



LAKE EFFECT LEADERS

Lake Effect Leaders Host Site Projects and Descriptions 2020-2021

Focus Area: Economic Opportunity

Priority Area: Employment/Workforce Development

1. Greater Erie Community Action Committee (GECAC)/Erie Together, Erie PA (2)

Goal: Erie Together is a countywide, cross-sector collective impact movement launched in 2009 by GECAC and its partners to prevent and reduce poverty, elevate prosperity, and make the Erie region a community of opportunity where everyone can learn, work, and thrive. Erie Together works to achieve economic stability for everyone in Erie County by facilitating cross-sector alignment and collaboration to help more kids become successful adults, more people secure jobs, and more families become self-sufficient. To help ensure more young people grow up to become successful adults and more individuals can secure and maintain family sustaining employment, the VISTA will build Erie Together's capacity by supporting cross-sector career-connected learning initiatives, efforts to increase broad community engagement, and methods to diversify funding for future sustainability.

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

2. Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network (SSJNN), Erie PA (3)

Goal: Through grass-roots partnership with local residents, businesses and the broad community, SSJNN creates and implements programs that address wide-ranging and otherwise unanswered needs of residents of these neighborhoods. Hallmark to SSJNN's holistic approach, residents and a large network of volunteers work together to provide social services, revitalize neglected environments, and promote community and economic development opportunities. To help reverse the overwhelming trend of rental vs. owner-occupied properties, provide affordable housing to those in need, and ensure that individuals and families receive the educational support they need to break the cycle of poverty, the Housing VISTA will build the capacity of SSJNN by developing a sustainable program (Genesis Program) which provides the financial independence and equity-building opportunities available through home ownership.

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

3. Mission Empower, Erie PA (1)

Goal: To ensure that people with disabilities break the cycle of poverty, the Mission Employment VISTA will build the capacity of Mission Empower's *Mission Employment* program by coordinating services within the Pre-Employment Transition Services (P.E.T.S) and Discovery Customized Employment Program (DCE) to create an outreach plan for participants and potential employers, develop outreach materials for participants and potential employers, build a database of potential employers and their employment needs, and research diversified funding streams for sustainability.

Website: <https://missionempower.org/>

Priority Area: Housing

1. Bayfront East Side Taskforce (BEST), Erie PA (2)

Goal: The goal of this VISTA project will be to create, organize, and program the inaugural Erie City Studio. The VISTA will collaborate with partnering organizations and City employees to plan and program the new Erie City Studio. Once the Studio has been developed, the group will work to organize operations and promote the project to the residents of Erie's East Bayfront. The Studio will encourage visitors to provide input and ideas to their neighborhoods and City projects. This new level of community engagement will provide empowerment to all to build a city that reduces poverty, improves housing, and creates a neighborhood that is safe and affordable for all.

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

2. City of Erie: Neighborhood Development, Erie PA (3)

Goal: As the population within the City of Erie continues to decline, the housing stock worsens in areas with a higher concentration of low income residents. Erie Refocused, the City's Comprehensive Plan, proposes to engage residents and neighborhood organizations within the City of Erie to develop neighborhood level strategic plans that will help improve housing stock, address community needs and priorities, and develop a framework for how to continue an open and inclusive dialogue between the City and its neighborhoods. VISTA resources will be utilized to create a system by which this engagement, planning, and implementation occurs within City Hall. Year three of this position will move the VISTA from working on the planning and implementation piece into working on local policy development.

Website: <https://cityof.erie.pa.us/>

3. Crawford County Coalition on Housing Needs (CCCHN) & Crawford County Mental Health Awareness Program (CHAPS), Meadville PA (3)

Goal: Both CHAPS and CCCHN are dedicated to helping the homeless, near homeless, and impoverished in Crawford County with housing challenges. CCCHN is a landlord, overseeing 28 rental properties and an emergency shelter. CHAPS operates a Housing Solutions program which supports low income individuals in accessing and maintaining affordable apartments. In year three, VISTA support will be utilized to develop and formalize fundraising, volunteering, outreach, and advocacy programs in order to attain project sustainability.

