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# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As 2025 draws to a close, we find ourselves reflecting with deep gratitude on the seeds planted back in 2010—seeds that have grown into meaningful relationships and life-changing programs. This year, we celebrated our 15th anniversary at *Now & Zen*, a joyful gathering that honored the people and pivotal moments that shaped Shanthi Project into what it is today.

This milestone year was also one of extraordinary growth. Thanks to our educational partners and funders, we expanded from serving 109 classrooms to 183 across five school districts. Through our *Transition to Kindergarten Initiative*, we supported every kindergarten student in the Easton and Bethlehem Area School Districts—helping young learners begin their academic journey with a sense of confidence and calm.

We launched *The Bridge to Middle School*, a large-scale pilot program serving all Bethlehem Area School District 5th graders as they prepared for the significant transition to middle school. We also established a shared brick-and-mortar space in downtown Easton, where we now offer mindfulness workshops for both children and adults. Returning to the community we've long called home has allowed us to deepen old connections and cultivate new ones.

In the pages ahead, you'll find program highlights and outcome data and hear directly from those we've served. Yet the true heart of Shanthi Project isn't found in the numbers—it's found in the remarkable team whose dedication and passion bring our programs to life every day.

We are profoundly grateful for all of our volunteers, donors, sponsors, and partners—especially the City of Bethlehem, Bethlehem Area School District, Lehigh County, Northampton County, Two Rivers Health & Wellness Foundation, and the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley. Your support allowed us to expand our mission and address the growing need for mindfulness in our schools and communities.

Most of all, we are thankful for the privilege of planting, nurturing, and cultivating the seeds of mindfulness throughout the Lehigh Valley today. We can only imagine what will bloom in the next 15 years, but we know it will be shaped by your shared belief in the transformative power of this work.

With gratitude, Kimberly Hopkins Executive Director Shanthi Project

#### **ABOUT US**

**Our mission:** To teach social-emotional resiliency through the practice of mindfulness.

**Our vision:** Resilient communities nurtured by individuals with self-awareness and compassion, regardless of their past experiences.

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#### School-Based Instructors:

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#### Mindfulness & Yoga Instructors:

J. Brown Dona Jones Sara Timofeev

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions and service of departing board members, Victoria Alercia and Shonda Moralis.

## SCHOOL-BASED HIGHLIGHTS & OUTCOMES 2024-2025



183 CLASSROOMS3,550 STUDENTS31 SCHOOLS in 5SCHOOL DISTRICTS:

Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, East Penn, Whitehall-Coplay

#### TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN INITIATIVE

This academic year, we adapted our Calm+Kind+Focused in-class kindergarten curriculum to create a brand-new program, serving students at a pivotal stage in their development: the transition from early childhood to public education. This initiative introduced students to age-appropriate mindfulness tools and resources they can use through their entire K-12 journey and beyond. Like CKF, this programming covered topics such as:

- Mindful listening and paying attention
- Awareness of self and physical sensations
- Identifying feelings and managing emotions

The kindergarteners at Cheston Elementary even showed us how much they learned during an end-of-program celebration, led by two of our instructors! The children demonstrated breaths and practices from the program for school personnel and Shanthi Project donors, impressing us all with their enthusiasm and retention. See photos on Page 5.

During the 2024-2025 school year, we expanded our school-based programming to serve every single incoming kindergarten student in BASD (16 schools) and EASD (7 schools). This unprecedented reach was made possible with funds from our generous supporters:

B. Braun, the Bethlehem Area School District, the City of Bethlehem, Crayola, Fidelity Bank, the Kiwanis Club of Palmer Township, Lehigh County Mental Health, Magellan Behavioral Health of Pennsylvania, Inc., Northampton County Mental Health, Penn Community Bank, Two Rivers Health & Wellness Foundation, and the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley.



Annually, we collect responses from students and classroom teachers to assess the efficacy of our CKF curricula. From preto post-program, we found that our Kindergarten Initiative had a big impact!



