



Lake Effect Leaders 2018-2019 Host Sites and Descriptions

Year One Projects:

Bayfront Maritime Center - Maritime Academy VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Education/Post-Secondary Education

The goal of the Maritime Center project is to help ensure that students, especially underserved populations, are presented with a unique, rigorous, and engaging secondary education experience that will lead them to be properly prepared for a career and/or continuing education after graduation. The VISTA will develop recruitment and marketing materials, conduct outreach, establish outcome measurements for the Maritime Academy, and create a database for those outcomes. Lastly, the VISTA will network, identify, and create a database of opportunities for students that consist of schools, apprenticeship programs, Maritime Career Paths, etc. **Website:** <https://bayfrontcenter.org/>

Catholic Charities Counseling and Adoption Services (CCCAS) - Systems VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Economic Opportunity

The goal of CCCAS' project is to develop a system/process in order to better serve the many people requesting emergency assistance and services in the various locations that CCCAS operates. The VISTA will analyze client needs, develop a process/system of reviewing, assessing, and determining if clients should be served by referrals or CCCAS, and develop an outcome measurement system to quantify how well needs were met versus the amount of money needed to aid clients.

Website: <http://www.cccas.org/>

Crawford County Mental Health Awareness Program (CHAPS)/Crawford County Coalition on Housing Needs (CCCHN) - Volunteer Coordinator and Resident Empowerment VISTA (Meadville)

Focus Area: Economic Opportunity

The goal of CHAPS/CCCHN joint project is to establish a volunteer inventory while empowering residents of both agencies through education, support and community building. The VISTA will build capacity of the agencies volunteer programs by creating an inventory of existing volunteers, developing/implementing an outreach strategy, and increasing funding. The VISTA will also get information on local rental issues and research trends on renter education, engagement, and empowerment. Last, the VISTA will develop educational programming, and conduct community building events. **Websites:** (CHAPS: <http://www.chapsinc.org/>) (CCCHN:

<http://www.unitedwaywcc.org/crawford-county-coalition-housing-needs-inc>)

City of Erie - Neighborhood Strengthening and Stabilization Initiative VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Economic Opportunity/Housing

The goal of the City of Erie's project is to support the city's *Neighborhood Strengthening and Stabilization Initiative* which will create strategic plans for all 17 of Erie's neighborhoods. These plans will be resident driven and city supported. The VISTA will assist in the following areas: program coordination between the city and neighborhood leaders, event planning to garner resident engagement, constructing neighborhood planning documents that promote the priorities of each neighborhood, working with municipal members to implement plans, finding funding alternatives for redevelopment projects, and working on communication strategies to inform residents on land banks, reuse projects, and the importance of strategic planning. **Website:** www.erie.pa.us

Common Roots - Capacity Building VISTA (Meadville)

Focus Area: Economic Opportunity/Housing

The goal of Common Roots' project is to build the organization's administrative and programmatic capacity to help expand safe & affordable energy-efficient housing, provide job training and access to work in construction and sustainability, and promote community participation. The VISTA will help develop the administrative infrastructure, strategic partnerships, membership base, and financial and human resources that will scale up the training program and work towards the development of cooperative housing for low-income Meadville residents. **Website:** <https://commonrootspa.com>

Community Wellness Initiative (CWI) - MARC Community Garden VISTA (Meadville)

Focus Area: Healthy Futures/Food Access & Security

The goal of the Community Wellness Initiative project is to build the capacity of the Meadville Area Recreation Complex (MARC) Community Garden to help move it away from grant funding in order to be sustainable. The VISTA will coordinate program evaluation and assist in the development of a long-term strategy for the project's continued management and funding. The VISTA will also recruit garden participants, coordinate gardening and cooking workshops, establish volunteer positions for the garden's management, and supervise volunteers and Allegheny students.

