



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



CAR SHOW



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6TH, 2025

RAIN DATE SEPTEMBER 13TH, 2025

12PM-3PM

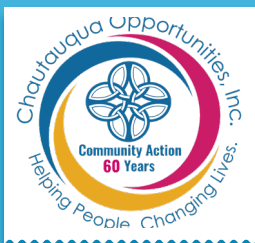
SPECIAL REMOTE
BROADCAST BY KIX
COUNTRY
96.5 FM

FREE ADMISSION!
FOOD!
CAR AWARDS!
MUSIC!

**CONNECTIONS NORTH
PARKING LOT**
10825 BENNETT ROAD,
DUNKIRK

HOSTED BY THE CHAUTAUQUA OPPORTUNITIES, INC.
FATHERHOOD PROGRAM

- 02 Supporting Hope Haven
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THE COMMUNITY

Summer
2025

Quarterly Community Newsletter

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

COI Hosts Hope Haven Grand Opening

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. hosted a ribbon cutting for the grand opening of Hope Haven Women's Shelter on June 25, 2025. The critically needed homeless shelter in Jamestown provides 18 beds in 12 units for single adult women. The opening of Hope Haven addresses the lack of emergency shelter options for the homeless, most of whom are placed in hotels and motels at high cost and with no supportive services.

A reception at the Northwest Ice Arena across the street from the shelter opened the ceremony. Diane Hewitt-Johnson gave the opening remarks. "Hope Haven represents not just a refuge, but a fresh start for women in Chautauqua County who are experiencing homelessness. We are proud to open our doors to these women and help them get back on their feet", she said.

Additional speakers who expressed their support of the project included City of Jamestown Mayor Kimberly Ecklund, Chautauqua County Executive PJ Wendel, and Michael Washburn from the NYS (*con't on page 3*)



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

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

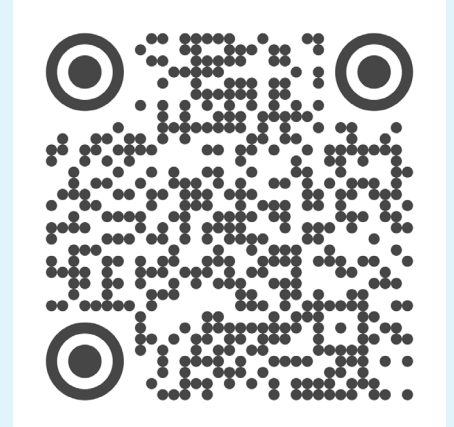
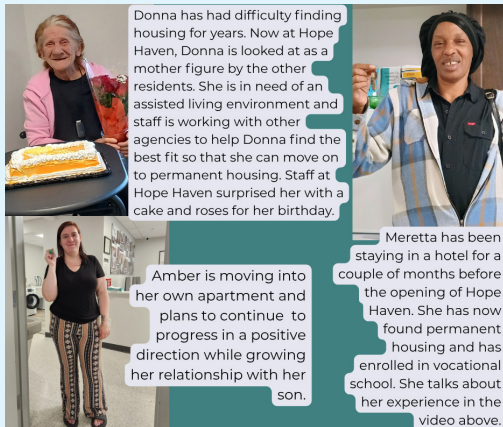
**Youth Safe
House** 1(888) 877-9647

Thank You for Supporting the Hope Haven Women's Shelter!

COI and the women of Hope Haven's Women's Shelter are incredibly grateful for the generosity of this community during the GiveBig CHQ online giving event. Together, you helped raise \$1,514 to support women in need at the shelter. Your kindness helps provide safety, comfort, and hope for those experiencing difficult times.

If you'd like to continue making a difference, you are invited to donate items directly to the shelter through our Amazon registry. Simply scan the QR code to shop for the items our shelter needs most. Every purchase - big or small - goes directly to helping the women we server.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for standing with us and showing that compassion can change lives.



We're Hiring!

Early Childhood Quality Assessment Specialist
Business and Community Outreach Specialist
RN Trainer/Supervisor
Human Resources Specialist
Hope Haven Shelter Support Specialists
Crisis Workers
Mobile Crisis Peer Advocate
Youth Specialists
Life Coach
Early Education Mentor
Quality Assurance Monitor
Teachers
Teacher Assistants
Head Cook
Assistant Cook
Weatherization Specialist
Weatherization Energy Auditor
Weatherization Laborer



chautauquaopportunities.com/employment

COI Hosts Hope Haven Grand Opening

(con't from page 1) Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. Also in attendance were Randy Holcomb, representing Senator George Borrello's office, and Frank Puglisi from Governor Kathy Hochul's office.

About 75 people attended the reception, which was followed by a ribbon cutting in front of Hope Haven. Guests were able to take a guided tour the facility, including one of the residential units.