#### 100% OF KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM TEACHERS

reported that they felt their students benefited from our programming.



of teachers reported that their students improved "moderately" to "very much" in the SEL competency of Self-Awareness



of teachers reported that their students improved "moderately" to "very much" in the SEL competency of Social Awareness



of teachers reported
that their students
improved "moderately"
to "very much" in the
SEL competency of
Self-Management

We also found that **71%** of teachers "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that, post-program, their students were **more likely to use mindfulness techniques** when feeling overwhelmed or upset.

At Donegan Elementary, 8 out of 10 kindergarten students reported definitive improvement in:

- Their ability to focus when listening to their teacher or doing activities
- Their **emotional well-being** (e.g., feeling calmer or happier)



We also saw the use of breathing skyrocket as a calming strategy.



This is a change from 1 in 4 kids to more than 1 in 2: a huge positive shift, likely reflecting the mindfulness training emphasis.

The use of breathing strategies also rose dramatically at William Penn Elementary: from 21.9% pre-program to 40.7% post-program.

Each year, educators and administrators share **positive feedback that speaks to the widespread benefits of our school-based mindfulness programming.** Of the many responses we got this year, here is a small sample:

"Our students count breaths and send kind thoughts. We catch them using the skills and suggesting strategies to peers who need to calm themselves. I have walked into a classroom containing 100 second grade students and found them all, eyes closed, with hands over hearts, taking some mindful breaths. It was magical!"

- Melissa Sonnenblick, School Guidance Counselor at Ada B. Cheston Elementary School

"I have a very challenging group this year, and I found myself yearning for Ms. Annie every Thursday. I learned that my students will feed off of my energy, and if I'm not calm and in control of my emotions, my students will feel that as well."

- Danielle D., teacher at March Elementary

"After participating in the mindfulness program, I observed positive changes in my students' behavior and attitudes, particularly in their ability to cope with issues and apply mindfulness strategies during assessments. The programs are also personally beneficial, providing valuable insights and techniques for managing stress and enhancing well-being."

- Liana L., teacher at Clearview Elementary

### SCHOOL-BASED HIGHLIGHTS & OUTCOMES 2024-2025

#### **BRIDGE TO MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM**

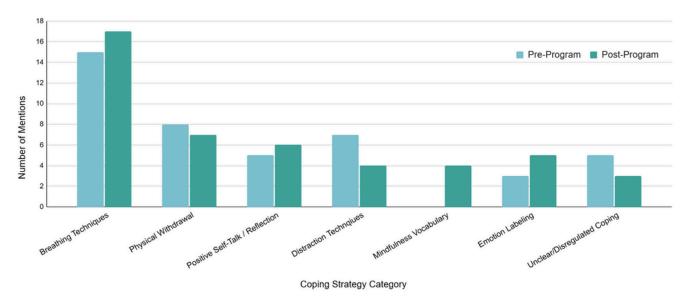
Using Calm+Kind+Focused as a base, we also created a new program tailored to prepare fifth-grade students for their upcoming transition to middle school. In this pilot initiative, a trained, trauma-informed Shanthi Project instructor would lead six thirty-minute sessions, teaching mindfulness strategies, tools, and simple practices to help students:

- Self-regulate
- Build their own mindfulness toolbox
- Navigate a larger school environment, increased academic workload and new relationships

We are grateful to the City of Bethlehem, whose grant from their Community Recovery Fund allowed us to serve all fifth grade students in the Bethlehem Area School District.

Our research team collected and analyzed impact data from a total of 495 surveys. As shown in the graph below, our fifth-grade students in BASD showed, from pre to post-program:

- · A decrease in distraction and unclear/dysregulated coping
- An increase in structured breathing and mindfulness vocabulary
- Growth in emotional labeling and reflective responses





of all 5th grade students indicated they felt **more prepared to handle difficult feelings** (e.g. anxiety, stress, nervousness, anger) after completing the Bridge to Middle School program.