Website: <http://sites.allegheny.edu/cwi/>

Erie City School District - Fresh Food Education Program VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Healthy Futures/Food Access & Security

The goal of the Erie City School District's project is to build the capacity and expand the *Fresh Food Education Program* in order to educate youth about nutrition, teach them how to grow food/prepare it, and provide new opportunities for students to serve their communities by donating to local food pantries. The VISTA will help bring curriculum into Erie City middle and high schools, incorporating nutrition education, culinary skills, STEM, and career preparation. VISTA activities will include working with teachers to incorporate garden and nutritional concepts into courses, working with farmers to include more fresh, local produce in school cafeterias, developing a strategy to promote urban gardening among parents, schools, and communities, and working with current and new partners to help provide volunteers and financial support to the program.

Website: <https://www.eriesd.org/site/default.aspx?PageID=1>

Gannon University - Strong VISTA Coordinator (Erie)

Focus Area: Healthy Futures

The goal of Gannon University's project is to build the capacity of *Strong*, an afterschool program that focuses on improving nutrition and physical activity in pre-teen girls and their families. The VISTA will refine the curriculum based on feedback from the pilot program, solidify collaboration with existing and new partners, recruit/manage volunteers, establish an infrastructure by setting up roles and responsibilities, develop a budget, and help to secure future funding. **Website:**

<http://www.gannon.edu/>

Our West Bayfront - Neighborhood Revitalization and Resident Liaison VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Economic Opportunity/Housing

The goal of Our West Bayfront's project is to increase the number of low-income West Bayfront residents living in safe, healthy, and affordable housing by removing barriers of access to housing resources. Barriers will be removed by assisting residents in activities that strengthen neighborhood pride and encouraging investments in the housing stock. The VISTA will serve as a resident liaison, develop different outreach methods to promote available programming in the neighborhood, and assist property owners with paperwork and housing applications. The VISTA will also build a network of volunteers to help neighbors with small repair projects and/or neighborhood beautification projects.

Website: www.ourwestbayfront.org

Year Two Projects:

Bethany Outreach Center (BOC) - Youth Program Assessor VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Education/K-12 Success

The goal of the BOC project is to (1) improve engagement and preparation of children in grade school for reading and learning activities and (2) improve high school students motivation for, and awareness of, post-graduate jobs and higher-education opportunities as evidenced by improved grades/proficiency scores and lower dropout rates of individuals in the programs. The VISTA will: document processes related to the programs; identify improvements within these processes based on best practices, effectiveness, and efficiency; distribute processes and training materials to staff and volunteers; try to expand the client base; and assist refugee and new American neighbors in assessing and utilizing the organization's programs.

Website: <http://bethanyoutreachcenter.org>

Early Connections - Marketing and Fundraising Specialist VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Education/School Readiness

The goal of Early Connections' project is to maintain and increase the quality of services and capital improvements for Early Connections by helping develop an effective marketing plan, updating social media, and assisting in fundraising strategies. The VISTA will take on developing an effective marketing strategy, further outreach activities, provide resources and referrals to promote school readiness, improve the website and social media pages, increase the donor base, and enhance fundraisers.

Website: earlyconnectionserie.org

Edinboro University - Community School Liaison VISTA (Edinboro)

Focus Area: Education/K-12 Success

The goal of Edinboro University's project is to infuse McKinley Elementary School with an array of services and supports to increase the academic performance of students as demonstrated in increased standardized testing and qualitative feedback from educators and families. The VISTA will develop a comprehensive list of services to bring to the school, engage stakeholders to begin service development (bring services/students to the school for support), and operationalize all activities. Operational activities include creating an implementation plan, tracking mechanisms for evaluation reporting and research, and creating an on-going communication strategy to inform the school and community of progress at the school. **Website:** www.edinboro.edu

Erie County Department of Health - Food Policy Advisory Council VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Healthy Futures/Food

