



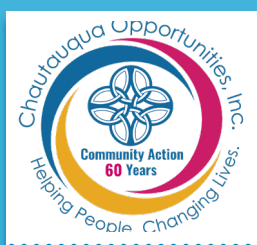
02 Dedication to Excellence

04 Family Engagement

05 Safe House Halloween

07 In The Community

08 Success Stories



THE COMMUNITY

Fall
2025

Quarterly Community Newsletter

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

Compassion, Purpose and Possibilities

The Doubletree by Hilton hotel in Jamestown was the setting for COI's annual Staff Development Day in August. The morning featured Jennifer Hickman, who spoke on the issue of "Compassion Fatigue". Jennifer is a Licensed Master Social Worker and a former COI employee. She is the founder of Hope Counseling in Jamestown. Compassion fatigue often affects people in caregiving roles, particularly those working with people who have experienced traumatic events. It can have profound negative emotional and physical effects on the caregiver or worker. Jennifer stressed the importance of knowing the warning signs and taking time for self-reflection and self-care to recharge yourself.



Jennifer Hickman, LMSW

The keynote speaker, Joe Roberts, rounded out the morning activities with his dynamic presentation, "From Skid Row to CEO: Reigniting Your Passion and Purpose". The presentation told the story of how he went from being a homeless addict to a successful entrepreneur and CEO. His story is one of resilience, overcoming adversity, and seeing beyond perceived limitations. The theme continued into the afternoon with Joe's presentation "Practical Tools in Action". *(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

Dedication to Excellence and Making a Difference

Congratulations to Amanda Straight, Director of the Housing and Community Development division, for earning her Certified Community Action Professional (CCAP) credential at this year's National Community Action Conference in Detroit!

The CCAP credential is granted to individuals who have shown mastery and practical application of the core competencies needed to effectively uphold and advance the vision, mission, purpose, and values of the Community Action movement.



COI is also proud to share that COI was recognized at the conference for attaining the Bronze Level in Pathways to Excellence, a framework for going above and beyond the compliance mandates of Community Action and striving for optimal best practices. It includes 35 Standards of Excellence that represent the very best operational objectives for performance. The agency is moving forward with working toward excellence at the Gold level, which is expected to take up to 18 months to complete. The initiative is a testament to COI's commitment to continuous improvement to efficient and effective operations.

COI's Chief Executive Officer, Diane Hewitt-Johnson, attended the 2025 Annual Professional Development Conference hosted by the NYS Community Action Association (NYSCAA) and the NYS Weatherization Directors Association (NYSWDA) in Syracuse in October. The 4-day conference featured engaging workshops and keynote speakers to foster professional growth and inspire new approaches to supporting low-income communities. Diane Hewitt-Johnson currently serves as the President of the NYSCAA Board of Directors.



Compassion, Purpose and Possibilities *continued*

(con't from page 1) Joe had been living on the streets of Vancouver, Canada when a simple statement from a man named Gus changed his life. "There's more to you than you can see," he said, which sparked something in Joe that made him think about his potential to be more. He worked hard to beat his addiction and found his way back to college, where he graduated with honors. Joe turned his life around, building a successful media company from the ground up. Within 12 years he was featured on the cover of Canadian Business magazine as one of Canada's most successful entrepreneurs.

But Joe didn't stop there. To raise awareness of the problem of youth homelessness, he pushed a shopping cart from Newfoundland to British Columbia, a 5,621-mile trek that took 17 months to complete. Known as the Push for Change, the journey included over 450 school and community events to inspire others to work toward ending youth homelessness.

Joe's message is to focus on the power of possibility to help you achieve your potential. He believes that everyone has unlimited potential – they just need to realize it.

Attendance at the event included over 200 managers and staff of COI, as well as members of the Board of Directors. The day opened with presentations of certificates for employees reaching milestones from 5 years to 25 years of employment with the agency.



Joe Roberts



Head Start Family Engagement

Family engagement is a vital part of the Head Start program, as it strengthens the connection between home and school while supporting children's learning and development. When families are actively involved, children feel more confident and supported, and parents become empowered as their child's first and most important teacher. Through family engagement, we build partnerships that encourage communication, trust, and shared goals for every child's success.

In October, COI's Head Start centers celebrated this partnership by inviting families to participate in a variety of fun and meaningful activities. Families joined their children in classroom projects, took part in festive parades, and enjoyed Trunk or Treat events at COI's Holy Family location in Jamestown and at the agency's community partner, Lakeshore Family Center in Irving. These events provided wonderful opportunities for families to connect, celebrate, and engage in their children's early learning experiences in joyful and memorable ways.

