Annual Report to the Public

Lewis County Head Start (LCHS) is a federally funded, locally administered program and operates within the Administration for Children and Families. Grants are awarded by Regional Offices within the Department of Health and Human Services. The Region II Office in New York City has oversight responsibility for LCHS.

The three Head Start centers are licensed by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services. Four classrooms currently operate in Beaver Falls, Lowville and Lyons Falls. Approximately 60 children receive services in the home base option which operates out of the centers and a home base site located at the Harrisville United Methodist Church. There are 35 full time and 3 part time staff employed. This year over 4,951 hours of volunteer time were contributed by 447 volunteers; of those, 374 were current or former parents. The program extends immeasurable thanks to the many volunteers who account for those hours. Your support, participation and helping hands are sincerely appreciated.

Funds by Source
The funding level for 2013-2014 included $1,172,692 in the regular operating grant and $17,010 in training and technical assistance funds. The funding for 2013-2014 was reduced by 5.27% due to the federal sequestration. Supplemental funding was later received to restore the sequestration and provide a 1.3% cost of living adjustment.

Head Start programs are required to provide at least a 20% match of their total funding in order to spend federal dollars. LCHS fulfills this requirement through donated services and supplies, and documents community support received through donations, parent and community volunteers, transportation services, supplies and space. Transportation is provided through four school districts (Beaver River, Lowville, Copenhagen and South Lewis) for children enrolled in class. The program pays a small amount to two districts toward the cost of transportation. The non-federal share received from March 1, 2013 through February 28, 2014 was $446,928.

LCHS participates in Universal Service Administrative Company’s Schools and Libraries (E-Rate) program which reimburses eligible programs up to 80% of communication costs (i.e. – telephone and internet). The annual E-Rate application was submitted in October with reimbursements received in the following months. From 07/01/2013 to 06/30/2014, LCHS received $8,336.85 in reimbursement.

LCHS is eligible to receive USDA reimbursement, through the New York State Department of Health, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), for food served to children in licensed centers and received $42,108. In October 2013 the FY 2014 sponsor budget plan to participate in CACFP was approved. This is a continuation of the approved agreement effective October 1, 2005.

Budgetary Expenditures
The regular operating grant (PA22) budgetary expenditures for March 1, 2013 through February 28, 2014 were:

- Personnel $810,445
- Fringe Benefits 159,917
- Equipment 18,400
- Supplies (administrative, classroom, other) 49,274
- Contractual (audit, accounting) 16,534
- Other Costs* 165,235
*Other Costs include service agreements, consultants, area transportation, food, insurance, telephone, utilities, repair and maintenance, parent fund, legal, building leases, parent projects and snow removal.

**Number of Children and Families Served**
LCHS is completing its 49th year of operation, is funded to serve 130 children ages 3 to 5 years and provides services in all areas of the county. Head Start agencies must report actual monthly enrollment to the Administration for Children and Families. If enrollment falls below the funded enrollment, programs must explain the reasons why. LCHS’s enrollment for September 2013 through April 2014 was 130 and 129 for November and December 2013. If a child leaves the program, another child is accepted to fill the slot. On April 15, 2014 there were 10 income eligible children on a waiting list; ten were 3 year olds. Program wide, center based attendance from September through June was 91%.

As of 6/4/14, 95 of the 140 enrolled children have completed all required health screenings. Of the children who did not complete required screenings 6 left the program, 5 did not have a physical exam/blood pressure screening or immunizations up to date, 24 did not have a hemoglobin or hematocrit screening, and 35 did not have a dental exam.

North Country Children’s Dental Clinic, Lowville Office, did not have a dentist the last two years. Some families have chosen to find a different dentist. Twenty-nine children had a dental exam completed through Head Start with the Watertown office’s dentist. Dental clinics were held at the Lowville Center with 11 children having an exam completed. A dental clinic was also held at the Lyons Falls center with 18 children having a dental exam/fluoride treatment completed. Feedback from parents has been positive. Parents shared they did not have to travel far and the convenience of having the clinics in a familiar setting attributed to children’s success toward dental health. A total of 35 children were found to need follow up for cavities and/or decay; 15 of these children were referred to an oral surgeon, 30 children have received or are receiving follow up as recommended, with the others are being monitored or have appointments scheduled.

