

## Federal Funds Fueling Slate Belt Transformation

By Brian Fenstermaker / Dir. of Slate Belt Rising

SLATE BELT- In the heart of Northampton County lies a 10-municipality region — including Bangor, Pen Argyl, Wind Gap and Portland — that together make up what we call the Slate Belt, so named for the rock that was quarried there beginning in the 1800s and used across the country in various applications. Rich in heritage and potential, this region has long faced economic challenges that mirror those of small towns in the rest of Pennsylvania and the nation: aging infrastructure, struggling downtowns and limited resources to support business and community development.

For many decades after most of quarries closed the Slate Belt struggled. But something is changing here. Through Slate Belt Rising, a neighborhood revitalization initiative of Community Action Lehigh Valley, we are seeing a true transformation — one built by local hands and fueled by federal funding. Programs such as the Community Services Block Grant and the Community Development Block Grant aren't just lines in a federal budget — they're the lifeblood of our work. Both programs provide money to eligible nonprofit community-based organizations or governmental entities that work to ameliorate the causes and conditions of poverty in disadvantaged and low-income communities.

However, recently there have been discussions about cutting or eliminating both of these programs. Without these critical funding sources, efforts like Slate Belt Rising wouldn't be possible. And without Slate Belt Rising, many of the improvements residents and visitors now see in the Slate Belt simply wouldn't exist. We've used these resources to lift up our communities in visible, meaningful ways:

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## 2 Northampton County 13-year-olds being honored as heroes, after officials say their quick actions saved man's life

By Grace Griffaton / 69 News

WASHINGTON TWP., Pa. - Two Northampton County 13-year-olds are being honored as heroes. Fire officials say their quick actions saved property and a man's life.

Cousins and Bangor Area Middle School students Ellie DeCheser and Dane Kulak were in the right place at the right time with, most definitely, the right attitude.

"We live in a world where most kids don't understand what's going on around them. These kids saw something was going on," explained Washington Township Volunteer Fire Chief Tighe Lane.

It was a brush fire in March that neighbors say the teens likely stopped in its tracks. They had just gotten off the school bus on Ridge Road in Washington Township when they saw smoke, then flames.

"It spread very fast. All the leaves were burning up. A lot of flames," explained Dave Kulak, an 8th grade student.

Kulak's parents say there were no adults around, no firefighters — just the teens. The pair called 911, and they "conquered and divided."

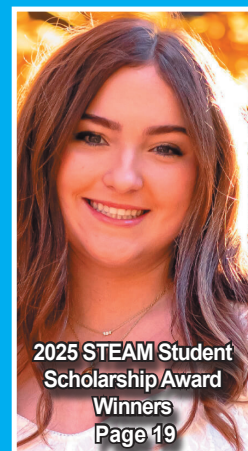
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