Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. (COI) has a history of providing housing services since the mid-1970’s. COI began offering veteran specific services three years ago as one of only 85 grantees awarded in the first round of Veterans Administration funding for its Supportive Services for Veteran Families program. As a result of its success, the VA has just announced that COI has been awarded over $1,000,000 to increase the people and geography it serves. COI will serve veterans in 12 counties across three states: New York (Chautauqua, Allegany, Cattaraugus, Erie, Genesee, Wyoming), Pennsylvania (Crawford, Erie, Forest, McKean, Warren), and Ohio (Ashtabula). COI will be expanding its current partnership with the Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council (a community action agency) to directly provide services in four of the five Pennsylvania counties.
by Roberta Keller
Executive Director

This is the 50th Anniversary of the creation of community action agencies. Chautauqua Opportunities has been working in our county for fifty years. We have traditionally been seen as a service agency providing a wide array of services to low and moderate income county residents. Our mission is broader than service to individuals and families in poverty or vulnerable to falling into poverty. We are charged with creating economic and social opportunities for marginalized residents. This means becoming an integral part of the planning and implementation strategies throughout the county: governments, organizations, agencies and grassroots organizations.

Chautauqua Opportunities has been working with a number of grassroots initiatives in the county over the years. We offer our expertise in assisting groups to define objectives, develop strategies and assist wherever possible with gaining economic and social support to move their initiatives forward. We believe in empowering residents to improve their neighborhoods, their schools, and their communities.

We are working with a number of churches in our community in a variety of ways. We offer our services to help coordinate local initiatives and facilitate development and expansion of outreach efforts that are designed to benefit the vulnerable in our county. Initiatives have ranged from mentoring to assistance with shelter, food, and clothing.

Chautauqua County is rich in human resources that care, work hard and have a tradition of cooperation. In strong economic times this has made us stronger and allowed us to offer a wide array of supports to those among us in need. In more difficult economic times, this history of hard work and cooperation becomes critical for the survival of a much needed service delivery network that many have come to depend on.

Chautauqua Opportunities provides a venue for all sectors of the community to participate

Every customer will receive the same comprehensive service model that includes a holistic look at the family, their needs and strengths. Services will begin with an intake, housing analysis, and the development of a family plan that identifies both the short and long-term goals of the family. Supportive services may include housing search assistance, credit counseling, temporary financial assistance, veteran’s benefits application, and health insurance. We also offer referral assistance for employment services, substance abuse support, and mental health assistance.

Prior to receipt of funding from the VA SSVF Program, COI served veterans who were at risk of homelessness or living homeless in this catchment area with Solutions to End Homelessness (STEPH) funding. We pride ourselves on having an integrated team that includes trained and certified financial social workers. Housing Support Specialists work one-on-one with veterans, develop a housing plan, and calculate the temporary financial assistance (TFA) often needed to pay first month’s rent, obtain security and/or utility deposits, moving costs, and child care. Outreach Specialists network with outside organizations to identify homeless veteran populations and provide referrals to COI. Through an integrated approach and external partnerships, the SSVF team is able to offer many services to veteran families during one appointment.

All divisions of COI meet on a weekly basis and work together to identify areas where we can improve service delivery utilizing the integrated collaborative approach. While SSVF temporary financial assistance funds are to be used as a last resort funding source for veterans, customers are linked with every available service within COI and its partners to best ensure that the family is stabilized and does not become at-risk of homelessness again. As a primarily rural service provider, COI built an extensive referral list to ensure veterans have the opportunity to connect with additional community resources, including the Veterans Benefits Administration. We attribute development of this strong community resource network as a key to its SSVF success.

• About 13% of the adult homeless population are veterans.
• Almost half of all homeless veterans served during the Vietnam era.
• Over one million other veterans are considered at risk of homelessness due to poverty, lack of support networks, and dismal living conditions in overcrowded or substandard housing.
• Community-based and non-profit organizations have been effective in helping homeless and at-risk veterans.
• Over half of our homeless veterans served for at least three years and over thirty percent were stationed in a war zone.

http://fanofthefeather.info
The Community Transformation Grant-Active Play Curriculum

The Community Transformation Grant teamed with the Chautauqua County Department of Health and Child Care Council at Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. with the intent to curb obesity trends among students entering kindergarten within the school districts of Jamestown, Dunkirk, & Silver Creek. Obesity among children and adolescents has tripled over the past three decades with 29% of our children being categorized as either overweight or obese. As part of the Community Transformation Grant Team, the Physical Activity Specialist (PAS) position was created to recruit and train providers in child care centers, group family day centers, and family day care settings to increase the quantity and quality of developmentally appropriate physical activity in the early education settings. In the end, over 43 centers, group, and family child care providers participated and successfully completed the “Active Play” program with 25 of providers being in the targeted school districts of Jamestown, Dunkirk, and Silver Creek.