# SCHOOL-BASED HIGHLIGHTS & OUTCOMES 2024-2025

#### **NEW & EXPANDED PROGRAMS**

To meet the evolving needs of our educational partners and sustain our broad-scale delivery model, Shanthi Project expanded our program offerings in 2025. Highlights include:

#### The development of an abridged learning program, the Refresher Series.

For students who have completed the full 16-session Calm+Kind+Focused series the year prior, the Refresher Series reviews the foundational principles of mindfulness. Depending on school preference, the four 30-minute sessions are delivered across the school year. Included with the lessons are digital resources and mindfulness tools for each classroom, digital resources accessed through our online portal, and access to a Shanthi Project "Mindfulness Concierge." The Mindfulness Concierge/Instructor supports the classroom teacher in establishing daily mindfulness routines and is available for general mindfulness-related questions throughout the entire school year. Here's what our instructors had to say about their first grade students:

"The kids are so happy to see us again, and they're remembering so much, too. One girl at Cheston practically recited the whole kindergarten brain lesson! The kiddos remember and understand why we pause and notice how we are feeling. They recalled many of the breaths. The teachers even remarked about how much the kids remember!"

#### The development of our Mindfulness for Special Needs program.

To serve students in Autistic Support, Emotional Support, and Gifted classrooms, we adapted our curriculum and invested in training select instructors to facilitate an abridged eight-week version of our Calm+Kind+Focused program. Supplemental practices and/or discussion questions have been added to each lesson to ensure that the Shanthi Project instructor can seamlessly pivot the lesson based on the needs or pacing of a particular classroom. Sessions are 30 minutes, building in time for communication between the Shanthi instructor and classroom teacher, and establishing connection with the students.

#### **Expansion of our Healing through Mindfulness Program.**

This eight-session program provides evidence-based, small group mindfulness skill-building support to referred high school students (grades 9-12) who have been identified as needing extra support in the area of emotion regulation, and/or students identified as victims of abuse or other trauma. Students meet one time per week for approximately 45 minutes. Broad skills include understanding mindfulness and the science of stress; developing strategies to manage and cope with stress and anxiety; and cultivating compassion and perspective.

With funding provided by Lehigh County, **Shanthi Project was able to expand this program** to serve Emmaus High School and Whitehall High School for 2024-25.

At Easton High School, we implemented an **emotional check-in program** to determine the impact of our sessions on student wellbeing. We conducted **140 check-ins** over **5 months** with **21 students**. Overall, we saw a significant positive impact, finding:

- "Calm" responses increased from 14% to 40% after sessions (+26 points)
- Exhaustion dropped from 39% to 11% after sessions (-28 points)
- Anxiety reduced from 10% to 4% after sessions (-6 points)

#### **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT NIGHTS**

We created our Family Engagement Nights to teach parents and children how to practice mindfulness at home, together. In the first part of the evening, parents learned the basics of mindfulness and its benefits, giving meaning to why an at-home practice can be beneficial for all. Meanwhile, the children remained nearby learning mindful activities and games with a different Shanthi instructor. In the second half of the evening, parents and children came together to learn fun, simple mindfulness activities, games, and strategies, and how to begin a daily shared mindfulness practice. In spring 2025, we led **five Family Engagement Nights** at Lehigh Valley elementary schools. We received **positive feedback from schools, parents, and children alike,** and look forward to continuing this program in the 25/26 school year.





# PARTNERSHIP TO SUPPORT RAUB MIDDLE SCHOOL

In 2023, Shanthi Project was invited to partner with four other local non-profits as part of a Raub Middle School Violence Prevention Program in the Allentown School District. The initiative is led by the United Way of Greater Lehigh Valley and funded through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime & Delinquency.

In year one, we focused on faculty wellness. Shanthi Project led weekly small group mindfulness sessions for the teachers, offering guided relaxation and takeaway mindfulness strategies.

