



- 02 Fatherhood Graduation
- 03 Panel Discussion
- 04 Hope Haven Update
- 05 Youth Corps
- 06 Little Free Project
- 07 Provider Appreciation
- 08 Success Stories
- 09 Outreach & Training
- 11 Winterfest
- 12 Upcoming Events



THE COMMUNITY

Spring
2024

Quarterly Community Newsletter

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. and Chautauqua Opportunities for Development, Inc.

Save the Date for GiveBigCHQ 2024!

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. (COI) is excited to announce our participation in Give Big CHQ on June 13, 2024. The event is a 24-hour online donation drive sponsored by the Chautauqua Region Community Foundation that features over 100 local nonprofits. This year, COI is raising funds specifically to support our Mobile Crisis Outreach Program.

COI's Mobile Crisis Outreach Program provides crisis intervention response services during non-traditional work hours (evenings and weekends) to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. Services include stabilization and de-escalation, field assessment and referrals to appropriate services, crisis counseling, development of a safety or diversion plan, and follow up. The program is coordinated by a NYS licensed Clinical Social Worker and staffed by trained Crisis Workers and Peer Advocates.

The need for crisis intervention services has never been greater. In 2023, the program responded to 430 crisis intervention situations and diverted 356 unnecessary ER visits. The figures are more than double the number of crisis response interventions just two years ago. *(continued on page 2)*



Dunkirk (716) 366-8176
10825 Bennett Rd. Dunkirk, NY

Jamestown (716) 661-9430
402 Chandler St Jamestown, NY

Youth Safe House 1(888) 877-9647

GiveBigCHQ (con't)

(continued from page 1) In 2021, the program responded to 199 crisis situations and diverted 125 ER visits.

Information from the NYS Department of Health confirms that there is a significant need for mental health resources in Chautauqua County. The rate of hospitalization for self-inflicted injuries is 8.1 per 10,000 persons in the county, much higher than the statewide rate of 4.7 per 10,000. In Chautauqua County, the rate of mortality by suicide is 12.3 per 100,000 individuals, compared to 8.6 for the state.

We hope that on June 13, you will join COI at www.givebigchq.org to raise funds to support the need for mental health crisis intervention in Chautauqua County. Offline donations are also gratefully accepted.



Fatherhood Graduation

COI's Fatherhood Program has been connecting with incarcerated fathers and father figures at the Chautauqua County Jail to provide support and education about maintaining positive connections with their children upon re-entering the community.

Congratulations to all of the fathers who have graduated from the program for all of their hard work!



Homelessness Key Topic of Panel Discussion at SUNY Fredonia

Homelessness is a major issue in Chautauqua County, with the highest number of individuals experiencing homelessness ever recorded. In late March 2024, Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.'s Amanda Straight, Deputy Director of Housing and Community Development and Chautauqua County's Director of Mental Hygiene Services Carmelo Hernandez, spoke about the issue at the Williams Center at SUNY Fredonia. They shared their expertise in supporting the unhoused, along with ways to help. Approximately 50 people attended the event, which was organized by the League of Women Voters.



The county has seen a significant rise in the number of individuals receiving services for homelessness, from 541 in 2019 to 816 in 2022. Though numbers conflict on how many have been identified as “street homeless”, Amanda Straight estimates that number at around 30 individuals, not including those that are sleeping in vehicles or “couch-surfing”.

Temporary housing is provided through hotels and motels throughout the county, but the capacity is limited, and neighboring counties often send unhoused people to Chautauqua County. “The capacity for us to find places for them to live, it just doesn’t exist,” Straight said. “... There are places available, but they are very limited.”

“... they fell on hard times ... but they still deserve a fair chance, and they still deserve to have a house to live in.”

The lack of affordable and safe housing options has always been an issue in Chautauqua County but was made worse by the pandemic. Landlords have dramatically increased rent, taken the property off the market or have turned units in to short-term rentals.

Currently, Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. has two single-family houses available for temporary housing, one in Jamestown and one in Dunkirk. The agency's Hope Haven Women's Shelter is currently under development in the City of Jamestown. It is expected to open in early 2025 and will be specific to helping homeless women.

Besides the challenges of finding safe and affordable housing for the unhoused, another challenge is that the current system creates a “benefit cliff” where an individual or family's assistance surpasses the amount an individual would receive if they were working. “People literally refuse more hours at work,” Straight said, “... They can't afford to work.” Unhoused individuals may be reluctant to seek assistance due to mistrust and negative experiences. Many individuals in the north end of the county do not want to be relocated to Jamestown, where there are more options for temporary housing.

Straight also reminded people about the importance of tolerance, emotional support and understanding for those in need of assistance. “If you hear somebody talking about unhoused people in general ... take a second to stop and remind them that they are human beings,” Straight said. “Everybody can make a mistake, and a lot of people are one paycheck away from an emergency. ... A lot of the customers that we work with, they fell on hard times ... but they still deserve a fair chance, and they still deserve to have a house to live in.”

