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THE COMMUNITY

Winter
2024

Quarterly Community Newsletter

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

ANNUAL SAFE HOUSE SANTA EVENT

In December 2024, over 60 children and adults attended the annual Santa Event hosted by Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.'s Safe House. The event was open to the public and featured free pictures with Santa Claus, who gave each child a wrapped gift. As families toured the shelter, the children decorated Christmas tree ornaments at the craft table and created M&M trees in the kitchen.

Staff were on hand to answer questions about the Safe House and its purpose in the community. Eight members of the Youth Corps assisted with the event by helping children at the craft table, answering

questions, and handing out scarves and "reindeer chow" to the children. In addition to informational brochures laid out on tables, a wide assortment of donated scarves, gloves, hats, blankets and more were available for families to take to help keep them warm this winter season. *(con't 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

ANNUAL SAFE HOUSE SANTA EVENT



(con't from page 1)

The Safe House is a 12-bed voluntary, short-term, crisis intervention shelter for youth under the age of eighteen that is licensed by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services. Any youth up to age 21 may join Youth Corps, which meets monthly to coordinate community projects.



Front Row: Jaxon Walter, Brittany Dorman
Back Row: Luke Macakanja, Kirsten Morales, Ashley Kubis, Alex Woleen (Santa), Kaitlyn Newman, and Chris Nicosia, Director of Health and Family Services

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

COI
helping people.
changing lives.

JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL
EASTER EVENT

WEDNESDAY APRIL 9TH
5PM TO 7PM

COI'S SAFE HOUSE
16 EAST 6TH STREET
JAMESTOWN, NY 14701

Questions? Call 716-661-9446
Parking for event will be along
the side streets

GAMES - CRAFTS - MORE
FREE PHOTOS WITH THE EASTER BUNNY

COI Welcomes New Chief Human Resources Officer

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. (COI) is excited to announce the recent appointment of Robert Dahlin as Chief Human Resources Officer. Robert is a seasoned Human Resources executive with over 17 years of extensive experience in managing HR operations and functions. Robert succeeds Teri Stalter, who retired in December 2024 after 18 dedicated years of service with COI.



The agency's CEO, Diane Hewitt-Johnson stated, "Although I'm sad to see our current CHRO retire, I am thrilled to welcome Robert Dahlin to the COI leadership team. His experience and expertise in the HR field are a perfect match for COI's mission and values. He has a clear vision for COI's HR department and is qualified to address the changes that continually occur in the HR field. I'm looking forward to working closely with Robert and I'm confident that he will lead the HR division on a path that will ensure success and continued growth while maintaining our agency culture and values."

Robert graduated with honors from Bellevue University in Nebraska, earning a Master of Science degree in Strategic Human Resources Management, and completed his undergraduate studies Business Administration at Mount Vernon Nazarene University in Ohio. He obtained a Senior Certified Professional credential from the Society for Human Resource Management and is a graduate of the Chautauqua Leadership Network.

COI is a multi-service nonprofit Community Action Agency that will commemorate 60 years of service to Chautauqua County's low- and moderate-income residents in 2025. The agency's mission is to fight poverty by mobilizing resources and creating partnerships to promote empowerment, economic independence and opportunities. COI has offices in Jamestown and Dunkirk and employs over 200 individuals.



WE ARE HIRING!

- HOPE HAVEN SHELTER COORDINATOR**
- SHELTER SUPPORT SPECIALIST**
- HOUSING SUPPORT SPECIALIST**
- WEATHERIZATION PROGRAM SPECIALIST**
- WEATHERIZATION LABORER**
- WEATHERIZATION ENERGY AUDITOR**
- MOBILE CRISIS PEER ADVOCATE**
- CRISIS WORKERS 1 & 2**
- GRANT SUPPORT SPECIALIST**
- YOUTH SPECIALIST**
- SITE DIRECTOR/TEACHER**
- TEACHERS**
- TEACHER ASSISTANTS**
- EARLY EDUCATION MENTOR**
- ASSISTANT COOK**
- PERSONAL CARE AIDES**

TOP WORK PLACES 2024 THE BUFFALO NEWS

APPLY NOW AT
[CHAUTAUQUAOPPORTUNITIES.COM/EMPLOYMENT](https://www.chautauquaopportunities.com/employment)

Amanda Straight Appointed to Lead New Home, Business and Asset Development Division



Due to the growth of COI's Housing and Community Development (HCD) services, the agency has structured these services into two divisions. Amanda Straight, who has served as the Deputy Director of HCD since 2020, now leads the newly created division of Home, Business and Asset Development (HBAD). Services under her leadership include the Weatherization Assistance Program, Lead Hazard Remediation, Homebuyer Education, Foreclosure Prevention, and Credit/Bankruptcy Counseling. Responsibilities for the activities of the agency's affiliate organization, Chautauqua Opportunities for Development, Inc. (CODI) will transfer to Amanda later this year. CODI provides technical assistance and loans to small businesses and startups.