Hope Haven has staff onsite 24 hours/day, 7 days/week, and case management is provided to help the women in residence address the obstacles in their lives, with the goal of moving into permanent housing. The shelter is already nearing its capacity of 18 women since opening in April 2025. Most importantly, several women have already successfully transitioned to permanent housing.

The \$3.96 million project received a \$3.12 million grant from OTDA's Homeless Housing and Assistance Program (HHAP). Additional funding sources for the project included the City of Jamestown, the Chautauqua County Land Bank, the Chautauqua Region Community Foundation, and Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.



LAKE SHORE FAMILY CENTER CELEBRATES 35 YEARS OF SERVICE!

This month, Lake Shore Family Center proudly celebrates its 35th anniversary of nurturing and educating young children in our community. Currently licensed to serve up to 104 children, Lake Shore Family Center provides high-quality care and education for children ages 8 weeks to 12 years.

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. has successfully partnered with Lake Shore Family Center since 2015, working together to support Early Head Start families and promote school readiness from the very start.

Here's to 35 years of impact – and many more to come!



Pictured: Virginia Miller, Lake Shore Family Center Director

Sandra Sheridan, Early Care & Education Family Services Manager

Head Start Celebrates Graduations

We're proud to celebrate 67 amazing graduates of COI's Head Start program who are headed to Kindergarten!

These bright young learners have grown so much and are ready to take on their next big adventure. Children were enrolled in COI's Head Start programs at the Early Care and Community Center (ECCC) in Dunkirk and the Holy Family and Bush school sites in Jamestown, as well as the Home-based program.

To honor this special milestone, ECCC and Holy Family each hosted graduation family events, bringing together families, staff, and students for a joyful celebration filled with pride, smiles, and unforgettable memories.



Head Start family events like these promote strong family engagement, school readiness, and lasting connections between home and school, helping to set the foundation for continued success in kindergarten and beyond.

Why Your Voice Matters: COI's Community Needs Assessment

COI is inviting community members to take part in our Community Needs Assessment Survey – and your input is essential! By sharing your experiences, concerns, and ideas, you help us better understand the real needs of our community.

The survey results guide COI in shaping programs and services that make the most impact. Every response paints a clearer picture of our community's strengths and challenges, ensuring resources are directed where they're needed most.

Participating is quick, confidential, and a powerful way to make your voice heard. Together, we can create lasting, positive change for Chautauqua County.

Scan the QR Code to take the survey today – because your perspective matters!

To be entered to win one of five \$100 gift cards, just provide your contact information at the end of the survey!



Honoring Claudette Baldwin: A Beloved Teacher Remembered

On July 9th, the Early Care & Education staff at Connections North gathered to honor and remember one of their own—Claudette Baldwin, who passed away on August 2, 2024.

Claudette was a dedicated member of the Early Care & Education family since September 1992. Over the years, she made a lasting impact on countless children and families. Her teaching journey spanned several of our locations, including Dunkirk, Westfield, and Gowanda. In her final years, she brought her warmth and energy to the Infant and Toddler Early Head Start program at Connections North in Dunkirk.

Claudette will always be remembered as the teacher who wasn't afraid to get messy, be silly, and bring joy into the classroom.

A heartfelt thank you to all the past and present Early Head Start/Head Start friends who generously donated in her memory. Thanks to you, a beautiful memory flower garden now blooms just outside her former classroom—a lasting tribute to a truly special educator.



Early Care & Education staff and guests are pictured with the flower garden planted in memory of Claudette Baldwin.

Front Row: Marilyn Vargas, Marissa Bonafede, Marcanna Zeilinski, Ariel Parsell, Chaelee Vega, Isabella Marshall

Back row: Bill Vogt, Lynette Pagon-Fontan, Alyssa Steward, Brittany Dunn, Melanie Wielgasz, Marion Bray, Andrea Baldwin (daughter of Claudette Baldwin), Sandy Sheridan, Becky Reed, Beth Mulkin (Campus and Community Children's Center Director), Anne Campbell, Isamar Mercado, Angelique Naples and Bobbi Jo Sheldon.



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!

Five Youth Corps members recently visited the Audubon Community Nature Center, accompanied by COI's Youth Site Leader. They volunteered their time and were rewarded with passes to tour the buildings and grounds. Many of the youth had never experienced the Audubon before, and enjoyed spending time on the trails and seeing all the wildlife and natural beauty! They pressure-washed tables, lots of chairs, and two tractors, before decorating toilet paper rolls for the birds to play with and tear apart. The youth are already asking when they can plan a trip to go back and volunteer again.



This was a thrilling experience for them all. Thank you to the Audubon Community Nature Center for this awesome experience!