The goal of the Erie County Department of Health project is to organize farmers, community members, and organizations to form a Food Policy Advisory Council in order to eliminate food deserts in the county. The project focus will be to form the council, and work with existing farmers markets to organize and maximize impact on food deserts. The VISTA will get the council up and running by building relationships, recruiting new members, and coordinating the group until leadership roles are established. The VISTA will also develop community projects for the council to participate in and work with farmers markets to bring in local produce to new vendors, while assisting market managers to create SNAP/WIC doubling program. **Website:** <https://www.eriecountypa.gov/county-services/health-department.aspx>

Gannon University - Gannon University Liaison to NW PA Opioid Responder (Erie)

Focus Area: Healthy Futures/ Access to Care

The goal of Gannon University's project is to connect Gannon with opportunities that address the opioid crisis in Erie County through research, treatment, prevention, messaging, and policy improvements. The VISTA will identify programs and initiatives currently addressing the opioid crisis in the county, identify the needs of the programs and gaps that students could fill to address the crisis, identify funding and faculty that will commit to participating, and connect Gannon with the community to deploy resources into these programs. The VISTA will also organize special programs at the University to help solve the problem/highlight the initiative. **Website:** www.gannon.edu

Penn State Behrend (PSB) - Food Security Liaison VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Healthy Futures/Food Access & Security

The Penn State Behrend VISTA project will address the specific poverty related topic of Healthy Futures by providing resources that will support the development and sustainability of community-based food systems. The VISTA will utilize PSB's strengths in research and outreach using the Penn State "open lab" concept by using the *Waste Not* program, campus food collections, Lion Pantry, and the community garden as research tools for best practices that can be shared with individuals, community organizations, and members of our campus community. The VISTA will focus on program development, student engagement and research, and outreach to provide a more strategic and intentional focus on

the issue of food insecurity. They will continue to work with food donations, growing food, and exploring a food bank on campus. **Website:** <http://behrend.psu.edu/>

St. Martin Center (SMC) - Data/Program Analyst VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Economic Opportunity/Financial Literacy

The goal of SMC project is to reduce poverty in Erie by improving its ability to provide basic needs and financial literacy programs. The VISTA will work on data analysis and expand further into more fundraising requests. The VISTA will also assist with: outcome reporting and monitoring of the food service, utility, and rental assistance program; grant research/writing for basic needs and financial literacy opportunities; program design; and combining financial literacy/education with each request for rent/utility funding. **Website:** www.stmartincenter.org

United Way of Erie County (UWEC) - Community School Liaison VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Education: K-12 Success

The goal of UWEC's project is to establish community schools throughout Erie County to align a full range of community resources with the specific needs of students, their families, and their neighborhoods to ensure student success as measured by Shared Community School Outcomes. The VISTA will continue to develop partnerships, assess data and outcomes, identify and coordinate training needs, implement quality assurance processes, and maintain a high level of transparency and communication. The VISTA will also develop a database of community programs focused on providing programming at community schools, recruit/train volunteers to assist in school activities, and provide support to the local campaign for grade-level reading to ensure alignment with community schools.

Website: <https://www.unitedwayerie.org>

Women's Services - Opioid Intervention Coordinator VISTA (Meadville)

Focus Area: Healthy Futures/Access to Care & Opioid Focused Programming

The goal of Women Services' project is to build capacity of the Crawford County Overdose Prevention Coalition by growing membership, developing its brand, promoting its existence within the community, creating leadership positions, and identifying new leadership - all to curb the escalation of life threatening drug abuse. The VISTA will be a liaison for all opioid related work. This includes working with key stakeholders to collect demographic information about recent opioid related deaths and studying related opioid issues such as babies born with drug addictions, the use of Narcan, etc. The VISTA will expand the coalition and facilitate logistics of the meetings, analyze study findings, and develop presentation materials based off results. **Website:** <https://www.womensservicesinc.com/>

Year Three Projects:

Bayfront East Side Task Force (BEST) - Home Chore Program Coordinator VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Economic Opportunity/Safe and Affordable Housing

