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THE COMMUNITY

Spring
2025

Quarterly Community Newsletter

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

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO US!



This year marks the 60th anniversary of the birth of Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.! The agency's Articles of Incorporation were filed with NY State on May 11, 1965. On June 11 of the same year the Chautauqua County Board of Supervisors approved a local law allocating county funds to COI to ensure that residents could benefit from the Federal Opportunity Act of 1964. The Act spurred the creation of Community Action Agencies nationwide, a network that has grown to over 1,100 member agencies.

The earliest COI programs mentioned in historical documents are the Jamestown Boys' Club "Project Catch Up" and Legal Aid to the Indigent. COI began Head Start operations in December 1965 with a total enrollment of 300 children. Programming that followed soon after included a Medicare Alert Program and Neighborhood Youth Corps. Jamestown Area Meals on Wheels began through COI in 1969.

In the early 1970's, COI further developed its programming to include additional Meals on Wheels programs, senior centers throughout the county, Rural Home Repair Program, Mortgage Default and Rental Delinquency Counseling, Food Stamp Outreach, and Crisis Intervention (food vouchers and fuel delivery). COI began providing the Weatherization Assistance Program and the HUD Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) in the mid 70's. These two programs are still operated by COI. The agency (*con't on pg 3*)

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

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

Youth Safe House
1(888) 877-9647

COI'S HOPE HAVEN WOMEN'S SHELTER IS NOW OPEN



COI's Hope Haven Women's Shelter is now open and providing services!

Donations to the shelter may be made in the following ways:

Visit chautauquaopportunities.com and click the Donate link at the top of the page. Fill out the form and specify "Hope Haven" in the comment field.

Visit amazon.com/registry and click on "Find a registry". In the name field, type **Chautauqua Opportunities** then click the title "Donations for COI's Homeless Programs". This will take you to a list of household and personal care items that are needed. Items may be purchased in any quantity you wish and will be sent directly to the shelter from Amazon.

Please note that we are not accepting clothing donations at this time.

Thank you for your support!

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO US!

(con't from pg 1) added WIC and HEAP to its growing list of services in the 1980's, along with prenatal care, teen pregnancy prevention, minority outreach, Home Care, housing programs, crime prevention, emergency food pantries, community gardening, and a self-help cannery. Early Head Start was added to COI's services in 1993. WIC transitioned to Catholic Charities in 2010. In 2011, Chautauqua County Department of Social Services began providing HEAP in-house.

COI has grown over the years into a well-known provider of a wide range of services that align with the agency's mission to combat poverty. Current programming includes: **Early Care and Education** (Head Start, Early Head Start, Early Head Start Expansion-Child Care Partnerships, Universal Pre-K); **Health and Family Services** (licensed Home Care, Responsible Fatherhood, Mobile Crisis Outreach, Migrant Farmworker Health Outreach, and homeless youth residential programs); **Housing and Emergency Services** (homeless prevention and rehousing, Hope Haven Women's Shelter, HUD Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8), Fair Housing Outreach and Education); **Home, Business, and Asset Development** (Weatherization, Lead Remediation, HUD Housing Counseling, Homebuyer Education, Foreclosure Prevention, Bankruptcy Counseling, and Credit Counseling); and the **Child Care Council** (Child Care Resource & Referral, child care business development, family day care registration, Family Court Child Care Center, child care provider mentoring and assessments, and USDA Summer Food Program).

Chautauqua Opportunities for Development, Inc. (CODI), is COI's affiliate corporation that was initiated in 2002. CODI is a certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) providing technical assistance and loans to entrepreneurs for business startup and expansion.

HEAD START TURNS 60!

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. is excited to celebrate Head Start's 60th Birthday throughout May with themed family engagement and home-based socialization events. Join us for fun birthday party games, a special slide show featuring employees and their children who are Head Start graduates (for those who choose to participate), and visits from local community organizations and first responders.



 Holy Family Head Start Center May 13 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm

 Early Child Care Center (ECCC) May 21 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm

Head Start programs engage families in their child's learning, recognizing parents as their child's first and most influential teacher. We create welcoming, well-organized, and safe learning environments—both indoors and outdoors—while supporting children with disabilities and building on their strengths.

Head Start serves families with children from birth to age 5, as well as pregnant women and expectant families. Eligible participants include families who meet federal low-income guidelines.

Let's honor six decades of empowering children and families—together!



