it warms our hearts to witness such acts of kindness within our Step By Step community. The bonds forged extend beyond professional relationships, creating a tapestry of support and friendship that truly sets us apart. May this heartening story inspire us all to find opportunities to spread joy and warmth in the lives of those we serve.



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 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.)

Spring Safety Hazards

As we draw near to spring, our thoughts begin to drift to outside activities, spring blossoms, and fresh beginnings. It's a time of hope and growth and sunshine and rainbows. With longer days and warmer temperatures, everything is coming up rosy! Well, almost everything. With winter ending and spring on the horizon, it is also the time for spring showers, allergies, and daylight savings time. There is no better time for a little spring cleaning with some safety measures.

In March we can experience everything from snow, to freezing rain or light spring showers. Extra precautions should be taken due to changing conditions. With wet ground, there is an increased chance of **slips, trips and falls**. Here are some safety tips to prevent springtime falls: 1) Wear non-slip shoes to prevent slipping on wet floors. 2) Wipe your



feet before entering your home or office. 3) Always use handrails when going up or down steps. 4) If you are unsure if a sidewalk is wet or icy, test it before walking fully onto it. 5) Keep an umbrella in your vehicle and in your house.

As the trees and plants begin to wake up from their winter slumber and new buds begin to appear, many people suffer from **seasonal allergies**. Even if you have never experienced an allergy before, they can develop at any time. According to the Mayo clinic, there are some steps that you can take to reduce miserable symptoms like watery, itchy eyes and sneezing: 1) Check the pollen count on your local news or the internet. On the worst days, stay indoors or wear a mask outside. 2) Change your clothing when you come back indoors. 3) Take a show-

er to wash off pollen. 4) Limit your exposure to freshly mowed grass and pulled weeds. 5) Use an air purifier indoors if possible.

Now that you are ready to spring forward, you should also be aware of some safety tips for **daylight savings time**. When we lose sleep, it can take days or weeks to acclimate. Here are some ways you can avoid the exhausting effects of daylight savings time: 1) Adjust your bedtime the week leading up to the time change by going to bed 15 minutes earlier. 2) Eat dinner a little earlier than usual to help your body adjust. 3) Get up and go outdoors in the morning after the time change for fresh air. 4) Take short naps when possible to help catch up on lost sleep. 5) Use extra caution when driving as you may not be as alert when tired.

Keeping these safety tips in mind can help you to prepare now so you can enjoy a healthy and wonderful spring season.



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



Karen Zomerfeld, Editor. For more information on contents in this newsletter, please contact info@stepbystepusa.com. Special thanks to the following employees for newsletter contributions: Patti Blazaskie, Kimberly Orner-Rauch, Lee Horton, Philip Fritchey, and Scott Gomb.