Hope Haven Women's Shelter

Work has begun on COI's Hope Haven Women's Shelter! The shelter will provide 18 beds for homeless individual women when it is completed in early 2025.

It will be staffed around the clock and provide supports to the women with the goal of helping them move to independent safe and affordable housing.



Youth Corps Recognizes Local Law Enforcement



The COI's Youth Corps had a community service event on President's Day, February 19. Youth and Safe House staff prepared care packages for the Jamestown Police Department to show appreciation for their support. Nine youth participated and created 80 care packages that included a handwritten note of appreciation, homemade snickerdoodle and chocolate chip cookies, tissues, hand warmers, and lip balm. Many of the homeless youth served by the Safe House are transported there by law enforcement from school or home. Staff and Youth Corps members delivered the care packages directly to the police department.



Youth Corps is open to young people ages 14-22 who are interested in community service activities and volunteer opportunities. Call COI's Safe House at (716) 661-6446 for more information.

Little Free Project - BIG Impact



Pictured: Lily Speacking
donations, that have kept this project thriving.

“Take what you need, give what you can”, is a motto that Beth Anderson, a resident of Jamestown, has spread throughout Chautauqua County. These words were written on the first pantry box, and the first photo she posted on her Facebook page “Chautauqua County Little Free Project”. Celebrating their 4th anniversary of the project, with over 1,400 followers, the page recently highlighted a photo of her two children, who have been helping their mother install and fill boxes from the start. As of October 2023, there were 22 affiliated pantries throughout the county, and as of today, it is closer to 30. That isn’t counting the families who were motivated by this project to build and set up pantries of their own. Partnering with places like No Child Goes Hungry and Bombas Socks has helped the project grow, but it is Beth, her children, and the residents of Chautauqua County, who make sure there are steady streams of

Each year Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. surveys their staff on a variety of topics. We look at what we do well, and what we could improve upon. During a recent survey, Stephanie Thompson, a Head Start teacher at Holy Family, brought up the idea of having a pantry box outside of the school. She recognized the need of those in our community, and reached out to Beth to see if we could join in on this amazing project. On May 6th, 2024, COI’s first pantry was installed outside of the Holy Family site. Beth and her children generously filled the box with nonperishables and hygiene items, provided a bag full of items to replenish the box, and donated several bags of Bombas socks.



Items in this box will be available to anyone in the community that has a need, and safe donations can be placed in the box when there is room available. We ask that those who visit the box be mindful of the children and please drive slowly and carefully.

We are so excited about this opportunity, so much so that Beth has agreed to help us install a pantry box at one of our Dunkirk locations! Please keep an eye on our Facebook page for updates.

Provider Appreciation Day Was a Hit!

Every year in the month of May, we celebrate Provider Appreciation Day! This momentous occasion is in recognition of our dedicated Child Care Providers, to show our gratitude and appreciation of the hard work they give to the children of our community.

This year the Chautauqua Child Care Council invited all area Registered/Licensed Child Care Providers to join in a Paint Party. The event was held on Friday, May 3, 2024 at the Cassadaga American Legion. The paint instruction was led by Kimberly Tedquist of Coffee, Canvas, Ceramics & More. Kim is also a Group Family Daycare Assistant at Mary Ann's Daycare in Jamestown, NY.



Paint Instructor Kimberly Tedquist with Assistants Shirley Smith & Dan Tedquist



Family Day Care Providers Angella Newhard, Amanda Halovich & Kimberly McVinney

The evening was filled with laughs, bonding, food and creativity. Four lucky Providers were recipients of raffle prizes, which included a hand painted wine glass and a box of gourmet chocolates.

It's another Provider Appreciation Day event in the books! Thanks to all who participated and helped to make this event possible!



Group Family Day Care Provider Kristin Glowniak



Chautauqua Child Care Council Staff Damaris Caceres Mercado, Keira Santana, Diane Guzman & Rebecca Potter



Chautauqua Child Care Council



Success Stories

Rand Interiors LLC

Rand Interiors, LLC is a carpentry business that is beginning operations in Dunkirk with help from Chautauqua Opportunities for Development, Inc. (CODI). The business, which specializes in interior renovation, is owned and managed by Dominick Rand. He previously owned a business in the UK and wanted to better understand the US business environment.



Dom's mission was to launch the LLC for liability protection and to legitimize his trade. His vision is to earn a competitive living doing what he loves on his own terms. Ultimately, he wants to support his family and be able to spend precious time with them, a common goal for new microbusiness owners.

CODI staff helped Dom make steady progress on his business filing between his home renovation jobs so he could avoid paperwork fatigue and stay on track. Before long he could open bank accounts and obtain insurance. CODI continued to coordinate the necessary paperwork and appointments with professional service providers.

Dom was able to find unique benefits from CODI's technical assistance process. CODI was able to "meet him where he was" with several one-on-one in-person meetings in between his contacting jobs. CODI provided a structured process that was documented, which paid off when he needed to communicate information from the LLC's founding documents to professional service providers.