During the 24-25 school year, we offered eight weeks of our new *Mindfulness for Special Needs* programming to their Autistic Support, Emotional Support, and Gifted classrooms. In addition, we attended two faculty meetings, working with staff on simple mindfulness strategies they can add to their school day to benefit themselves and their students. Our instructor also led a workshop with the Raub MS cheerleaders, teaching them basic mindfulness principles and strategies to promote teamwork and compassion, as well as work through difficult feelings.

In preparation for our *Mindfulness for Special Needs* program, select Shanthi Project instructors completed specialized training in teaching mindfulness-based interventions to neurodivergent populations.

#### SHANTHI PROJECT IN THE NEWS

In November, *The Morning Call* highlighted our in-class kindergarten programming at Clearview Elementary—a partnership close to our hearts. Sharing photos and testimonials, they illustrated our program's impact on educators, students and the school environment at large. You can find highlights below, and read the entire story on the Morning Call website. Photo credit to Monica Cabrera and article credit to Elizabeth Deornellas.

**NEWS** > **EDUCATION** 

#### This nonprofit is teaching Lehigh Valley students how to be mindful. Here's how it's helping Bethlehem students

Chloe Roman clasped her hands together in prayer position, slowly raised them over her head, and then wiggled her fingers as she floated her hands back down to waist level.

She calls it "unicorn breath," and it's the 10-yearold fourth grader's own spin on mindfulness techniques that have been expanding into Bethlehem and Easton area schools.

"You can use the breathing techniques anywhere," Chloe said. "You can always focus on the right here, right now."

The techniques are being taught by the nonprofit Shanthi Project, which for more than 10 years has worked to provide mindfulness education to students across the Lehigh Valley. Chloe's homebase of Clearview Elementary received additional grant money to expand the Shanthi Project curriculum to all grades. Elsewhere in Bethlehem Area School District, this is the second



Kindergarteners practice a relaxation exercise at Clearview Elementary School in Bethlehem on Wednesday, Oct. 22, 2025. The activity is part of the Shanthi Project, a mindfulness program for kindergartners and fifth graders in the Bethlehem Area School District. (Monica Cabrera/The Morning Call)

year the nonprofit has served all kindergarteners and fifth graders. Easton Area kindergarteners also participate.

The 16-week kindergarten curriculum starts in October and focuses on fundamental concepts such as intentional breathing and mindful listening.

"It would be the last thing I would ever want to see go," Clearview kindergarten teacher Lisa Koski said. Students are entering school struggling with emotional regulation, and no learning can happen until they learn to calm their bodies, Koski said.



Fellow kindergarten teacher Juliana Maffea said the mindfulness rituals also benefit the adults in the room. Teachers engage in the exercises alongside their students, and allowing students to choose which breaths to practice gives them agency, she said.

"The students really feel like they have a voice," Maffea said.

Shanthi Project curriculum also emphasizes relationship skills like kindness and gratitude.

"It makes a huge difference in their level of empathy," Clearview fourth grade teacher Jacqueline Jimenez said.

As the students get older, the lessons shift toward skills needed to conquer the anxiety that comes with the transition to middle school.

"If you're really stressed out, you can just stay calm and relaxed by breathing in and breathing out," Clearview fourth grader Caleb Lopez said. Lopez said he's learned to recognize when he's "crazed out" and needs a reset.

Breathing techniques are useful for daily transitions like entering school in the morning or coming back to class from lunch. Shanthi Project instructor Jody Millspaugh said the practices can also inspire creativity.

Millspaugh aims to teach students awareness of themselves, others and the environment. Along with the breathing techniques, a lifelong skill, she wants to impart calmness and compassion.

As Millspaugh surveyed the kindergarteners gathered on Maffea's carpet, she guided them through the transition from "mindful bodies" to "wiggly bodies" and back again.