During our **October Fall Fest**, we were pleased to welcome several community partners who helped make the event both educational and engaging. The **Jamestown Fire Department** and **Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office** participated by offering child ID services, while **Cornell Cooperative Extension** provided valuable resources on healthy eating. In addition, **Jackie Sasso from Molina Healthcare** and **Kendra Hogan from WIC** shared important information and resources with families. Their participation highlighted the strength of these community partnerships and a shared commitment to supporting children and families.



Halloween at the Safe House

On October 29th, the Great Pumpkin and his spooky menagerie visited the Safe House in Jamestown, bringing candy and crafts to all the ghosts, clowns, and princesses that ventured into their lair! Over 180 members of the community attended the Safe House Halloween event, and those who were brave had their photo taken with the Great Pumpkin. 10 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!





Dunkirk Professional Firefighters Local 616
Dunkirk Police Benevolent Association



CHRISTMAS TOY DRIVE



SUNDAY NOVEMBER 23
12:00PM - 3:00PM

Murphy Training Grounds
665 Brigham Road, Dunkirk

In exchange for a
NEW, UNOPENED, UNWRAPPED
TOY VALUED AT \$20+
Meet Santa and his reindeer!

If you cannot attend
but still wish to donate...
New, unopened, unwrapped
toys can be dropped off at ⇒

Dunkirk Police Department
342 Central Avenue
Dunkirk Fire Headquarters
311 Eagle Street



**CHAUTAUQUA
OPPORTUNITIES**
Helping people. Changing lives.

All toys collected will be distributed to local children by Chautauqua Opportunities

Shout out to COI's Outreach!

COI's Outreach Specialists participated in several community events over the past few months to engage with individuals and families. They raise awareness about available services, including housing assistance, weatherization and energy programs, child care assistance, Head Start and Early Head Start, and much more. As the 'face' of COI out in the community, Outreach Specialists can answer questions about assistance programs and make connections with the appropriate staff member or community partner.



In the Community



Success Stories

Transitional Independent Living Program Contributes to Teen's Success



Tori joined COI's Transitional Independent Living Program (TILP) in April 2024 after experiencing homelessness. Throughout the 16-month stay, Tori's independent living skills were enhanced through participation in Life Skills classes. Tori held two part time jobs through Chautauqua Works while enrolled, demonstrating a strong work ethic. A recent graduate of Jamestown High School, Tori finished 10th grade early, skipped 11th grade completely and entered 12th grade, ultimately graduating in the top 20 percent of the senior class. Tori was a member of the National Honor Society and will attend Jamestown Community College this Fall on an academic scholarship.

While at TILP, Tori became involved in CCS-TV (Collaborative Children's Solutions Television), contributing both on-camera and voiceover segments. One of the most notable experiences was interviewing the Swedish Ambassador during a visit to Jamestown. Tori has had no

behavior issues at school or TILP and reported improved mental health since enrolling in the program. Tori has been an active community volunteer and member of Youth Corps and plans to continue these activities.

COI's Youth Services team is very proud of Tori and are so excited to see what the future holds!

Formerly Homeless Woman Moves into Own Apartment



After staying at COI's Hope Haven Women's Shelter for just over 3 months, Virginia received the keys to her new apartment! During her stay at Hope Haven, Virginia became like family to the Hope Haven staff and other residents. Many refer to her as "grandma," which she loves. Virginia was found eligible for the Housing Choice Voucher Program, commonly known as Section 8 rental assistance. Virginia's participation in the rental assistance program will enable her to maintain permanent housing and meet her basic financial needs, both of which have been a long-term struggle that Virginia has endured. It's only up from here for Virginia, and the smile on her face says it all! Good Luck, Virginia!

Head Start Services Not Just for Children

Jansen is a three-year-old enrolled in the Head Start program. Through the comprehensive approach to services by both COI and Head Start, Jansen's parent has also begun seeing change. The parent has been on a journey to improve their mental health, a goal that was collaboratively identified early in the parent's work with COI's life coach. While discussions about accessing therapy had been ongoing and central to the goal, the parent had initially faced challenges in taking the next step.

Recognizing the parent's strengths particularly their openness, persistence, and desire for change, they continued to have supportive, nonjudgmental conversations about the different mental health resources available. The life coach shared a pamphlet provided by the Mental Health Association which clearly outlined various helplines tailored to specific needs, including emergency services.