Amanda has been with COI since 2012, holding front-line positions for two years before moving into her first of three management positions in the agency's Housing and Community Development division. She was promoted to Deputy Director of the HCD division in 2020.

Amanda holds a bachelor's degree in social work from SUNY at Fredonia. She has completed the Emerging Leaders Institute sponsored by the NY State Community Action Association and is currently working toward certification as a Community Action Professional, as well as an Implementer of ROMA (Results Oriented Management Accountability). "I am truly grateful for the opportunities COI has given me over the past twelve and a half years," Amanda stated. "In each position I have held, I have learned invaluable skills that have helped me grow both personally and professionally. I am excited to continue to learn and contribute in my new role as Director of Home, Business and Asset Development."

COI's Chief Executive Officer Diane Hewitt Johnson stated, "Amanda Straight has worked at COI for over 12 years, and I've had the pleasure of watching her grow into the leader she is today. She is extremely motivated to learn and grow and is dedicated to making a difference in others' lives. She has been promoted over the last several years, most recently, 4 years ago, to the Deputy Director of Housing. The Housing division has grown significantly over the last several years resulting in the need for restructuring the division into two separate divisions. I am pleased to welcome Amanda Straight to the Senior Management team as the Director of Home, Business and Asset Development. I'm looking forward to working closely with her as she leads this new division. This is a well-deserved and long overdue promotion. She is an inspiration to others, and we are lucky to have her on our leadership team!"

COI's housing services to prevent and respond to homelessness will continue to be provided under the umbrella of a newly named Housing and Emergency Services division. Josiah Lamp, who has led the HCD division since 2016, will continue to oversee these services, which include rental assistance programming, emergency shelter, and affordable housing.

Public Donation Tables

During the months of November and December, COI provided donations of clothing and other winter items to those in need. Tables filled with shirts, coats and blankets and clotheslines with hats, socks, gloves and scarves were setup at each of COI's five main locations. Customers and their families were able to pick up items that they needed to stay warm this winter season.

Many thanks to Zumiez and private donors from within the community who donated clothing and other winter items.



First-Time Home Buyer Education Course



Helping people. Changing lives.



Jamestown

Laughlin Community Action Center ~ 402 Chandler Street, Jamestown
♦ Saturday, January 18th & Saturday, March 22nd
9 am-5 pm

Dunkirk

Connections North ~ 10825 Bennett Road, Dunkirk
Saturday, February 22nd & April 26th.
9am-5pm

Our First-Time Home Buyer class is an 8 hour course that will include sessions on the following topics:

- Are you ready to purchase a home?
- Maintaining your budget
- Understanding credit
- Shopping for a home
- Getting a mortgage
- Keeping your home

Cost for book is \$25.
RSVP due at least one week prior to class start date

Contact a Navigator at 716-366-8176 ext. 2202 or 3309



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

In the Community

Youth Corps Brings Smiles

On Friday November 22, COI's Youth Corps members and their Youth Site Leader went to the Magnolia Assisted Living Facility in Frewsburg, NY. They had a wonderful time making friends and enjoying getting to know the residents and staff. While there the Youth program brought along a turkey necklace craft to make just in time for Thanksgiving! They also played a rousing game of Scrabble. The Youth had so much fun and are planning to go back in the New Year for a game night and possibly a movie night! Here's to new friendships! Thank you Magnolia for hosting us!



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.



Home Appliance Loan Program Helps with New Oven

Nicole Rothwell, a single mother of three children residing in Dunkirk, NY, recently benefited from Chautauqua Opportunities for Development Inc.'s (CODI) Home Appliance Loan Program. Right before the holidays, Nicole's oven broke. Under the terms of her apartment lease, she was responsible for replacing the appliance herself.

Having previously worked with Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. (COI), Nicole was familiar with the organization and its programs. She reached out to COI's Navigators, who promptly connected her with the Business Development Specialist. Nicole was provided with the loan application, which she completed and submitted. Her application was processed and approved in a timely manner.

To accommodate Nicole's schedule, CODI's Business Development Specialist collaborated with the organization's Senior Accounting Manager to arrange for her loan closing paperwork to be completed in Dunkirk during her lunch break. Within a day of her loan approval, Nicole met with the Senior Accounting Manager to finalize the closing documents.

Following the completion of her paperwork, CODI's Senior Accounting Manager facilitated payment to the appliance store on Nicole's behalf. The store promptly contacted Nicole to arrange for the delivery of her new oven.

Nicole is pleased with her new appliance and has taken steps to ensure her loan payments are managed responsibly. She opened her first checking account and set up automatic payments, demonstrating her commitment to building a positive credit history by making on-time payments.



Chautauqua Opportunities for Development, Inc.
CODI....Business and Asset Development.

Home Appliance Loan Program

Considering a new appliance?
Don't settle for high interest rates. We may be able to help!

A Home Appliance Loan from Chautauqua Opportunities for Development, Inc. features a low fixed interest rate; which means you can get a new appliance without breaking the bank.