WE ARE **HIRING!**

- CENTER DIRECTOR 2
- TEACHERS
- TEACHER ASSISTANTS
- HEALTH CARE SPECIALIST
- ASSISTANT COOK
- SUMMER FOOD KITCHEN ASSISTANT
- BUSINESS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH SPECIALIST
- EARLY EDUCATION MENTOR
- PERSONAL CARE AIDES 1 & 2
- MOBILE CRISIS PEER ADVOCATE
- CRISIS WORKERS 1 & 2
- YOUTH SPECIALIST
- HOPE HAVEN SHELTER SUPPORT SPECIALIST
- HOUSING CASE WORKER
- WEATHERIZATION SPECIALIST 1
- WEATHERIZATION LABORER
- WEATHERIZATION ENERGY AUDITOR
- MAINTENANCE LABORER/MOWER



APPLY NOW AT
CHAUTAUQUAOPPORTUNITIES.COM/EMPLOYMENT

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH



In recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month, staff from COI's Administrative, Health and Family Services, Early Care and Education Divisions along with Head Start and Early Head Start students came together to plant pinwheels at various COI locations.

This activity not only symbolizes our commitment to protecting children but also serves as a visual reminder of the importance of nurturing a safe and supportive environment for every child. The vibrant pinwheels fluttering in the wind stand as a testament to our collective efforts in advocating for the well-being and safety of all children in our community.



The Easter Bunny Came to Town

On April 9th, the Easter Bunny made his annual appearance at the Safe House in Jamestown to take free photos with all the children who hopped down the bunny trail to see him! Over 70 members of the community came to the event to partake in Easter and spring-themed games and crafts, and have a meet and greet with the bunny. 7 youth in COI's Youth Corps also volunteered their time to work the stations and share information about our programs with the guests. If you are between the ages of 14-22 and are interested in joining the Youth Corps, call 716-661-9446 for more information!



Safe House Staff
Seated: Brittany, Ashley
Back Row: Kirsten, Katie, Mandie, Mr. Bunny, Luke and Chris



love fresh fruits and veggies?

Stop by to purchase fresh, healthy, affordable
and locally grown produce!



Chautauqua Opportunities

10825 Bennett Rd, Dunkirk, NY 14048

11:30-12:30pm

Every 2nd and 4th Friday of every month



The Farm Market accepts credit, debit, cash, and SNAP!

**FeedMore
wny**

FeedMore WNY
www.feedmorewny.org
(716) 822-2002

Youth Corps serves up Smiles!

On Saturday, January 25th, the Chautauqua Opportunities Inc's Youth Corps spent the afternoon volunteering at St. Susan's Soup Kitchen. The Program Coordinator and Youth Site Leader for the Safe House, along with five youth participants, all contributed to serving the community in various ways. Some helped bus dishes, others wiped down tables and chairs, while some served hot meals and beverages. Additionally, a few youth offered to-go meals to those leaving the soup kitchen.



In the Community

CCC attends Easter Event at the Safety Village

On Saturday, April 12th, the Chautauqua Opportunities Inc's Child Care Council participated in the Safety Village's Bluey Easter Carnival. The COI Building was used to hold a Roller Coaster Simulation on one side of the building. Braving the cold weather, approximately 1,850 people attended the Easter Carnival.



Weatherization Manager Prevents Carbon Monoxide Poisoning



In February of 2025, COI's Weatherization Manager arrived at a customer's home to perform an Energy Audit. Upon entering the home, the Weatherization Manager's personal carbon monoxide alarm began to flash, indicating elevated levels of carbon monoxide in the air beyond permissible limits. The manager asked the customer if he had been baking or using the oven for any reason. The customer stated he hadn't used the oven in quite some time, so the manager immediately stopped the audit and went outside with the customer.

While outside, the manager inquired about the gas appliances in the customer's home and whether he had any carbon monoxide detectors. The customer replied that he only had a gas furnace and had smoke detectors, but no carbon monoxide detectors. At that moment, the manager informed him of a potential carbon monoxide leak inside the home, explaining its implications and the associated risks. As a result, the customer contacted his wife, who left work to take their children to the emergency room for carbon monoxide testing. Later that day, both the customer and his wife were also tested. The customer mentioned that he and his family had experienced headaches at various times but were unaware of the underlying issue.