Website: <http://chapsinc.org/>

4. Common Roots, Meadville PA (3)

Goal: A disproportionate share of Meadville's local population is struggling economically and at-risk for unaffordable and unhealthy housing. Many local residential properties are old and contain unsafe structures that have not been updated for decades. Common Roots is an organization whose goal is to acquire, rehabilitate, and then lease/sell residential properties in a housing cooperative model so that low-income residents gain access to safe, affordable, energy-efficient housing and develop capacities for self and community governance. In year three of the project, the VISTA will continue their work building the organization's public identity, help Common Roots establish their first affordable housing development, and identify best practices for governing the project. This work will include researching different affordable housing models and regulations, including a range of cooperative approaches.

Website: <https://www.commonrootspa.com/>

5. Our West Bayfront (OWB), Erie PA (2)

Goal: Through this project, OWB will ensure that resources are available in the community to improve housing affordability and quality are accessible by residents, identify opportunities to develop properties for affordable housing, mobilize volunteers connected to a diverse array of organizations on community projects, and create events that are an opportunity for busy families to connect with community organizations and learn about resources. The Our West Bayfront VISTA will increase the number of low-income West Bayfront residents who live in safe, healthy and affordable housing and neighborhoods by leveraging a network of community organizations to create opportunities for affordable housing, disseminating information about resources that improve housing quality and affordability, mobilizing volunteers, and organizing events that promote stronger attachments to the neighborhood. **Website:** <https://ourwestbayfront.org/>

6. ServErie, Erie PA (2)

Goal: The East Bayfront is full of culture and history with a support network of long-standing service organizations and neighborhood groups. However, there are high levels of blight, vacancy, and disrepair causing business and housing stock to decline. ServErie restores communities by connecting people in need to resources. The community ServErie addresses is located in the core of Erie's East Bayfront from East 6th to 12th Street and Holland Street to Wayne Street. The VISTA will aid ServErie in its mission by building capacity in the many facets that the organization operates, specifically focusing on the Heritage District. Service activities will include volunteer and program coordination, neighborhood engagement and planning, assisting with grant tracking for housing projects, and more.

Website: <https://serverie.com>

7. Mercy Center for Women, Erie PA (1)

Goal: To help ensure that individuals and families will not relapse into homelessness but will receive the educational, financial, and emotional support they need to help them break the cycle of poverty, the Mentor Corps VISTA project will build capacity for Mercy Center for Women by developing a sustainable 'Tool-Box' of resources, with guidelines and resources to manage the system and assure its success, for MCW's housing program. VISTA activities will include outreach to community organizations, researching best practices to ensure the effectiveness of the program, expanding networks and procuring financial resources.

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

Focus Area: Healthy Futures

Priority Area: Access to Health Care

1. Gannon University Wellness Department: STRONG Program, Erie PA (3)

Goal: The STRONG after school program will provide preventative health services and health literacy programming for adolescent females and their families living in areas of concentrated poverty. Working alongside Strong Vincent Middle School, the Erie County Department of Health, and the United Way of Erie County to meet the health needs of both the adolescent females and their families, the VISTA will work to break down the correlation between poverty and obesity by providing a sustainable health program that decreases the incidences of obesity and its comorbidities. The Strong Program is effective and powerful, but can only continue to be so with consistent funding, regular staffing, and strong leadership. The goals for the third year VISTA include developing and implementing the Strong program, recruiting and managing college-aged volunteers, expanding the STRONG program to better serve the parents, as they will influence their children and their families and more.

Website: <https://www.gannon.edu/> & <https://www.eriesd.org/vincent>

Priority Area: Opioid Prevention/Recovery

1. Gannon University: Opioid Prevention, Erie PA (2)

Goal: An AmeriCorps VISTA member will be placed in the Morosky College of Health Professions and Science and will marshal resources that connect Gannon University students and faculty with an opioid and drug campaign developed in partnership with the Erie County Department of Health. In collaboration with faculty, students and the Health Department, the VISTA member will directly train faculty and students on how to utilize campaign materials to raise awareness and create a training program for campus leaders to educate others. Collectively, the overarching goal of this community project is to address the opioid crisis in Erie

County through research, treatment, prevention, messaging and policy improvements; measuring the impact through reported numbers of overdoses, deaths, admissions into treatment programs, and improved treatment or prevention protocols.

Website: <https://www.gannon.edu/>

2. Crawford County Drug and Alcohol Executive Commission (CCDAEC), Meadville PA (2)

Goal: The number of deaths and lives negatively impacted by drug use/overdose in Crawford County is alarmingly high. Women's Services, an organization that works with victims of domestic and sexual violence, has experienced an increase in client drug abuse and overdose. The recent Community Voices survey administered by the United Way of Western Crawford County identified Drugs and Alcohol as the top pressing, yet least addressed issue. To reduce the impacts of substance use disorder for rural populations and connect those in poverty to vital services, the Crawford County Drug & Alcohol HRSA Implementation VISTA project will build capacity by developing training events to integrate behavioral and primary care, maintaining volunteers for the Welcome Every Baby basket program, and expanding the social media/marketing presence of both project partners to reduce stigma.

