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Boscola Bulletin

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 **LISA BOSCOLA** 18TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

Boscola Announces Over \$1.1 Million in State Grants for Afterschool and Violence Prevention Programs

By Senator Lisa M. Boscola

BETHLEHEM - Senator Lisa Boscola announced that \$1,132,206 in state funding has been awarded to Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) and Easton Area Community Center's (EACC) St. Anthony's Youth Center to support after two school and violence prevention programs in Northampton County by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). The grants are funded through the FY 24-25 Building Opportunity Through Out-of-School Time (BOOST) Grants and the FY 24-25 Violence Intervention & Prevention (VIP) Grant Programs. Additionally, the Pennsylvania Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs were awarded \$1.5 million in BOOST funding to be split among the 12 Boys & Girls Clubs in the Commonwealth that run out-of-school time (OST) programs, which both the Boys & Girls Clubs in Bethlehem and Easton provide.

"This state funding will enhance efforts to provide out of school time programming in Bethlehem and Easton and to sustain the Cure Violence partnership between Lehigh Valley Health Network and Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley," Boscola stated. "Afterschool programs such as those at St. Anthony's and the Boys & Girls Club of Bethlehem and of Easton improve academic performance, improve social skills and provide a place for children to have fun in a safe setting. Without these programs many children would be unsupervised and there would be a much higher risk of engaging in risky behaviors."

The grants were awarded as followed:

- Lehigh Valley Health Network, \$950,000 (VIP)
- St Anthony Youth Center of Easton, Pa Inc (dba Easton Area Community Center), \$182,206 (Boost)

Lehigh Valley Hospital, Inc. (LVH), in collaboration with Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley (PNLV), will sustain its Cure Violence partnership in Allentown and other counties and communities in Central Eastern Pennsylvania, including those in Northampton County. Cure Violence is an evidence-based public health model that treats violence as a learned and preventable behavior and can lead to reductions in retaliatory violence. This project maintains critical elements of a collaboration between LVH Trauma Centers and the PNLV's Zero Youth Violence Team to build relationships with people who are immersed in and struggling with violence, intervene during the crisis of hospitalization, decrease retaliatory violence, and promote norm-changing messages of anti-violence. This grant is expected to result in decreased retaliatory acts of violence and, ultimately, reduced hospital admissions for violent injury, within the project's regional service area.

Easton Area Community Center will use the \$182,206 to support the enhancement and expansion of its OST programs, which includes the after school and summer camp programs, at St. Anthony's Youth Center. EACC will be able to provide transportation and increase its capacity, add new programs and collaborations with an expanded set of community partners/ contractors / instructors, and expand the utilization of current evidence-based and evidence-informed programs and practices with proven partners/collaborators to drive positive youth development.

The Pennsylvania Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs will expand statewide OST services for school-aged at-risk youth. Funds will support sub-grants to 12 affiliated Boys & Girls Clubs that currently offer OST programs and represent low-income urban, rural and suburban communities across the Commonwealth. Annually, Pennsylvania Boys & Girls Clubs serve over 43,600 youth with OST programs. Of these youth, 68% are 12 and younger and 32% are teens; 56% identify as male and 40% as female; 77% come from minority races/ethnicities; 83% qualify for free or reduced lunch; and 43% live in single-parent households. By funding this project, the PA Alliance will remove barriers thereby increasing youth participation in robust, trauma-informed, evidence-based, OST programming throughout the state. Funds will be used for each location's specific needs.

The FY 24-25 Budget made \$56.5 million available for the BOOST (\$11.5 million) and VIP Grant Programs (\$45 million). PCCD received a total of 296 applications for the BOOST Program requesting \$63.2 million, of which 44 local projects and 2 statewide projects were selected for funding.

PCCD received a total of 176 applications for the tradition VIP program (grants to community groups) and 13 applications for the Collaborative Community Violence Intervention (CCVI) Strategies grants. The 189 applications for both portions of the VIP program requested more than \$111 million in funds. A total of 66 traditional VIP applications and 1 CCVI application were awarded, covering 21 counties across the Commonwealth.



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