"We can switch into our mindful bodies when we need to or want to," Millspaugh reminded the students.

The long-term goal is to build emotional resilience, stress management and self-confidence while improving focus and executive function, Millspaugh said.

"If you can teach a kid how to be mindful and notice their emotions as they're happening and teach them to respond rather than react very suddenly, it is a resource that they can call on not only in the classroom but for the rest of their lives," Shanthi Project Executive Director Kimberly Hopkins said.

Learning mindfulness early is like learning a language at a young age in that it's easier to pick up, Clearview Principal Heather Bennett-Knerr said.

"I think it helps them keep that pause and stay present," Bennett-Knerr said.

CHILDREN & YOUTH OTHER PROGRAMMING

During 2025, Shanthi Project delivered mindfulness programming to:



children across 5 summer camps



children in 2 afterschool programs



#### CHILDREN'S HOME OF EASTON

For six weeks in the spring, and six weeks this fall, we led an after-school program for the Children's Home of Easton, a non-profit that serves traumatized, neglected children who are unable to remain at home. Each session included guided relaxation, mindful movement, and strategies that participants could add to their self-regulation "toolboxes." Programming evolved based on the needs of the participants, and was led by Jocelyn Hontz, who has previously worked for the PA Department of Human Services.

#### **JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTER**

We continue to serve youth at the Northampton County Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) every Wednesday and two Saturdays a month. The Healing through Mindfulness program we offer in high school and middle school is the newest program at JJC, meeting one Saturday per month.

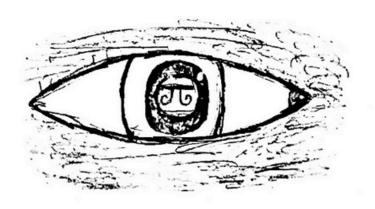


During the spring, our instructor Sara led a writing project for her classes at JJC, encouraging them to draft statements and create artwork about the impact of mindfulness and yoga on their lives. After receiving their creations, she told us, "I am absolutely floored by the responses I received from the boys at JJC. Each one of the attached pages is thoughtful and full of emotion and presence." On the next page, you'll find a particularly moving sample from one of Sara's students; we know you'll find it as powerful as we do.

At the end of each year, our instructors celebrate the holidays with the participants by bringing in a craft—last year we made ornaments that they could give to family members—and some treats. We look forward to sharing holiday joy again this year!

#### 5/10/25 NCJJC#7

For me, mindfulness has been an escape from the crushing expectations of society. I have Spent most of my life worrying about the things I can not control, the past and the future. I face a constant uphill battle against my biggest fear, time. Time is one of the only-things that can not be controlled. No matter how much you can be hurting or mourning, time passes. Time has taken countless things from me, and my only escape has been mindfulness. Socrates had created one of my favorite quotes, "Amor Fati." This describes my biggest fear being conquered. Socrates uses a mindset that directly aligns with the principles of mindfulness. In a sense, sourcites states that,"A person must not fear what is not promised, but shall relish in the gift that is the present." He encourages others to The in-the moment, the epitame of mindfulness. Mindfulness shall always serve as my safe haven. It relians me of the burdens I carry on a daily basis. I seek refuge in an all-inclusive Utopia. It shall always be the thing that hat saved me. I have many tears that I carry. I am weighted with the Vast uncertainty of like, which I carit control. I have used mindfulness to acate acceptance. Acceptance of myself, of others, of life, and of time. I will no longer let my fears dictate me. I gave my power to others in the past, using their beliefs and expectations to shape my life. No more. No more shall I give the opressors of my life, power. I take book the control I lost. I take back the freedom of my mind, that I have let go of And, I take back the injustices, which I have placed on myself and others. Mindfulness, is the key to the cage, which restricts my mental freedom. It has ghen me freedom and feate of mind, even when I am not free physically.



