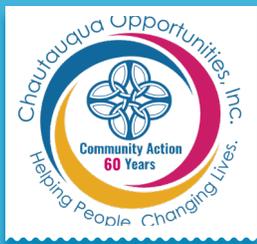




- 02 Little Food Pantries
- 04 Donations
- 05 Hope Haven Gathering
- 06 Holiday Parades
- 07 Dunkirk Toy Drive
- 08 Success Stories
- 11 Staff Luncheons



THE COMMUNITY

Winter
2025 - 2026

Quarterly Community Newsletter

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

COI Publishes 2026 Community Needs Assessment

Every three years, Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. (COI) conducts a Community Needs Assessment to guide its management, strategic planning and service delivery. This comprehensive assessment examines key aspects of life in Chautauqua County to better understand the needs of residents, identify service gaps, and highlight emerging challenges. The findings form the foundation of COI's Strategic Plan, ensuring the agency remains responsive to the needs of low-income and vulnerable populations. COI also hopes this assessment will serve as a valuable resource for partner agencies as they develop strategies to address community needs over the next three years.



**Chautauqua County
Community Needs Assessment
2026**
Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.
Chautauqua Opportunities for Development, Inc.



Drawing on data from local, regional, state, and federal sources, the **2026 Community Needs Assessment** explores trends in housing, employment, health, transportation, technology, childcare, and youth services. COI staff analyzed both quantitative data and community feedback, including resident surveys, Board of Directors input, and discussions from Community Conversations. Together, these insights paint a clear picture of the strengths and challenges facing Chautauqua County and inform recommendations to support economic stability and self-sufficiency for county residents.

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

Little Food Pantries Rely on Donations

Little food pantries have been available outside COI's Connections North Service Center in Dunkirk and the Holy Family Childcare Center in Jamestown for nearly two years. The pantries were generously donated by Beth Anderson of Jamestown through her Chautauqua County Little Free Project. The pantries are open to anyone in the community who may be in need – no questions asked. This initiative has been a vital resource for families struggling to stretch limited food budgets. Its continued success relies on the generosity of community members who donate what they can to support their neighbors.

To help ensure the pantries remain stocked for those who need them most, donations may be brought directly to the centers during business hours. Donors can place items in the box if there is room available or they may be brought inside and staff will stock the box when there is room. Please avoid placing items on the ground or donating large items that fill the entire box. Food donations should be non-perishable and preferably not expired. Toiletries and personal care items are also in high demand. Please make sure that all items are safe (no sharp or breakable items).

When visiting the box, please drive carefully and be mindful of children. To find other pantry box locations, you can visit the Chautauqua County Little Free Project's Facebook page.

Pictured below are COI's Housing Director, Amanda Straight and Administrative Assistant Michael Esquilin with over \$300 in food and personal care items that were donated to the little pantry by an anonymous donor in November. At right, Chautauqua County Little Free Project organizer Beth Anderson and her daughter Lily are pictured installing the Little Food Pantry at the Holy Family Childcare Center in 2024.



The Children's Center

The Children's Center, operated by COI's Child Care Council, provides drop-in child care services to families attending proceedings at Family Court in Mayville. The program is designed to create a safe, welcoming, and developmentally supportive environment where children can feel secure and engaged while their parents or guardians focus on court matters.

Serving children from six weeks through 12 years of age, trained staff provide age-appropriate care and enrichment activities that include creative play, early literacy, and hands-on learning opportunities. The center also serves as a connection point for families to access resources that support child well-being and stability beyond the courtroom setting.



In addition to providing high-quality care, the Children's Center has made a meaningful impact on the families it serves. Over the course of the program, care has been provided to more than 430 children, supporting over 300 families during some of their most stressful and difficult moments. By offering a dependable, compassionate space for children, the center helps ease the emotional burden on caregivers navigating the court system and reinforces the Chautauqua Child Care Council's commitment to family-centered support and community well-being.

The Children's Center



For more information on this valuable community service,

contact The Children's Center

Monday - Friday

8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

at 716-753-4142.



Thank you!