Youth Corps is open to any youth ages 14-21 interested in participating in monthly Youth Corps events. Call the Safe House at 716-661-9446 for more information.

In the Community

Legally Exempt Providers Receive Gift Cards

On June 30, Dan Heitzenrater, Chautauqua Chamber of Commerce President/CEO, dropped off 360 Shop Local gift cards to Patti Dudenhoeffer, Child Care Council's Legally Exempt Coordinator. These gift cards were presented to legally exempt providers in Chautauqua County as this year's Provider Appreciation gift.



Success Stories

Head Start Home-Based Success



Bruce and his young son Jeremiah joined COI's Head Start Home-Based program in January 2025, shortly after relocating from Dunkirk to Jamestown. At the time, Bruce was navigating numerous challenges, including temporary housing and adjusting to life in a new city with limited support. With help from DSS, he initially secured short-term housing, and shortly after was able to move into a more stable living environment.

During the first home visit, COI's Family Educator and Life Coach completed the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) screenings with Jeremiah. The results suggested potential developmental delays. In response, COI's Disabilities Mental Health Specialist coordinated a referral for further evaluation through the local

school district. At the same time, Bruce also needed assistance in scheduling an updated physical for Jeremiah and completing kindergarten registration requirements.

The Life Coach and Family Educator provided hands-on support, including helping Bruce complete Jeremiah's kindergarten registration paperwork. Due to Bruce's lack of transportation, the Family Educator offered to transport the family to their appointment. At the appointment, the Family Educator connected Bruce with the District's school psychologist and explained that although some appointments had been missed due to illness, Head Start had completed initial developmental screenings and would share the results, as well as coordinate the next steps with the Disabilities Mental Health Specialist.

Today, Bruce and Jeremiah have made significant progress. Jeremiah is now fully registered for kindergarten and has a physical appointment scheduled, with transportation provided by COI. Once this step is complete, his evaluation for additional services will be scheduled.

Despite ongoing challenges, including limited transportation, lack of local family or community support, and dissatisfaction with their current housing situation, Bruce remains committed to building a better future. He has a strong desire to help Jeremiah thrive and is hopeful about the positive changes ahead. His engagement with the Head Start Home-Based program has been a key support on this journey, and we are proud to walk alongside him every step of the way.

COI and DSS Collaborate to Help Homeless Mother



In May 2025, a COI Housing Case Worker (HCW) started working with a newly homeless client - a single mom with two young children who had just moved to the area and did not have much support. They met for the first time on May 19th, determined to get her housed quickly. The Department of Social Services (DSS) assigned her as an intensive case management client, which allowed COI to work with her on a weekly basis to find her housing as soon as possible.

After two meetings, the HCW connected her with a landlord in the Dunkirk area who was willing to rent to her. The HCW was able to get her approved for a new program called Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) through the Department of Social Services, which provides additional rent and utilities for low-income families.

COI's HCW was able to quickly process the necessary paperwork so that COI could assist with the first month's rent and security deposit. Once the unit passed inspection, the HCW was able to approve the paperwork and help the family get into the unit. On June 6th, the client signed the lease, got her keys, and moved into the apartment. This client was able to do all this in just 15 days, through the collaboration of COI and DSS. Now she and her children can start furnishing their home and live comfortably in a home place of their own.

Youth Success!

Flynn enrolled in COI's Transitional Independent Living Program in December 2023 due to homelessness. Over the course of her 15-month stay, Flynn actively participated in our Life Skills classes, enhancing her independent living skills. She was also an active member of our Youth Corps group consistently volunteering within the community. During her time in the TILP Program, Flynn successfully secured full-time employment and with the skills that she learned, was able to save money. These skills allowed Flynn to successfully transition into her own apartment before the end of her stay in the program. We would like to congratulate Flynn on her accomplishments and wish her all the best in her future endeavors!



Homebuyer Journey

When Lisa Marie first connected with Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. (COI) in 2017, homeownership was more of a dream than a plan. As a single mother navigating the challenges of renting, she was determined to build a better future for her family—one with stability, independence, and a place to truly call home.

Lisa Marie officially began her journey toward homeownership with COI in 2021. After completing her initial intake and detailing her monthly expenses, she met with one of COI's Asset Development Specialists, Jennifer Bittner. Together, they created a personalized spending and savings plan tailored to her goals. She also completed the First-Time Homebuyer Education Course, gaining knowledge and tools to help her navigate the homebuying process. However, life brought unexpected delays, and her plans were temporarily paused. But in 2024, Lisa Marie returned with renewed focus and commitment. She updated her intake information, worked closely again with COI's Asset Development Specialist to revise her financial plan, and set a clear goal to purchase a home within 12 months.