The results showed an increase in the amount of adult led lessons compared to free play lesson, the use of fundamental focused lessons, and cardiovascular endurance related activities. Each early education setting presented new challenges when focused lessons, and cardiovascular endurance related activities. Specifically, the number one goal of the of the Active Play curriculum was to give each provider the tools to increase the amount of vigorous physical activity to 30 minutes a day for children ages 2-5 years old. The secondary goal was to improve fundamental movement patterns such as skipping, jumping, striking, hopping, galloping, twisting, running, walking, and throwing. Every provider was given daily lesson plans that addressed both goals along with an additional games & activities from the book “Active Play” by Dr. Diane Craft. Within the book were pictures, movement descriptions, video demonstrations, and 20-week example curriculum for providers to follow.

While recruiting efforts were focused in the target school districts, 15 other Chautauqua County providers were trained in the Active Play curriculum with a total of 294 early education employees trained, reaching over 1,300 children in Chautauqua County. Presentation engagements throughout the grant life presented themselves such as the CCAEYC conference, the NYSAYEC conference, 2014 Global Summit on physical activity, and the Wellness Day conference for local schools. Activities were given to parents at local Head Start community events. As the Community Transformation Grant comes to a close in Chautauqua County, we would like to extend our thanks to all the providers who participated in the trainings and events. Our goal was to give providers the knowledge and tools to integrate more age appropriate physical activity. The willingness from our Chautauqua County providers to try the curriculum will provide for positive change in the lives of our local children.

The lack of time throughout the day to prepare new lessons with physical activity in mind. One of the major goals of the grant was to create sustainable strategies with easy to use techniques and activities to guide the providers in teaching purposeful, adult led physical activity. Each provider who participated in the Active Play curriculum was given resources and tool kits to increase the likelihood of continued participation in the physical activity. Upon each technical assistance visit, the providers were given sample lesson plans and supplied with additional activity descriptions for timely use. Specifically, the number one goal of the of the Active Play curriculum was to give each provider the tools to increase the amount of vigorous physical activity to 30 minutes a day for children ages 2-5 years old. The secondary goal was to improve fundamental movement patterns such as skipping, jumping, striking, hopping, galloping, twisting, running, walking, and throwing. Every provider was given daily lesson plans that addressed both goals along with an additional games & activities from the book “Active Play” by Dr. Diane Craft. Within the book were pictures, movement descriptions, video demonstrations, and 20-week example curriculum for providers to follow.

While recruiting efforts were focused in the target school districts, 15 other Chautauqua County providers were trained in the Active Play curriculum with a total of 294 early education employees trained, reaching over 1,300 children in Chautauqua County. Presentation engagements throughout the grant life presented themselves such as the CCAEYC conference, the NYSAYEC conference, 2014 Global Summit on physical activity, and the Wellness Day conference for local schools. Activities were given to parents at local Head Start community events. As the Community Transformation Grant comes to a close in Chautauqua County, we would like to extend our thanks to all the providers who participated in the trainings and events. Our goal was to give providers the knowledge and tools to integrate more age appropriate physical activity. The willingness from our Chautauqua County providers to try the curriculum will provide for positive change in the lives of our local children.

COI’s Early Education Division/Head Start Program coordinated with several community resources this summer to develop educational experiences for families and children that support learning and increased child outcomes/decreased information loss over the summer. We called it The Summer Passport Program and made it available to all interested Head Start Families. Families with children who demonstrated needs improvement in the child domains of Literacy, Social Studies and Science were prioritized to help families and children feel the excitement of learning together. This passport provided free admission to a variety of area attractions, including:
- Jamestown Audubon Society
- Fenton History Center in Jamestown
- Roger Tory Peterson Institute in Jamestown
- McClurg Museum in Westfield
- Chautauqua Fish Hatchery in Mayville
- Marshall Martz Memorial Observatory in Frewsburg

The Passport program was created in response to data trends over the past couple of school years and overall family participation with inspiring and supporting learning in key academic domains. It also aligns with the school readiness goals of the Head Start program because the applied learning model will prepare parents to be conscientious Common Core participants, which will be critical for children’s success in elementary school.

The effectiveness of The Summer Passport Program will be measured as children participate in beginning of year assessments during the Fall. Preliminary discussions with families have indicated that the program was well received and successful.