The fire department was called, and they discovered that the furnace vent had become disconnected from the furnace due to improper installation. The individual who installed the unit neglected to use PVC glue to secure the joints of the PVC pipe. Additionally, there was an open cold air return situated directly below the malfunctioning exhaust, which was pulling the exhaust emissions into the furnace and distributed them along with the heated air throughout the living space of this ranch-style home.

After the home was safely abated due to the hazardous gas, the customer and a member of the fire department worked together to repair the furnace vent. Currently, the home is undergoing Weatherization services that encompass wall insulation, duct work repairs, air sealing, and the installation of new carbon monoxide detectors in both the living area and the basement.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a dangerous, odorless, and colorless gas that can be fatal, especially at high levels, because it displaces oxygen in the blood, starving vital organs. Symptoms can be subtle and mimic other illnesses, including headache, dizziness, nausea, weakness, and confusion. Exposure to high levels can lead to loss of consciousness and death.



COI's Housing and Head Start Programs Help Homeless Family



Sophia was just two years old when she joined COI's Early Head Start Program in June 2024. Her mother had been referred to the program through COI's Housing division. Sophia's mother, Eileen, was fleeing a domestic violence situation and was temporarily housed in a local hotel with Sophia and her ten-year-old brother. When Sophia first arrived for center-based services, she was a very shy little girl who seldom spoke. However, she has since blossomed, actively engaging with both her peers and teachers. Sophia made a smooth transition to Head Start when she turned three. Eileen has been highly involved in Sophia's education, attending every monthly Family Engagement activity. She communicates daily with Sophia's teachers, sharing updates from home and learning about Sophia's day at the center. Eileen consistently seeks resources to ensure her children's needs are met. She has participated in COI's Community Conversations and enrolled in the Positive Solutions parenting education course offered by the Early Care and Education division.

Once Sophia began attending Early Head Start, Eileen started working at a local fast-food restaurant and has since been promoted to Assistant Manager. With COI's assistance, she has secured permanent housing for her family. Eileen has done an exceptional job creating a safe and nurturing environment for herself and her children, always prioritizing their needs. She attributes her support from COI as one of the key factors that facilitated her successful transition to single parenting.

Success Stories

Chautauqua Lake Dental Donates to Children's Center

COI is grateful to Chautauqua Lake Dental for their generous donation to COI's Children's Center at Mayville Family Court. The donation included dental bags to be distributed to children attending the drop-in Center. The children loved picking out what color toothbrush they wanted to take home, and also received toothpaste, stickers and a tooth brushing sand timer. One little girl was so thrilled with her dental bag that she asked if she could take one home for her little brother, and of course she did!



COI Helps Family of Six with Home Safety Hazards

The Healthy Homes team recently had the privilege of serving a large family consisting of five young children. Three of these children are under the age of six, meaning they are at a developmental stage which is most vulnerable to the effects of lead poisoning. At least one of these small children was already known to have elevated levels of lead in their system. The case was referred to COI by the Chautauqua County Health Department (CCHD). The case was deemed to be of high priority due to the number of children in the household and the amount of lead hazards present within the home.

COI permanently removed lead hazards from the home. Part of this process includes hosting an open house where lead safe certified contractors conduct a walk-through inspection of the home and meet the residents before submitting a sealed bid for the project. At the open house it was apparent that this home had more safety hazards than just lead hazards. There were multiple broken stairs in the stairwell and a hole in the bathroom floor. Thankfully, COI was able to add these items to the scope of work.



The residents of this home were not only thankful for the lead abatement work completed but showed even more gratitude for the fact that we were able to go above and beyond to ensure they had a home where they could safely raise their children. The current HUD Lead Hazard Reduction Grant includes a Healthy Homes Supplement which will allow COI to continue the practice of repairing safety hazards on lead abatement projects that are not necessarily lead related. These funds are another tool for COI to assist community members with stabilizing and maintaining their housing.

Save the Date: Join COI during GiveBig CHQ on June 12, 2025

On Thursday, June 12, 2025, our community will come together for GiveBig CHQ, a powerful 24-hour online giving event that makes a lasting difference for local non profits—including COI!

This year, COI will raise funds for its recently opened Hop Haven Women’s Center, a 12-unit facility for homeless women. This special day is your chance to stand with women experiencing the crisis of homelessness. Your donation—large or small—helps COI to provide safe shelter, case management, transition to permanent housing, advocacy, and hope. Every dollar raised goes directly toward empowering women and helping them rebuild their lives in safety and dignity.