#### **COMMUNITY-BASED HIGHLIGHTS**

#### **SHANTHI @WORK**

During our 2025 fiscal year, Shanthi Project provided mindfulness sessions to:



Practicing mindfulness in the workplace has proven benefits such as increased job satisfaction and productivity, healthier office relationships, and reduced stress and staff turnover. We continue to receive highly positive feedback about S@W, such as:

"The instructors were skilled at demystifying mindfulness."

- Berry Steiner, Memorial Library of Nazareth and Vicinity

"Jocelyn did a great job using real-life examples that made it easy to relate to and understand the importance of including mindfulness in each day."

- Sarah Car, American Bank

#### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

We engaged with our community at a variety of events, ranging from back-to-school nights to establishing a mindfulness-based calming room at the Resilient Lehigh Valley Annual Conference. No matter the opportunity, we enjoyed sharing the wonders of mindfulness with adults and children alike.

858 community members reached

#### **VOLUNTEERING**

In March, volunteers from Just Born's Human Resources Department helped us assemble eighty calming glitter jars, which our instructors use during Calm+Kind+Focused lessons. Sarah, our Senior Director of Programs, also led the team through two mindfulness practices to bookend the morning. Volunteer Center of the Lehigh Valley helped coordinate this effort and hosted us in their new space, and Just Born kindly supplied the materials needed to create the jars. We are grateful for the support and generosity of all involved!



#### **VOLUNTEER CHALLENGE**

This year, we participated in the Volunteer Center of the Lehigh Valley's annual Volunteer Challenge. They matched us with ASR Media, who volunteered to create a :30 PSA showcasing Shanthi Project's mission and work.

"The Volunteer Challenge is a unique opportunity to use our professional skills to make a lasting impact," shared Katie Santana, president of ASR Media "This was a perfect match—we love working with organizations that promote mental well-being and education. We share a vision of creating impact through connection, whether through mindfulness or media."

We were thrilled with the final product — you can watch it on our YouTube channel! Thank you to ASR Media for donating their time and talent to create this PSA for us, as well as Ashley Russo, Katie Santana, Stephanie Mettler, and the Volunteer Center of the Lehigh Valley.







#### NEW SPACE AT 131 N. 3RD STREET

In August 2025, Shanthi opened a brick and mortar location in downtown Easton. We commemorated the occasion with a launch party, as well as a ribbon cutting officiated by Easton Business Association.

With the goal of better integrating our mindfulness services into the community, we began offering mindfulness workshops for all ages, taught by our experienced instructors. These workshops encompass a wide range of mindfulness activities and practices, including meditation, mindful movement, arts and crafts, and writing. We also formed new partnerships with Easton businesses to promote our programming and get more involved with our local community.

We look forward to expanding our programming offerings and leading more community workshops in 2026 and beyond!

#### **15TH ANNIVERSARY**

In May, Shanthi Project celebrated its fifteenth anniversary. Our organization, which began as a seed planted by Denise Veres in 2010, has fully blossomed into a thriving tree whose branches now reach far and wide. In 2025, we commemorated this evolution, as well as our impact on the tens of thousands of community members we have served through the years.

#### NOW & ZEN

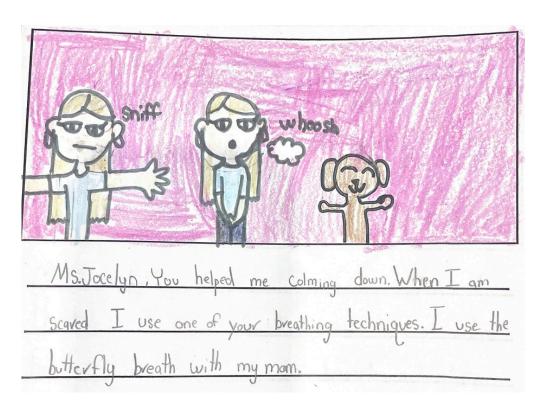
To honor this major milestone, we hosted an anniversary party at Stone Cellars 46 in Easton. With a full house of Shanthi Project's greater community, we toasted to the past, present, and future of our organization. Displays around the venue showcased a