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

Priority Area: Alleviating hunger & increasing access to nutritious food

1. Mercyhurst University, Erie PA (1)

Goal: The goals of the proposed two-year program/initiative are to build connections with community organizations that could identify places where healthy corners and the tower gardens could be placed, establish relationships with convenience stores owners to explore the implementation of healthy corners, build relationships with physician assistant and nursing program at Mercyhurst University to add various types of screening in the places where new healthy corner stores and garden towers will be located, create a community advisory board made of community organizations, residents of the chosen tracts, store owners, etc. The VISTA will also work with faculty and students from the Public Health Department at Mercyhurst University to create and assess nutrition education and wellness programming around the healthy corner stores and garden towers initiative, implement tower gardens in community organizations such as the YMCA and the Boys' and Girls' club, seek out grant funding for implementing the project. Outcomes of the program include: expand access to healthy foods, increase consumption of healthy foods, and increase nutrition education/information for families who live under poverty, are less educated, and live in 4 of the 10 food deserts in the City of Erie.

Website: <https://www.mercyhurst.edu/>

Focus Area: Education

Priority Area: College access for low-income students

1. Allegheny College Civic Engagement Office, Meadville PA (2)

Goal: The Allegheny College VISTA will assist in breaking generational poverty in the Meadville area by creating a Post-Secondary Education Access Program. Through this program, college students will mentor teenagers across the Crawford County area who are potential first generation college students and economically disadvantaged. Mentors will assist teenagers in discovering next step educational opportunities after high school. Mentors will also assist teenagers in navigating the college preparation and enrollment process, the discovery of gap year programs that would provide educational opportunities and stipends, jobs that provide educational support, and trade-school offerings that advance skills and intellectual knowledge.

Website: <https://allegheny.edu/>

2. City of Erie: Promise Program, Erie PA (1)

Goal: The goal of the Erie Promise Program is to build capacity with Erie City School District's economically disenfranchised students to improve their educational outcomes. The support of the VISTA will aid the City to work with the Erie Public School District and create a system by which engagement, planning, implementation, structure/framework is occurring outside City Hall. The VISTA will support and complement the Erie School District, GoCollege, program professionals, and career coaches. The VISTA will also organize a system for the Erie School Districts students who are enrolled into the Erie's Promise Program find a list of local universities or trade schools, tour universities, draft questions about careers, dress for success, follow-up emails to visited sites, and letter of thanks to the professionals for their time.

Website: <https://cityof.erie.pa.us/>

Priority Area: K-12 Success in student education and behavioral outcomes

1. Edinboro University, Edinboro PA (3)

Goal: Edinboro University proposes 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. Year 3 of the project will focus on sustainability of Project Year 1 and Project Year 2 VISTA members. The long term goal is for the project to also become a hub for community change and support. EU plans to address the identified needs by creating sustainable partnerships throughout the community including with other universities, non -profit organizations, businesses, community development organizations, service organizations, etc. Colleges and universities can assist the public school system by creating access to students through a variety of mechanisms including field experiences, student teaching, internships, student employment and volunteerism.

Website: <https://www.edinboro.edu/> & <https://www.eriesd.org//site/Default.aspx?PageID=31>

2. United Way of Erie County (UWEC), Erie PA (3)

Goal: The communities the UWEC serves through this project include a portion of the City of Erie, as well as the Girard and Iroquois School Districts. According to the 2017 American Community Survey, 43.5 percent of children under the age of 18 are below the poverty rate in the City of Erie and 24.9 percent in the County of Erie. However, because community schools are selected, in part, based on the economic needs of the students and their families, some of

our local schools have an economically disadvantaged rate as high as 90 percent. This VISTA project will build capacity at the existing and future community schools throughout Erie County by supporting the alignment of community resources with the specific needs of students, their families and their neighborhoods to ensure students are academically successful and families are self-sufficient. **Website:** <https://www.unitedwayerie.org/>

3. Penn State Behrend, Erie PA (1)

Goal: To help ensure that students from food insecure households and low-achieving schools receive the educational support they need to break the cycle of poverty, the Behrend VISTA project will build the capacity of students, educators and nonprofits to support student success efforts around food insecurity and academic performance. On campus, the project will build on existing connections with nursing and education faculty, the Sustainable Food Systems Program, Sustainable Behrend, Civic and Community Engagement, the wellness center and personal counseling. This VISTA project will also leverage existing partnerships with community entities like Iroquois School District, Erie's Public Schools and their Farm-to-School program, Erie's Food Policy Advisory Council, Erie County Department of Health, Penn State Extension, and others serving our target community.