Many micro-business founders have circumstances and goals that are similar to Dom's. CODI staff is available to empower business owners on their way to financial independence.

St. Patrick's Day Outreach

COI's Fatherhood program and the Child Care Council participated in Jamestown's Turn the River Green event in March.



Pictured left to right: Rob Smith, Christina Maddox, Mikala Farren and Lindsey Burke

Easter Carnival at the Safety Village



Pictured: Lisa Feldt and Lindsey Burke

Staff from the Child Care Council participated in the Safety Village's Easter Carnival.



Child Care Council Trainers



Pictured Left to Right: Nicola Rose, Leslie Anderson, Christina Maddox and Rebecca Potter

Nicola Rose and Leslie Anderson, mentors in Early Education, along with Christina Maddox and Rebecca Potter, registrars from COI's Child Care Council, have recently finished a 40-hour Health & Safety training course. This training enables them to teach the Health and Safety: Competencies for Becoming a Family or Group Family Day Care Provider course, a mandatory 15-hour requirement for child care providers to obtain a license. Previously, attending this course was challenging as it necessitated traveling to Buffalo for two to three days, posing difficulties for providers, especially Legally Exempt ones seeking licensure. Now, this training can be conducted at a COI facility or the provider's location. Additionally, both Early Education Mentors are certified Observers in the CLASS assessment tool. CLASS assessments define teaching quality through the lens of interactions. It provides providers with the ability to measure and improve the interactions that matter most for children's outcomes.

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc

Diane Hewitt-Johnson, CEO

Housing and Community Development

Josiah Lamp, Director

Foreclosure Prevention
Homebuyer Education
Homeless Prevention & Rehousing
Housing Rehabilitation
Lead Hazard Control
Tenant Services
Weatherization

Early Care and Education

Bill Vogt, Director

Early Head Start
Head Start
Early Head Start - Child Care Partnerships
Universal Pre-K

Find all job descriptions and apply online at:
chautauquaopportunities.com/employment



Youth Site Leader
Youth Specialists
Grant Support Specialist
Business Development Specialist
Family Educator
Summer Food Kitchen Assistants
Assistant Cook
Building Clerk
Personal Care Aides I and II
Mobile Crisis Peer Advocate
Crisis Workers I and II

Housing Rehab Laborer
Housing Rehab Specialist
Energy Auditor
Youth Site Leader
Youth Specialist
Teachers
Teacher Assistants
UPK Site Supervisor
Health Care Specialist
Nurse
Maintenance Laborer/Mower

**TOP
WORK
PLACES
2023-2024**

THE BUFFALO NEWS

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. is a
2024 Top Workplace!
2 Years Running

Head Start and Home-Based Families participate in a Winterfest



In March, Marty's Bubblegum Machine entertained over 80 Early Care and Education families. This was a fun interactive event for all ages! The children, families, and staff joined in the Chicken Dance, Bubble Catching, Limbo, and many other childhood favorites! Families also enjoyed a pizza party hosted by the Fatherhood program during the event.

Child Care Council Susan Marker, Director

Child Care Resource and Referral
Legally Exempt
Training
Family Court Child Care
USDA Summer Food Services Program

Health and Family Services Chris Nicosia, Director

Licensed Home Care
Fatherhood Program
Mobile Crisis Outreach
Migrant Health Outreach
Runaway & Homeless Youth Shelter
Street Outreach Program
Transitional Independent Living Program

Economic Development Michael Michalski, Sr. Accounting Manager

Entrepreneurial Technical Assistance
Small Business Essentials Training
Small Business Lending
Incubator Space
Consumer Appliance Loans





Community Council Virtual Meeting May 9th at 5:00 PM

*Attending will give
you a chance to win
1 of 3 hanging
baskets.

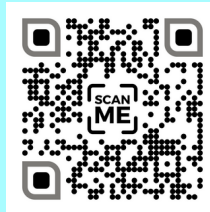
Scan the QR Code to Join the Meeting

Join us for a conversation with Chautauqua
County's program:
**Children & Youth with Special
Health Care Needs (CYSHCN)**



**CYSHCN is a FREE public health program that provides
information and referral services for health and related areas
for families and children (birth to 21 years) with special health
care needs.**

**Help is available whenever the need arises throughout your
child's growing years.**



www.chautauquaopportunities.com



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[@chautopp](https://twitter.com/chautopp)



[@chautopp](https://www.instagram.com/chautopp)

Upcoming Events

MAY 9, 2024
Community Council
Virtual
5pm - 7pm

MAY 27, 2024
Memorial day
CLOSED

JUNE 15, 2024
First Time Home Ownership
class - Dunkirk
9am - 5pm

MAY 18, 2024
First Time Home Ownership
class - Jamestown
9am - 5pm

JUNE 13, 2024
GiveBigCHQ
12:00am - 11:59pm

JUNE 19 2024
Juneteenth
CLOSED

Contact Us

For all general inquiries, please contact :

Michael Yerico Administration Building
17 W. Courtney St
Dunkirk, NY 14048
(716) 366-3333
info@chautopp.org