

NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release
July 25, 2018

PSFC Awarded \$2 Million in State Economic Development Grants for Monroe County

East Stroudsburg, PA— Pocono Services for Families and Children (PSFC) announced today that with the passing of the PA State budget, it has been awarded \$2,020,500 in community and economic development funds. The funding is targeted for early childhood education investments in Monroe County and is the highest amount the organization has received from the state.

A total of \$1,247,000 million was awarded through the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP) and \$773,500 was approved in PA Pre-K Counts funds. Both appropriations are for program year 2018-19 and are administered by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, Departments of Education and Human Services.

The revenue will enable PSFC to expand its work with preschoolers, assist more families, offer more programs and hire additional staff. A total of 91 children from low-income working families will benefit from this funding with high-quality education and year-round, full-day care services. This allows more of their income to go toward housing, food and healthcare. With additional federal and local funding, PSFC is able to provide services to a total of 309 families and enrolled children ranging in age from infants to sixth graders, in a birth-6th grade learning continuum.

“This is a win/win for the community. This funding will help families, spur employment opportunities, and generate positive ripple effects in terms of economic development and overall quality of life,” said PSFC Executive Director Tim Lee. “The grants will help us reduce our waiting list of children to be enrolled in our high-quality preschool classes and increase the number of families eligible for county subsidized child care. This will allow parents to work full-time and not have to worry about how to pay for child care, resulting in more consistent, stable employment and greater opportunities for higher wages,” he explained.

The grants are part of a new funding cycle that will earmark roughly \$2 million to PSFC each year for the next five years, resulting in over \$10 million being invested directly in Monroe County. With an annual payroll of nearly \$3 million being spent on local housing, food, transportation, healthcare and entertainment in our community, these investments will become a significant contributor to community growth and the local economy.

“This investment promises a better future for Monroe County’s working families and their children. Empirical studies have found a strong correlation between quality early childhood education and the development of positive attributes critical to workforce development and improving human capital within a region,” commented Chuck Leonard, executive director of the Pocono Mountains Economic Development Corporation (PMEDC). “We believe that this type of support from the

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commonwealth has favorable economic impact within the county beyond the families that will benefit directly.”

Lee expressed thanks to the governor and state legislators for reaching a quick agreement on the new budget. “We appreciate the hard work of all our local senators and representatives who helped secure these monies for our youngest citizens,” he said. Lee added that the PA Department of Community and Economic Development has acknowledged that high-quality school readiness is the most impactful investment in economic development for the community.

Funding high-quality early education is an issue on which legislators across party lines have consistently agreed. Voters agree, too, as a poll commissioned by the Pre-K for PA campaign in May showed that 75% of likely voters support increasing funding to expand access to high-quality, publicly funded pre-kindergarten, while 94% of voters believe that early education is important.

According to the National Forum on Early Childhood Policy and Programs, high-quality early childhood programs can yield a \$4 to \$9 dollar return per \$1 invested. These returns are in reducing expenses such as higher taxes, social services, special education and even prison costs.

“This is great news for Monroe County,” said United Way of Monroe County President and CEO Michael Albert. “PSFC is a critical partner in United Way’s work to support working families in Monroe County. United Way has been pushing in Harrisburg for increased funding for early childhood education. We were happy to see increases in both Head Start and Pre-K Counts funding at a state level – and we are thrilled that more funding is now coming back to Monroe County. The amazing thing about these investments,” continued Albert, “is even if you don’t care about all the benefits for these children and their families, the evidence shows when you make these early childhood investments, the state and school districts actually save money in the long run— through reduced costs for education remediation, IEPs and behavioral interventions that are avoided later in a child’s life.”

It is the “high quality” of preschool programs like PSFC that virtually guarantees these investments. PSFC is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and its classrooms/centers have earned the top-rated Keystone Star 4 ranking. The organization uses a team approach where teachers, family advocates, nutrition staff, and child mental health specialists work closely with the children and their parents/guardians to ensure success in preschool, kindergarten readiness, and increased economic stability in these homes. The curriculum is aligned with areas of development that are predictors of school success and aligned within the PA Early Learning Standards and Common Core State Standards. Lesson plans also integrate STREAM (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art and Math) initiatives.

“The goal is to ensure children’s success in school and later in life, as well as to focus on each family’s stability and success,” Lee said. “ECE investments develop a more highly educated, motivated and stable workforce for our community—which positively impacts economic development and growth.”

PSFC has been serving the Monroe County community since 1965 and employs nearly 100 staff. The nonprofit’s mission is to provide resources for the evolving needs of community children and families, in support of efforts to achieve their goals. The organization owns and operates The Mountain Center in Tobyhanna, a growing educational and community services facility where various health and human service agencies are housed under one roof, serving the Pocono Mountain and the Pleasant Valley school districts. PSFC also has an East Stroudsburg Center and classrooms in schools within the East Stroudsburg Area School District, serving both the ESASD and Stroudsburg Area School District.

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