



Lehigh Valley Mayors Issue Proclamations For Week Of The Young Child™

By Kimberly Early

LEHIGH VALLEY, PA (April 6, 2021) --The Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children (PennAEYC), and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Week of the Young Child™ from April 10-16, 2021. The purpose of the Week of the Young Child™ is to focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families and to recognize the early childhood programs and services that meet those needs.

NAEYC is a membership organization of nearly 60,000 early care and education professionals, dedicated to achieving equitable access to high-quality early learning for young children ages birth through eight. The vision of PennAEYC, the state affiliate, is that all Pennsylvania families will have access to high-quality, affordable early childhood care and education opportunities for their children provided by a profession that is valued, well-compensated and supported.

As part of the Week of the Young Child™, being celebrated across the country and honoring young children and all those who make a difference in the lives of young children, Senator Pat Browne introduced Senate Resolution 57 to officially recognize the week.

"The Week of the Young Child is a time to recognize the importance of ensuring that every child has access to high-quality early learning programs during their most critical developmental years, which will help lay the foundation for their success in school and later in life. History has demonstrated that students who receive this early assistance have an increased likelihood of graduating from high school and becoming productive and successful members of our highly skilled, competitive workforce. I am proud of Pennsylvania's efforts to prioritize financial support for these programs," said Senate Appropriations Chairman Pat Browne.

In addition, the mayors of Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton: Ray O'Connell, Robert Donchez and Salvatore J. Panto, have each issued proclamations officially recognizing this week.

In issuing the proclamations each mayor realizes that this is the time to recognize children's opportunities, and they urge all citizens to recommit to ensure that each child experiences the type of early environment -- at home, school, in a child care setting and in the community -- that will promote early learning.

High-quality early childhood education prepares children to succeed in school and promotes healthy development, allows families to work and fuels our economy. "Unfortunately, far too few children in Pennsylvania have access to high-quality, affordable early childhood experiences like child care and pre-k. As we celebrate the Week of the Young Child™ we call on Pennsylvanians to join us in our advocacy efforts to increase access to these important services and support the programs and professionals that provide them," said Jen DeBell, Executive Director of PennAEYC. PennAEYC is a principal partner in the Pre-K for PA and Start Strong PA nonpartisan, statewide advocacy campaigns which seek to increase access to these critical services.

Young children and their families depend on high-quality education and care, which help children get a great start and bring lasting benefits to the Lehigh Valley. Week of the Young Child™ is a time to recognize the importance of early learning and early literacy, and to celebrate the teachers and policies that bring high-quality early childhood education to young children.

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St. Luke's

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located in Eastern Pennsylvania, but the St. Luke's Sacred Heart facility is the only one in the greater Lehigh Valley region.

Ford said that inspiration for the unit arose from conversations with downtown residents, stakeholders and leaders: "We asked our neighbors how St. Luke's Sacred Heart could help the community – and we listened. Withdrawal management is an incredibly important service that is in keeping with St. Luke's Sacred Heart's longstanding Catholic tradition of caring those who are in need of all types of care – not only for the people of the Allentown community, but for so many in the Lehigh Valley and eastern Pennsylvania."

According to Christina Zelko-Bennick, St. Luke's Vice President of Patient Care Services at Sacred Heart and Network Inpatient Behavioral Health, transportation can be a barrier to accessing this high-level of lifechanging care.

"Within the Lehigh Valley and eastern Pennsylvania, many people were driving two or even three hours or longer to find a true detox facility that could manage chronic illnesses while helping them manage their withdrawal symptoms. This Level IV unit meets this need for the community," she said. "Now St. Luke's Sacred Heart will be able to provide the highest level of medical withdrawal management services in the region, allowing a patient to detox and become medically stable before transitioning to the next appropriate level of care for recovery."

In addition to the specialists who treat the medical symptoms of withdrawal, the unit will be staffed by substance use disorder experts to oversee the detox process, begin personalized counseling and plan follow-up care that may include residential or outpatient treatment facilities.

The detox unit, featuring 16 private rooms in a calming setting, is for adults age 18 and older. Typically, patients will be referred to the unit through assessments drug and alcohol crisis staff in an emergency room.