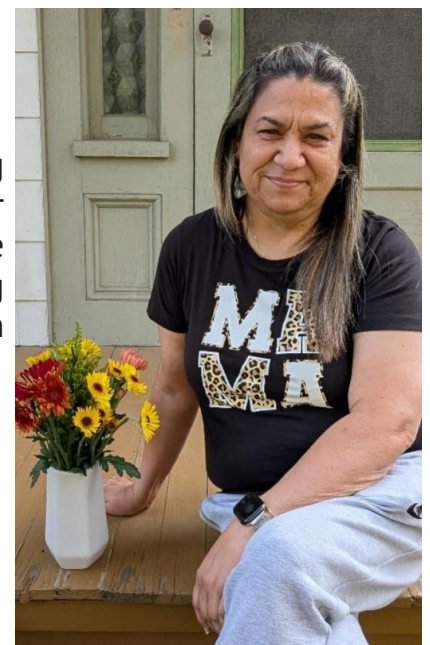
A breakthrough moment occurred when the parent reached out via text to share that they had used the emergency number listed in the pamphlet during a time of crisis. They expressed that the support they received was timely and incredibly helpful. This moment of self-advocacy and resilience demonstrated the parent's growing confidence and ability to seek help when needed. It also marked a significant step forward in their mental health journey. The parent and the life coach continue to work together with optimism, with the shared goal that the parent will follow through with enrolling in therapy services through the same organization.

This experience highlights the power of a strength-based approach focusing on the parent's capabilities, building trust, and providing tailored resources to foster meaningful, lasting progress.



Help for Affordable Homeownership

After participating in housing counseling with COI's certified Housing Counselor and working on her credit, Lizette did it - she achieved her dream of becoming a homeowner! Lizette's new home will be affordable with the support of the Section 8 Homeownership program. Becoming a first-time homeowner can take some time and a lot of effort. COI can guide and support customers on that path to success!



CODI Success: Archie's Powersports - Turning Passion into Opportunity



For John Swabik, owner of Archie's Powersports in Sherman, NY, the dream of owning his own business has been years in the making. With John's lifelong love of engines and the open road, he turned his passion into a thriving local business that serves Chautauqua County's outdoor community.

A 1994 graduate of the Motorcycle Mechanics Institute in Orlando, Florida, John brings over 30 years of experience in the powersports industry, including 15 years in franchise operations. John

envisioned a one-stop shop where fellow enthusiasts could find refurbished and new OEM parts for motorcycles, snowmobiles, dirt bikes, ATVs, and UTVs. Today, Archie's Powersports offers direct-to-customer sales, a retail showroom, e-commerce store, service department, and even indoor climate-controlled storage for customers' machines.

Before connecting with Chautauqua Opportunities for Development, Inc. (CODI), John knew there was strong demand for a business like his. However, securing the funds to open in 2025 felt out of reach. Through CODI's Microenterprise Assistance Program (MAP), he, along with his wife, Michelle attended the 16-hour Business Essentials Training Class and went through the detailed application process. Their dedication paid off when they received the call that they had been awarded \$25,000 in grant funding.

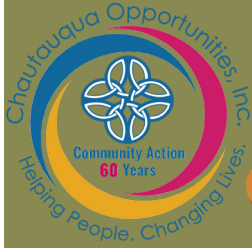
With the help of this grant, He was able to hire a full-time employee to assist with administrative duties, customer service, and online sales—giving him the freedom to focus on growing his business. Now, just four months after opening, Archie's Powersports is bustling with both familiar and new faces each day.

John shared, *"If it wasn't for the MAP grant, there is no way we would have been able to be open yet. This has helped us tremendously in being able to be open and running."*

John and Michelle are a shining example of what the MAP program is all about—helping small business owners turn their dreams into reality. With community support and their unwavering commitment, Archie's Powersports is off to an incredible start and ready for a successful season ahead.



Computer, printer, equipment and lifts were purchased with grant money.



YOU ARE INVITED TO

CHRISTMAS AT THE SAFE HOUSE

FROM 5:00PM-7:00PM

DECEMBER 17TH 2025

CRAFTS | SNACKS | FREE PHOTOS WITH SANTA

16 EAST 16TH STREET, JAMESTOWN, NY 14701

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR ANY QUESTIONS

PLEASE CALL 716-661-9446

THIS IS A FREE EVENT

PARKING AVAILABLE ALONG THE SIDE STREETS



**The Safe House of
Chautauqua County
is a program of
Chautauqua
Opportunities, Inc.**



Fatherhood Car Show



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





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
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






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

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Healthy Holiday Mind & Body

When: November 13th, 2025
 5pm-7pm
 Where: Zoom Meeting

Learn about ways to stay healthy both physically & mentally during the holiday season

Prizes:
 2 - \$50 gift cards
 1 - \$200 gift card

Click the link above or scan to join




www.chautauquaopportunities.com



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@chautopp

Upcoming Events

NOV 13, 2025
Community
Conversations
Virtual Meeting
5pm - 7pm

NOV 27 AND 28, 2025
Thanksgiving
Holiday
OFFICES CLOSED

DEC 25, 2025
Christmas Day
OFFICES CLOSED

NOV 23, 2025
Dunkirk Firefighters Toy
Drive

DEC 24 AND 31, 2025
OFFICES CLOSE at
12:00 pm

JAN 1, 2026
New Years Day
OFFICES CLOSED

Contact Us

For all general inquiries, please contact :

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 Dunkirk, NY 14048
 (716) 366-3333
info@chautopp.org