Join us on June 12 and GiveBig CHQ! Together, we can be the support someone desperately needs.

CODI Success: Melissa Baideme, CK Natural Fruit Juice



Melissa Baideme, founder of CK Natural Fruit Juice, came to Chautauqua Opportunities for Development, Inc. (CODI) seeking information about the MAP Grant. As part of the application process, Melissa enrolled in CODI’s Business Essentials Training class alongside five other aspiring entrepreneurs. From the very beginning, Melissa stood out—not just for her dedication to her own business, but for her generosity in sharing knowledge and advice with her classmates. Her collaborative spirit and willingness to help others made a lasting impression on both participants and instructors.

A proud Westfield, NY native, Melissa has built CK Natural Fruit Juice from the ground up as a woman-owned business rooted in local partnerships and high-quality standards. The company is the exclusive retail and small-bulk distributor for Growers’ Co-Op Concord, Niagara, and Catawba Grape Juice Concentrates, as well as Tart Cherry Juice Concentrate—all sourced from Westfield, NY. Growers’ Co-Op, founded in 1929, represents approximately 90 local farmers and more than 3,000 acres of grapes in the Lake Erie Grape Region.

Melissa’s dedication to food safety and quality is evident. She holds a food processing license from the State of New York Department of Agriculture and Markets, and has completed training through Cornell’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences to earn her HACCP certification. This rigorous training ensures CK Natural Fruit Juice follows strict food safety practices from raw material sourcing to final product distribution.

Melissa’s journey is a powerful example of what the MAP Grant can support: a passionate entrepreneur using her skills, knowledge, and community roots to grow a thriving business while lifting others up along the way.



Give Big CHQ
June 12, 2025

Givebigchq.org for more information!

Head Start Home Based Socialization Dances into Spring

During April, COI's Head Start Home Based families were entertained by Marty and the Bubblegum Machine. Parents danced with their children while bubbles, fake snow, and toilet paper filled the room.



Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc

Diane Hewitt-Johnson,
Chief Executive Officer

Robert Dahlin,
Chief Human Resource Officer

Judy Yonkers,
Director of Grants and Systems Compliance

Dan Mets,
Director of IT and Central Services

Housing and Emergency Services

Josiah Lamp, Director

Hope Haven Women's Shelter
Affordable Housing
Homeless Housing
Rental Subsidy
Homeless Prevention & Rapid Rehousing
Fair Housing Outreach & Education

Home, Business and Asset Development

Amanda Straight, Director

Weatherization
Lead Remediation
Homebuyer Education
Foreclosure Prevention
Credit & Debt Counseling
Pre/Post Bankruptcy
Financial Literacy Education

Early Care and Education

Bill Vogt, Director

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

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
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



JOIN CHAUTAUQUA OPPORTUNITIES, INC.

AS WE PRESENT



Community Conversations

THURSDAY, MAY 8, 2025

5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

CLICK THE ZOOM LINK TO JOIN

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89202561625?
pwd=HOGWUdacQLXlJjVpxxHOCtE3UrP8r8.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89202561625?pwd=HOGWUdacQLXlJjVpxxHOCtE3UrP8r8.1)

OR SCAN THE QR CODE



COME AND LEARN ABOUT THE SUMMER FOOD PROGRAM!
ALL PARTICIPATES WILL BE ENTERED INTO 2 PRIZE
DRAWINGS FOR AN EXTRA LARGE CAMPING CHAIR AND A
SPORTS THEMED COOLER!



CHAUTAUQUA OPPORTUNITIES, INC.
HELPING PEOPLE...CHANGING LIVES...



Chautauqua
Child Care Council
Child Care Keeps Chautauque County Working



www.chautauquaopportunities.com



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@chautopp

Upcoming Events

MAY 8, 2025
Community
Conversations
Virtual Meeting
5pm - 7pm

MAY 26, 2025
Memorial Day
OFFICES CLOSED

MAY 21, 2025
Section 8 Wait list Sign
up - Jamestown, NY
8:30am - 4:30pm

MAY 30, 2025
Section 8 Wait list Sign
up - Dunkirk, NY
8:30am - 4:30pm

JUNE 12, 2025
GiveBig CHQ
Supporting Hope
Haven Women's
Shelter

JUNE 19, 2025
Juneteenth
OFFICES CLOSED

Contact Us

For all general inquiries, please contact :

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