



Laraway Insider

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Special points of interest:

- Backpack Holiday Baskets
- Pennies for Presents
- Annual Appeal
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- Employees of the Month

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'Tis the Season of Giving



Everyone tends to have a favorite holiday tradition. For our dedicated staff in the Backpack program, it is assembling the Holiday Baskets to support our youth and families in need.

These baskets contain non-perishable food items, personal need items, a variety of other things that help lighten the heart, lift the spirit, and bring a feeling of warmth during the holiday season.



This initiative has been successful for many years now because of the support and collaboration of many local community partners. Businesses and individuals contribute non-perishable food items, gift cards to local shops and stores, toys, personal hygiene products, and handmade gifts. These baskets make a huge impact for families and reduce additional stress they are feeling this time of year.

Heather Mason, Tier 3 Program Coordinator, said, "It is my favorite thing about Backpack! I know how much this program means to our families. I remember nearly 40 years ago, people extended the same compassion and generosity to me and my family, and it is still meaningful today."



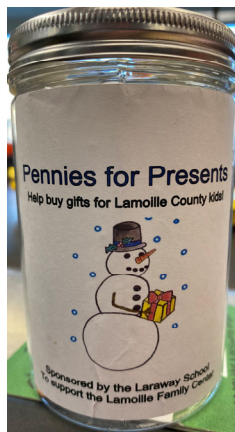
Sara Russell, Consultant Manager, believes it energizes the entire Backpack staff during what is usually a stressful time of year for everyone. "This is something our entire staff rallies behind and invests in. There is something about the spirit of giving and helping others that makes our lights shine brightest."

If you are interested in contributing to the program and spreading the gift of generosity and joy to someone else, please contact Heather, who is coordinating the efforts this year at hmason@laraway.org.

The entire Backpack team extends their appreciation and gratitude to those who help support these efforts annually, thank you!



Laraway School Gets Involved



The students at Laraway School do their part every year to give back through the *Pennies for Presents* initiative. Students enjoy the annual event and they are able to connect their positive experiences from one year to the next. The project begins when students deliver these jars to local businesses for individual patrons and customers to share their change.

Dave McAllister, Executive Director, said, "This is kids helping kids. What's better than that? Teaching our youth to help others through service expands their capacity for personal growth. Extending compassion and generosity to those who need it is a value we want our entire community to share."

Students collect the donations weekly and incorporate the tracking into math class. James Love, Math Teacher, said, "They are learning valuable life skills and helping kids at the same time. It's amazing how engaged the students are in these types of service learning activities. As a teacher, I want my students to be involved in their education, *Pennies for Presents* is an activity that brings the math to life for them."

This year, the generosity of our community, provided \$450 to purchase these gifts to donate to the Lamoille Family Center to aid in their annual Holiday Project.

Carol Lang-Godin, Executive Director at the Lamoille Family Center, said, "At a time when so many could use an extra hand, we are thankful to have Laraway students thinking of us with their *Pennies for Presents* initiative. The Holiday project takes a community effort and lots of support to be successful. To know there are children and youth playing a role is yet another example of why this community is so special."



Laraway's Annual Appeal Campaign

At this time a year ago, the donors and friends of Laraway, made a substantial impact during our annual appeal campaign. Their generosity provided additional resources for our students and their families to address basic needs like coats, boots, gloves, hats, and other winter clothing. We could support families in crisis with gas cards, food cards, and helped cover heating and electricity expenses. They also inspired new hobbies and passions for youth like fishing, skateboarding, snowboarding, and hiking.



The annual appeal funds are 100% reinvested into the youth at Laraway through the Youth Grant initiative. This is a process for each youth connected to Laraway to receive up to \$75.00 to pursue an interest, passion, or address a basic need.

We allocated funds to replace the kiln in the school last spring. Art is a high preference activity at Laraway School and it affords our students an outlet for healthy and creative expression. Funds helped send some of our Backpack students have a mountain top recreational experience rock climbing this summer. We purchased luggage and storage containers for our youth in foster and residential care, so they would never have to move their belongings in garbage bags again.