**Annual Meetings and Audit**
The Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors was held on May 29, 2014. A slate of officers and membership was approved. Members of the governing board include Dawn Ludovici, Chairperson; Thomas Schneeberger, Vice-Chairperson; Gayla Roggie, Treasurer; Douglas Hanno, Secretary; Deborah Domagala; Elion Grunert; Jessica Young; and David LaPlante. The program recognized Gale Swiecki for her years of service to the program. She was initially appointed to the Board in May 1986 and then reappointed to four 5-year terms. Gale was the Elementary Principal at Lowville Academy until her retirement in 2007 and provided background and expertise in early childhood and development as a member of the Board.

The annual audit for the fiscal year ending February 28, 2014 was presented by Michael Crowley and Pam Halloran, CPAs from Crowley & Halloran, CPAs, PC. An unqualified opinion was given (for the third year in a row) which is the highest possible opinion.

**Latest On-site Monitoring Review**
The last on-site monitoring review of the program was conducted by the Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, from November 3 to November 7, 2013. Based on the information gathered during the review it was established that the program had one area of noncompliance regarding the composition of the governing body. A corrective action plan was submitted describing in detail the responsibilities and background of the member with fiscal expertise. A follow up report was received in March informing us that no more corrective action was required and there were no areas of noncompliance.
Parent, Family and Community Engagement
LCHS makes every effort to provide a planned program of experiences which support and enhance the parental role as the principal influence in their child’s education and development. Parents provide input in planning and choose how they may contribute to the program. Parents have the opportunity to be directly involved in decision making and the operation of the program by serving on the Policy Council, as Parent Committee members and officers, on the Health-Family Services Advisory Committee, Education Advisory Committee and Self-Assessment. Parents also have the opportunity to help plan parent meetings and workshops of interest to them and are asked to be present at their child’s health screenings. We encourage parents to volunteer in the classroom and kitchen, by helping with the children, planning/creating materials for activities, parent/family activities and field trips, meal preparation and menu planning. Head Start works in partnership with parents to support school readiness and positive outcomes for children and families. Respectful, trusting and goal-oriented relationships are developed between parents and staff. Parents are directly involved in developing and supporting their child’s school readiness goals and progress, as well as developing individualized family goals and plans for moving toward those goals.

Transitioning Children into Kindergarten
LCHS works in partnership with families, local school districts and other early childhood programs to ensure continuity and successful transitioning of children into our program and into their next school experience. Transition activities take place throughout the year and begin at the time of enrollment. The goal for each child who leaves Head Start is to be wholesome, socially competent and school ready.

Health and education information is transferred to the school the child will attend in the fall with signed parental permission. For children with disabilities, the Committee on Preschool Special Education meets to review each child’s progress and make recommendations for continued services and special instruction. Head Start staff accompany parents to meetings and provide information about the child’s progress during the year.

In June 69 children left the program with the expectation of entering kindergarten in their respective school districts. To help them and their parents become familiar with this new experience, Head Start children ride school buses, tour school buildings and kindergarten classrooms, and attend plays and other special programs. During the year, a kindergarten teacher or elementary principal is invited to share information about kindergarten screening/registration and what to expect. Parents have the opportunity to ask questions and become familiar with the transition program each school district offers for children entering kindergarten.

Contact for Public Review
Lewis County Head Start’s governing documents, Conflict of Interest policies and Financial Statements are available for public review at the office in Lowville. Please contact:

Sandra M. Roberts, Executive Director
Lewis County Head Start
7673 N State St. PO Box 206
Lowville NY 13367
(315) 376-7531
lchs@twcny.rr.com