Lisa Marie retook the Homebuyer Education Course in July 2024, showing her dedication and readiness. Just ten months later, in May 2025, she achieved her goal—purchasing a home and becoming a homeowner.

Lisa Marie's journey reflects the power of perseverance, planning, and partnership. With guidance and support from COI's Asset Development team, she transformed a long-held dream into reality.

We're proud to celebrate Lisa Marie's success and honored to be part of her story. Her achievement is a reminder of why we do this work—to help individuals and families create a stronger, more secure future.



First Time Homeowner!

Earlier this year, Greg Caylor found out that his landlord had decided to sell the home he was renting through the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. Greg was faced with the problem of finding another affordable house to rent, and possibly paying more in rent in comparison to the cost of a mortgage. With the support of COI's certified Housing Counselor and the Section 8 Homeownership Program, Greg was able to purchase the home from his former landlord and has become a first time homeowner.

Congratulations, Greg!



CODI Success: Danielle & Angelo Marra - West Main Mercantile



Danielle and Angelo Marra are the proud owners of West Main Mercantile, located at 1719 West Main Street in Falconer, NY. Their vision for West Main Mercantile was clear from the start: to create a welcoming brick-and-mortar space that not only showcases local products but also highlights the services and talents of other small businesses in the community.

As their business continues to grow, exciting things are on the horizon—including the addition of The Art Studio, located at the rear of the building. The studio will soon open its doors for DIY classes and small gatherings, adding even more vibrancy to their mission of community

connection and creativity.

Danielle took a proactive step by enrolling in our Business Essentials Training class offered by Chautauqua Opportunities for Development, Inc. (CODI), where she excelled. This completed one of the many requirements for obtaining Microenterprise Assistance Program (MAP) Grant. As a result, West Main Mercantile was awarded funds to purchase inventory for upcoming art classes, create a community gathering space, and invest in training as they prepare to create new jobs.

Reflecting on their journey, Danielle shared:

"This has been a lengthy process, to say the least, but what a beautiful space we have created—together! Blood, sweat, tears, laughs, doubt in ourselves, long days—longer nights—but it is tears of pride and astonishment that we actually did this!"

Her words perfectly capture the resilience and passion behind West Main Mercantile—a business that embodies grit, hard work, and determination. We're proud to have supported Danielle and Angelo along the way and look forward to continuing a strong partnership with the Marras as they grow and inspire others in our community.



Out in the Field

COI's Outreach Specialists have been busy over the summer! Staff have been conducting outreach throughout the county from Music on the Pier in Dunkirk to the Prendergast Library's Community Block Party in Jamestown. A display booth was set up at the Chautauqua County Fair in Floral Hall, where COI was awarded a Blue Ribbon.



Pictured are Justin Gilbert - Healthy Homes; Mikala Farren - Early Care Education; Lindsey Burke - Child Care Council; Rob Smith - Fatherhood.



Jared Strickland - Weatherization

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc

Diane Hewitt-Johnson,
Chief Executive Officer

Judy Yonkers,
Director of Grants and Systems Compliance

Dan Mets,
Director of IT and Central Services

Melissa Sandeen,
Human Resources Manager

Housing and Community Development

Amanda Straight, Director

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

Early Care and Education

Bill Vogt, Director

Early Head Start
Head Start
Universal Pre-K





Pictured are Jenn Matos - Early Care and Education; Lindsey Burke - Child Care Council ; Jared Strickland - Weatherization; Rob Smith - Fatherhood.



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
Hope Haven Women's Shelter

Economic Development Michael Michalski, Sr. Accounting Manager

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



Pictured are Mystique Gomez and Lindsey Burke - Child Care Council; Mikala Farren - Early Care and Education

CHAUTAUQUA OPPORTUNITIES, INC. Community Conversations

Virtual Meeting
August 14, 2025 at 5 PM



Join us to discuss the needs in
Chautauqua County



Topics:

- Impact of funding changes
- Childcare
- Health Care
- Business
- Housing

**A CHANCE TO
WIN**

Mastercard Gift Card

\$50 (1)

\$100 (1)

\$150 (1)

3 PEOPLE WILL BE CHOSEN
AT RANDOM AT THE END OF
PRESENTATION



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



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

Upcoming Events

AUG 14, 2025
Community
Conversations
Virtual Meeting
5pm - 7pm

AUG 15, 2025
Staff Development Day
OFFICES CLOSED

AUG 20, 2025
Section 8 Wait list Sign
up - Jamestown, NY
8:30am - 4:30pm

AUG 29, 2025
Section 8 Wait list Sign
up - Dunkirk, NY
8:30am - 4:30pm

SEPT 1, 2025
Labor Day
OFFICES CLOSED

SEPT 6, 2025
Fatherhood Car Show
Connections North
12pm - 3pm

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