Website: <https://behrend.psu.edu/>

4. Crawford Central School District (CCSD), Meadville PA (1)

Goal: To help create more connected and educated families in our community and to ensure the success of low-income students, the Crawford County Central School District Family Connections VISTA project will develop a program that will lead to increased parental engagement and a better understanding of how to prepare their children for success. The VISTA project will focus on researching best practices for the program and highlighting community needs that are not being met. The intent of the program is to help parents and families, particularly those of lower socioeconomic status, understand how they can support their students better and why supporting them is important. As lower socioeconomic families tend to be less educated and connected, the VISTA will identify specific organizations to collaborate with to ensure the effectiveness of this program. It is CCCSD's intent to roll out this program in the first year.

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

5. Gannon University & Erie GAINS: Mother Teresa Academy, Erie PA (1)

Goal: An evidence-based after school program is a priority need according to MTA Principal, Jamie Brimm. A partnership between MTA and Gannon University (GU) will offer 200 inner-city K-8 students and their families an opportunity to receive locally-designed community solutions to help kids learn and grow, and support families balance work with home. The goal of this VISTA project is to help ensure that Mother Teresa Academy builds and sustains an effective afterschool program for Kindergarten-8th grade students by assessing the needs of students and identifying priorities for the after school programs.

Website: <https://www.prep-villa.com/mother-teresa-academy>

6. YMCA of Greater Erie, Erie PA (1)

Goal: In order to decrease summer learning loss and increase academic achievement for low-income students attending Pfeiffer-Burleigh Elementary School, the Power Scholars VISTA will work with program stakeholders in order to create a sustainable funding mix for Power Scholars Academy, establish and enhance relationships with local universities to provide educational enrichment opportunities for the students through strengthened collaborations, engage community volunteers to augment staffing structure and serve more youth, and establish strategies to engage parents in related activities.

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

Priority Area: Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM)

1. Bayfront Maritime Center, Erie PA (2)

Goal: The goal for the VISTA project at the Bayfront Maritime Center is to help ensure that students, especially underserved populations, are presented a unique secondary education experience leading to career and continuing education after graduation, measured by the success of students graduating and progressing to post-secondary education, training, or employment. The Maritime Program VISTA will build the capacity of the organization by developing effective outreach materials and processes, assist in the development of appropriate outcome measurements and a database system for use in securing funds through appeal campaigns, fundraising and grant applications, and assist in networking with local and national maritime career focused post-secondary schools, apprenticeship programs and employers to assist students with future planning.

Website: <https://bayfrontcenter.org/>

2. Gannon University & Erie GAINS: STEM, Erie, PA (1)

Goal: The VISTA will be utilized in order to create program facilitation plans for a suite of informal STEM learning programs called the STEM Community-Based Learning Opportunities at Strong Vincent Middle School (SVMS) and Erie High School (EHS). These high-impact programs will reflect an advanced academic curriculum that combines STEM education with university resources using an innovative delivery method to increase student engagement, career awareness and workforce growth. The overarching goal of these STEM programs is to address the academic achievement gap for below grade-level students at SVMS and EHS so they are better prepared to achieve family sustaining careers in science, technology, engineering and math.

Website: <https://www.gannon.edu/Visitors-and-Community/Outreach/Erie-GAINS/>

Priority Area: Education - Career and Technical Education

1. Youth Leadership Institute, Erie PA (1)

Goal: The mission of the Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) of Erie is to develop high school students into leaders who are informed, motivated, and committed to working toward an improved quality of life and an improved community. YLI's High School Leadership Program is an integral part of the Erie School's commitment to teach students personal responsibility and to encourage independent thinking. Participants learn techniques and develop leadership skills to employ over the course of their high school years. The Leadership Program initially introduces students in grades nine- twelve to a plethora of leadership characteristics, styles and practical situations. The VISTA will be tasked with revising program content by researching best practices, building an alumni network and developing funding streams to support the project.

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