Diane Hewitt-Johnson, CEO, is pictured accepting a donation from representatives of Northwest Bank. The funding will support economic development activities provided by Chautauqua Opportunities for Development, Inc. (CODI), which include technical assistance and loans for business development and expansion, as well as consumer loans for household appliances. Thank you to Northwest Bank!

Ashley Kubis, COI's Residential Services Manager, accepted a donation from the Chautauqua-Cattaraugus Board of Realtors. The \$1,000 donation will support youth staying at the Safe House runaway and homeless youth shelter located in Jamestown. The Safe House provides shelter and services for homeless children under the age of 18.



Hope Haven Coordinator Diane Guzman accepted 12 handmade quilts from JoAnne Morris, who represents a Westfield sewing group. The quilts will be given to women residing in the homeless shelter. Other members of the sewing group include Louise Quick, Debbie Hubbard, and Diane Stanton. Thank you for your support!

In the Community

Hope Haven Gathering

The women of the Gospel Church in Fredonia visited COI's Hope Haven Women's Shelter to share homemade cookies, refreshing drinks, and their company with the residents. The visit was filled with laughter and the smell of freshly baked cookies added to the cheerful atmosphere, providing the residents with a brief escape from their challenges and a reminder that they are not alone.



Holiday Spirit

During December, COI staff participated in a few of the holiday parades that happened across Chautauqua County. Staff of COI's Health and Family Services division were represented at both the Westfield and Sherman parades. The theme of their floats was Spreading Hope and Holiday Cheer. During the Westfield parade, staff from Lena's Pizza joined the COI float.

COI's Chautauqua Child Care Council and Weatherization program participated in the Jamestown Christmas Parade. Charlie Brown and Snoopy showed off their newly weatherized dog house, courtesy of COI's Weatherization team.



Youth Corps and Head Start help out during Dunkirk Toy Drive

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. (COI) partnered with the Dunkirk Fire Department and Dunkirk Police Department for a toy drive held on November 23rd at the Murphy Training Grounds in Dunkirk. Staff members from COI, along with eight Youth Corps participants, helped collect toys and distribute treats to donors. Santa, Mrs. Claus, and a live reindeer were on-site to welcome those who donated toys. WDOE provided a live broadcast throughout the event. More than 200 new toys were collected during the event. Head Start employees assisted with distributing the toys to local families.



Success Stories

Youth Corps participates in Red Kettle Drive



In December, two staff from Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. and 5 youth participated in the monthly Youth Corps event. They rang the bells for the Salvation Army Red Kettle Drive, collecting donations for those in need. They played Christmas music and sang along, spreading holiday cheer and passing out candy canes to children!

The youth had a great time serving the community and they thank the Salvation Army for allowing them the opportunity to give back during the holiday season. Thank you to Tops Friendly Markets for hosting the Red Kettle Drive. This was the second year that the Youth Corps participated and they hope to continue this tradition!



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.

Formerly Homeless - Now Safe and Stable

After experiencing homelessness for two years, a single mother of three has successfully transitioned into stable, affordable housing while addressing her mental health needs. During her time without permanent housing, she worked tirelessly to keep her children safe and enrolled in school despite the ongoing challenges of housing instability and stress.

Through a connection with COI's housing support services, she was able to secure affordable housing and access consistent mental health treatment. She strengthened her emotional well-being and rebuilt confidence in her ability to provide for her family with professional support and counseling.

Today, she and her children live in a safe, stable home. With housing security and ongoing mental health care, she has returned to work, established routines for her family, and is focused on long-term financial stability. Her journey highlights the impact of integrated housing and mental health services in helping families move from crisis to independence.

Joy of Home-Based Services



Jessica Gaworecki and Shawn Nichols enrolled their son Aiden in the Early Head Start program with Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. in August of 2023 and began their Home-Based journey with a family educator.