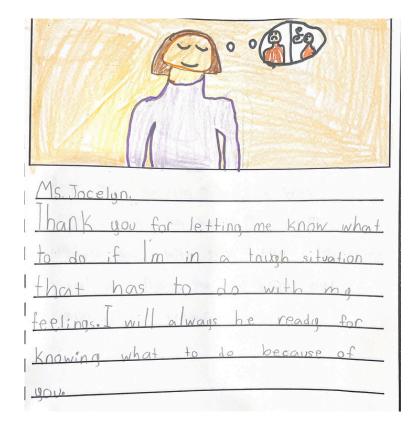


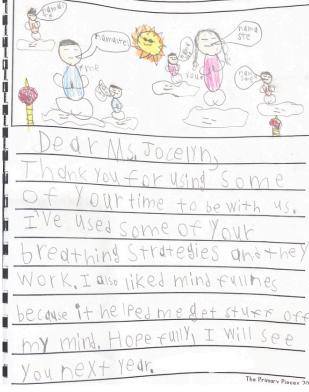
selection of artifacts collected since Shanthi Project's inception, including research, poems, drawings, photos, and quotes. (See some below!) Our inaugural Now & Zen Awards honored the individuals and organizations who played a critical role in nurturing Shanthi Project's growth during its earliest stages of development. Categories and recipients were as follows:

- Outstanding Partner in Education: Heather Maczko, Cheston Elementary School
- Community Collaboration Award: Boys & Girls Club of Easton
- Steadfast Supporter Award: David Miers
- Early Champion Award: Two Rivers Health & Wellness Foundation
- Legacy Builder Award: Michael Lear

At the event, we also organized a silent auction, raising over \$13,000 in support of our mission, and celebrated Denise's birthday!











# ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN

Our fifteenth anniversary also afforded us the opportunity to take a walk down memory lane and revisit our many years of work. In preparation for a dedicated campaign, we collected stories, photos, written works, and other historical documents from **interviews with dozens of Shanthi Project's current and past staff and board members, school partners, grantors, and research collaborators.** Throughout the rest of the year, these special artifacts were shared with our wider digital audience, as well as our Now & Zen attendees.

#### **THANK YOU!**

We are couldn't be more grateful for our amazing 2025 corporate and community partners:























































































SIIGHMARK 👽















Journey





**HOGANLAW** 









#### **VERES SOCIETY MEMBERS**

Thank you to our Veres Society members for helping us transform lives and sustain our essential mindfulness programs.

#### **Champion Members**

Friends and Family of Denise

#### **Pioneer Members**

Lynn Prior Paul & Paula Herron Braden

#### **Partner Members**

Beth Seetch
Dave Erickson
Dinoli Rowlands
John & Vera Cosgrove

#### Friend Members

Anthony and Gina Beltrami Heather Myers Jeanne Reilly John Hawkins Kim Hopkins Lynne Brolly Renell Carpenter

#### **WHAT'S IN STORE FOR 2026?**

Taking all that we've learned and experienced in 2025, we will continue to fine-tune our programming and work to create **healthier**, **more resilient communities within the Lehigh Valley**. A glimpse of our focus areas in the coming year includes:

# TWEEN AND TEEN MENTAL HEALTH

STRATEGIC PLANNING

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

#### **FINANCIALS**

FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2024 - JUNE 30, 2025

Total Revenue & Support - \$335.733.30

- Private, Corporate, & Government Grants \$266,495.25
- Program Services \$73,062.50
- Contributions \$44,925.55

**Total Expenses** - \$310,409.17

- Program Service & Delivery \$242,376.34
- Administration & Operations \$68,032.83

#### CONTACT

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Phone: (610) 255-7230

# **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

## STRATEGIC COLLABORATIONS



#### **FOLLOW US!**



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