Find us on 

facebook.com/chautauquopportunitiesdevelopment

Qualifying Appliances

- Refrigerators
- Freezers
- Electric Ranges
- Gas ranges
- Washers
- Electric Dryers
- Gas Dryers
- Stackable Washers and Dryers
- Air Conditioners (medical need documentation required)

Eligibility Requirements

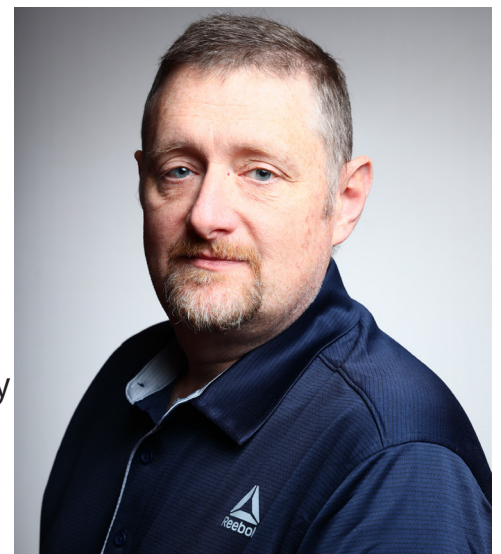
- Must be permanent resident of Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, or Southern Erie County
- 18 years of age or older
- Meet low to moderate-income guidelines
- Demonstrate ability to fulfill loan payment
- Consent to credit check

For more information, call the Jamestown office at 661-9430 ext. 2298 or the Dunkirk office at 366-8176 ext. 3307.



Faces of Energy Efficiency

Congratulations to COI's Weatherization Manager, Craig Rodgers for being highlighted as one of 129,000+ "Faces of Energy Efficiency" professionals by the Building Performance Association. The BPA is a non-profit organization that collaborates with business, nonprofits and government agencies to educate and promote energy efficiency.



Asset Development Assists with Preventing Foreclosure



In December, a single mother came to COI in a difficult financial situation. The restaurant where she had worked full-time for years saw a decrease in business, which led to her hours being cut to part-time. Her mortgage payment was no longer affordable, and she was now over \$1,500 behind. She had made several attempts to contact her lender, Rocket Mortgage, to see what options were available to her. Working with a lender that has no physical location is often very difficult, and she expressed frustrations getting in contact with the right person over the phone.

During her appointment, a comprehensive budget was completed that showed a monthly deficit. She was unaware that with her new income level, she was eligible for certain programs such as SNAP food assistance. The Asset Development Specialist assisted her with this application online. Her worker provided her with other referral information, such as local food and pet pantries. They also reviewed her resume and looked at different employment options where she could apply to increase her income.

The next step of the appointment was to reach out to Rocket Mortgage to determine what solutions were available. Once connected with the correct department, the Asset Development Specialist was able to explain the customer's financial situation. The lender agreed to suspend the foreclosure, grant a 3-month forbearance, and provide correct contact information so that the customer could easily contact their department to provide updates and potentially extend the forbearance period if needed. This 3-month grace period would allow the customer to focus her time on finding gainful employment.

One week after her appointment, the customer reached out to her worker to let her know that she had three interviews scheduled, all with full time hours and benefits.

Success Stories

Housing Certification

Congratulations to Housing Rehab Laborer Richard Bentley for earning his OSHA 10 Hour Outreach Training Program in Construction Certification. Way to go, Richard!



Head Start Families Connect over Winter Activities

In January, COI's Early Care and Education division hosted a family event on the topic of bird feeders and Winter Wonder. It's always special when Head Start families come together to connect, share experiences, and enjoy moments like these. Building memories while learning about nature helps strengthen bonds and reminds us of the importance of community.



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



Christmas Merriment

Staff from COI's Chautauqua Child Care Council and Fatherhood Program participated in Jamestown's annual Christmas parade.

After Dunkirk's parade had been cancelled, staff from the Health and Family Services Division were able to participate in the Sherman Tractor parade. This parade is the first for COI.



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





Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.

Helping People, Changing Lives.

Community Conversation Virtual Meeting

Join us to discuss the the various resources in our community to keep you warm this winter!



Ways to Warm Up This Winter

February 13th at 5 PM



*Presentations from St Susan Center
Chautauqua County Rural Ministries, &
Cornell Cooperative Extention*

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82477796227?
pwd=uAEaHsra4OYaKA7p62lLuolWa2JKkt.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82477796227?pwd=uAEaHsra4OYaKA7p62lLuolWa2JKkt.1)

Meeting ID: 824 7779 6227

Passcode: 839097



Raffle Prizes: 2 \$50 Gift Cards



www.chautauquaopportunities.com



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



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

Upcoming Events

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

FEB 19, 2025
Section 8 Wait list Sign
up - Jamestown, NY
8:30am - 4:30pm

FEB 28, 2025
Section 8 Wait list
Sign up - Dunkirk, NY
8:30am - 4:30pm

FEB 17, 2025
President's Day
OFFICES CLOSED

FEB 22, 2025
Home Buyer Education
Course - Dunkirk, NY
9am - 5pm

MARCH 22, 2025
Home Buyer Education
Course - Jamestown
9am - 5pm

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