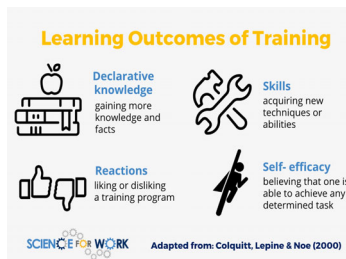
We intend to invest in our *Land Lab* program this year, which introduces students to agriculture, trades, and work ethic. Expanding on our therapeutic animal offerings. Students interacting with livestock and large breed animals teaches them compassion, respect, safety, and self-control.

We have high aspirations and lofty goals in 2023. Your generosity allow for these dreams to become reality. The joy of helping young people to develop confidence and overcome personal hardships and adversities inspires us everyday. Your support brings our mission to life.

Learn more about how to support the youth at our new website www.laraway.org.



School-to-Work: Laraway Students Learning and Earning



For 50 years, Laraway School has been predicated on alternative opportunities to help students learn in non-traditional ways. One of the foundational strategies that has yielded tremendous results is the School-to-Work program. Laraway School students who are eligible, get paired up a local business and receive on the job training, coaching, and supervision. In addition to the onsite skills required in their position, students are also learning important and critical employment skills, such as: being on time, dressing appropriately for the work place, communication, self-advocacy, reliability, and dependability.

Rick Aupperlee, Laraway's School-to-Work Coordinator, described the program as, "Essential!" Rick continued, "School-to-work is a hands-on, community-based, program to help build self-confidence and develop relationships within our local community. Using the *Circle of Courage* model, the experience creates *Belonging* and *Mastery*. Students gain knowledge and flexibility while making work a learning experience."



There are multiple levels of involvement for students in the school-to-work program. Initially, students are exposed to volunteer opportunities to demonstrate consistency in basic employment skills. Most notably, they volunteer to support the community meal offerings at the United Church in Johnson. Students participate in set-up, clean-up, and other support functions during the meal, are important to the success of the event. This also aligns with our organization's commitment to reduce food insecurity for individuals in our community. Students are introduced to the concept of having purpose and meaning in your occupation and the intrinsic rewards that result. The next holiday meal is on December 14th at noon, and starting in January, meals will be offered on the second and fourth Wednesdays.

The pandemic had a negative impact on our program because of the restrictions in both the school environment and our local work sites. Since we have emerged from the state of lockdown, we have slowly been re-introducing students to employment opportunities. We have partnered with Tractor Supply, ReSource, and Aubuchon most recently.



One of our most consistent work sites, Lamoille County Meals on Wheels, allows youth to deliver meals to needy seniors. Nicole Fournier Grisgraber, Executive Director at Meals on Wheels, said, "Seeing the dedication the Laraway students have delivering meals and interacting with community elders is powerful. We love working with the students at Laraway and appreciate Rick's dedication to making it work."

Martin Brokenleg, creator of Circle of Courage and author of *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*, said, "In helping others, youth create their own proof of worthiness: they make a positive contribution to another human life." If you are interested in partnering with Laraway as a school to work site, please contact Rick Aupperlee at raupperlee@laraway.org.



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Employees of the Month Profiles

CONGRATULATIONS to our three staff this month who were nominated and selected by their peers to be our Employees of the Month in their programs for October.

Albert O'Brien, Substitute Care. Albert supports our youth as one of our Residential Home Supervisors at our new program, Capital Meadows. "Albert is always patient and calm with the kids. He treats everyone with kindness and respect. He has been covering extra shifts while people have been out, which offers consistency to the residents. Albert offers help to everyone and provides great support."



Andy Sinclair, Laraway School. Andy serves as one of our Academic & Behavior Support staff in the middle and high school groups. "Andy is a cornerstone member of this community. He is a solid object for many students we serve. Andy offers much needed humor at timely moments. He is passionate and dedicated to his students. Andy goes above and beyond the basic expectations to help students and staff achieve success. He is a great advocate for student needs."

Erik Suvanto, Backpack. Erik is a seasoned and experienced Behavior Interventionist. "Erik is genuine, honest, and compassionate with the youth he serves. He establishes trusting relationships with youth because of his consistency. He enjoys problem-solving and teaming. His attention to detail and accurate reporting benefits his team's planning and intervention efforts. Erik has expanded his skill set and confidence over the years to support a wide variety of clients. Erik is a great mentor for new staff learning the ways of Backpack and ABA intervention."



Please keep those nominations coming. Our December newsletter will recognize three more of your peers you nominated for November.

Backpack: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/N5G38KY>

Laraway School: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/F86GNH5>

Substitute Care: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FLPWT5M>