The goal of BEST's project is to provide minor and critical home repairs to residents of the East Bayfront neighborhood in order to create a robust housing stock and increase the amount of equity homeowners have in their houses and their desire to remain in the neighborhood. The VISTA will continue working to expand the existing *Home Repair* program, as well as managing Façade applications. The VISTA will also

identify funding opportunities for home repair projects, create processes and management tools to track home improvement funds, create marketing materials to promote BEST, develop a volunteer guidebook, improve the home repair class, and find ways to collaborate with other area agencies focused on neighborhood development and housing issues. **Website:** www.besterie.org

Bethesda Lutheran Services (Trinity Center) - Volunteer Program VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Education/K-12 Success

The goal of the Trinity Center's project is to work towards sustainability of the volunteer program and to develop and maintain partnerships within Erie to reduce poverty. The VISTA will train staff to use the established volunteer methods, focus on partnerships within walking distance of the center to help overcome transportation barriers, unite residents of the Little Italy neighborhood, and work on raising money to pay for volunteer clearances for those requesting financial assistance.

Website: www.bethesda1919.org

Community Shelter Services (CSS) - Community Volunteer Coordinator VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Economic Opportunity/Safe and Affordable Housing

The goal of this project is to build the capacity of CSS to increase public awareness of services offered to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and to help CSS better engage volunteers, support/coordinator volunteers within agency programs, and generate funds. The VISTA will continue to enhance and adapt marketing messages to program cycles and growth for the purpose of public education, volunteer recruitment, and fund development. The VISTA will also expand the organization's social media presence and update their website, and expand their newsletter and other forms of communication with volunteers and donors. **Website:** unavailable at this time

House of Mercy (HOM) - Economic Development Revitalization VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Economic Opportunity/ Safe and Affordable Housing

The goal of HOM's project is to collaborate with organizations, businesses, and residents in the target area that the agency works within to implement a strategic plan to revitalize the Buffalo Road corridor by addressing blight, enhancing environmental beautification, engaging residents to improve health and vitality of the target neighborhood, and secure long-term funding to ensure the strategic plan's success. The VISTA will implement actions steps from the strategic plan, coordinate focus groups and community meetings to increase community engagement with the neighborhood revitalization project, assess the needs of the community, partner with local organizations to expand reach/scope of the plan, secure funding, maintain a website, and assist with outreach efforts to increase awareness of current House of Mercy programming. **Website:** www.houseofmercyerie.org

Mercyhurst University (MU) - Youth Mentor Program Coordinator VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Education/K-12 Success

The goal of MU's project is to support a third year of the mentoring program partnership with JoAnna Connell School, support a second year of a relationship building with Pfeiffer-Burleigh Elementary School, and support the continuation of game-based mentoring initiatives and long-term program sustainability for both programs. The VISTA will co-create and implement multi-year program

assessments, manage mentor resources and help to develop curriculum for mentor trainings, set-up and manage transportation logistics for field trips, seek funding for unmet program needs, plan for long-term program sustainability, and assist in training new faculty and staff that want to get involved.

Website: www.mercyhurst.edu

Pennsylvania Soldiers' and Sailors' Home - VET Specialist VISTA (Erie)

Focus Area: Veterans and Military Families

The goal of PA Soldiers' and Sailors' project is to connect as many Erie area veterans to service organizations that support a variety of needs including housing, education, employment, healthcare, financial literacy, and disability assistance. The VISTA will build upon current networks to create a more comprehensive network that will allow for more collaboration among organizations. The VISTA will also continue to identify agencies offering veteran services in the Erie area, coordinate these services to ensure those seeking help know where to go, and invite new organizations to join VIBE (Veterans Initiative Business Enterprise) , the Veterans Portal, and the Veterans Resource Guide. Lastly, the VISTA will develop partnerships with existing networks to combine resources, serve more veterans, and help grow and sustain the annual gala that celebrates military service.

Website: <http://www.dmva.pa.gov/stateveteranshomes/PA-Soldiers-and-Sailors/Pages/default.aspx>