Aiden is now two years old and has a six-year-old sibling. Aiden's family is highly engaged in the program and consistently prepares and plans developmentally appropriate activities alongside their family educator. Both parents actively participate in home visits, demonstrating a strong commitment to their child's learning and development. Because Shawn works full-time, the family has asked that visits be coordinated around his schedule, which the family educator accommodates. During home visits, the family enthusiastically participates in a variety of hands-on learning activities, including painting, sand exploration, blocks, puzzles, and playdough. They embrace sensory play and do not shy away from messier activities, recognizing the value these experiences have for early learning.

The family also attends numerous socialization events throughout the year, further supporting Aiden's social and developmental growth. As a result of this strong family engagement, Aiden is meeting all learning expectations, as reflected in his most recent report card. The relationship between the family and the family educator is positive and collaborative, with open, two-way communication that supports continued growth and success.



NOW ACCEPTING CHILDREN!
2026-2027
SCHOOL YEAR WAITLIST!
MUST BE 3 YEARS OLD
BEFORE 12/1/2026



SITES:
BROCTON, BUSH, ECCC,
HOLY FAMILY

PLEASE CALL: 716-366-8176

ELIGIBILITY : INCOME ELIGIBLE, SNAP, TANF,
FOSTER CARE, HOMELESSNESS, SSI

CODI Success: Uptwn Kix



Christopher Saldarriaga came to Chautauqua Opportunities for Development, Inc. (CODI) seeking guidance and support to turn his vision into reality. With a passion for sneakers, streetwear, and community, Christopher worked closely with CODI to explore financing options that would allow him to launch his business, Uptwn Kix, in Jamestown.

Through collaboration with both CODI and the City of Jamestown, Christopher successfully secured funding to purchase inventory and complete necessary repairs to his building - which were both critical steps in bringing Uptwn Kix to life. Since opening, Uptwn Kix has become more than just a retail store; it has grown into a vibrant

community hub. Christopher regularly hosts events at his location, including Easter scavenger hunts, custom sneaker classes, and other community-focused activities that welcome and engage residents of all ages.

We are proud to support entrepreneurs like Christopher who not only build successful businesses but also invest back into the community they serve. CODI is grateful to have Christopher and Uptwn Kix as part of our local business community, and we look forward to watching his continued growth and success.



Staff Enjoy Holiday Luncheons



COI staff recently gathered to enjoy festive holiday luncheons filled with good food, laughter, and time to connect with colleagues. The celebrations offered a chance to pause during a busy season and reflect on the meaningful work accomplished throughout the year.

The luncheons also served as a special moment to commemorate COI's 60th anniversary. Staff joined together to honor six decades of service to the community, recognizing the dedication, teamwork, and commitment that have shaped the organization's legacy. As COI looks ahead, the celebrations highlighted both pride in the past and excitement for the future.



Safe House Santa Event



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. Presents

COMMUNITY conversations

Community

Services

Join the conversation with

2-1-1

2-1-1 is a FREE confidential service connecting individuals with community services to assist with their specific needs.

SAVE THE DATE
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2026
5:00 PM TO 6:00 PM

Click this Zoom link to join

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88566086329?pwd=sgoRSBBhYUY3N4rW7sjYk1vdBMHIZ>

Meeting ID: 885 6608 6329

Passcode: 404760

Or scan the QR Code



Do you need assistance with

- Individual or Family Counseling
- Substance Abuse Support Groups
- Health Services
- Food Pantries/Food Deliveries
- Emergency Housing
- Disaster Response/Recovery
- Child Care Services
- Or Other Services

Participants will be entered to win a \$200 Shop Chautauqua Gift Certificate
3 Winners Chosen!



www.chautauquaopportunities.com



@chautauquaopportunities



@chautopp



@chautopp

Upcoming Events

FEB 12, 2026
Community Conversations
Virtual Meeting
5pm - 7pm

FEB 18, 2026
Section 8 Sign-up
Jamestown
8:30am - 4:30pm

FEB 28, 2026
First-Time Home Buyer
Education Course - Dunkirk
9am-5pm

FEB 16 2026
Presidents' Day
OFFICES CLOSED

FEB 27, 2026
Section 8 Sign-up
Dunkirk
8:30am - 4:30pm

MARCH 20, 2026
First Day of Spring

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