The results showed an increase in the amount of adult led lessons compared to free play lesson, the use of fundamental focused lessons, and cardiovascular endurance related activities. Each early education setting presented new challenges when focused lessons, and cardiovascular endurance related activities. Specifically, the number one goal of the of the Active Play curriculum was to give each provider the tools to increase the amount of vigorous physical activity to 30 minutes a day for children ages 2-5 years old. The secondary goal was to improve fundamental movement patterns such as skipping, jumping, striking, hopping, galloping, twisting, running, walking, and throwing. Every provider was given daily lesson plans that addressed both goals along with an additional games & activities from the book “Active Play” by Dr. Diane Craft. Within the book were pictures, movement descriptions, video demonstrations, and 20-week example curriculum for providers to follow.

While recruiting efforts were focused in the target school districts, 15 other Chautauqua County providers were trained in the Active Play curriculum with a total of 294 early education employees trained, reaching over 1,300 children in Chautauqua County. Presentation engagements throughout the grant life presented themselves such as the CCAEYC conference, the NYSAYEC conference, 2014 Global Summit on physical activity, and the Wellness Day conference for local schools. Activities were also given to parents at local Head Start community events. As the Community Transformation Grant comes to a close in Chautauqua County, we would like to extend our thanks to all the providers who participated in the trainings and events. Our goal was to give providers the knowledge and tools to integrate more age appropriate physical activity. The willingness from our Chautauqua County providers to try the curriculum will provide for positive change in the lives of our local children.

The lack of time throughout the day to prepare new lessons with physical activity in mind. One of the major goals of the grant was to create sustainable strategies with easy to use techniques and activities to guide the providers in teaching purposeful, adult led physical activity. Each provider who participated in the Active Play curriculum was given resources and tool kits to increase the likelihood of continued participation in the physical activity. Upon each technical assistance visit, the providers were given sample lesson plans and supplied with additional activity descriptions for timely use. Specifically, the number one goal of the of the Active Play curriculum was to give each provider the tools to increase the amount of vigorous physical activity to 30 minutes a day for children ages 2-5 years old. The secondary goal was to improve fundamental movement patterns such as skipping, jumping, striking, hopping, galloping, twisting, running, walking, and throwing. Every provider was given daily lesson plans that addressed both goals along with an additional games & activities from the book “Active Play” by Dr. Diane Craft. Within the book were pictures, movement descriptions, video demonstrations, and 20-week example curriculum for providers to follow.

While recruiting efforts were focused in the target school districts, 15 other Chautauqua County providers were trained in the Active Play curriculum with a total of 294 early education employees trained, reaching over 1,300 children in Chautauqua County. Presentation engagements throughout the grant life presented themselves such as the CCAEYC conference, the NYSAYEC conference, 2014 Global Summit on physical activity, and the Wellness Day conference for local schools. Activities were also given to parents at local Head Start community events. As the Community Transformation Grant comes to a close in Chautauqua County, we would like to extend our thanks to all the providers who participated in the trainings and events. Our goal was to give providers the knowledge and tools to integrate more age appropriate physical activity. The willingness from our Chautauqua County providers to try the curriculum will provide for positive change in the lives of our local children.
Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. (COI) was recently awarded a grant to operate an Advantage After School program in the Brocton Central School District in Chautauqua County by the NYS Office of Children & Family Services. The 2000 Census indicated that 18.5% of children in Brocton and 19.3% of children in the county lived below poverty. In 2012, American Community Survey (ACS), shows that these figures had risen to 34.0% and 29.4% respectively. According to data provided by NYSED’s School Report Card 2012-2013 for the Brocton School District, 87% of students at the elementary level and 63% of students at the middle school level are eligible for free or reduced lunches. Economically disadvantaged students make up 55% of the elementary student body and 53% of the middle-high school student body.

The program will target children in grades K-12. Program features include tutoring and homework help provided by Chautauqua Striders, Inc. to increase tutoring and homework help provided for instruction in mealtime etiquette and physical fitness, financial literacy and asset development. Parents will be involved in the program through volunteer opportunities and an advisory board. There will be four family events focused on health and safety, physical fitness, financial literacy and asset development, and family engagement in school and child academics. A healthy meal will be served and parents will be surveyed about the types of workshops they would be interested in.

The program will run from 2:30 – 5:30 each school day. COI hopes to have the program operational by late 2014. For more information on the Advantage After School program contact COI at 716-366-8176.

Web-Based Life Skills Launching at COI

The Family Services division at Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. has been offering life skills education to customers for several years to build personal assets and a “tool box” of skills in various areas such as relationships, employability, parenting, emotional regulation, and domestic management. Skilled Life Skills staff utilize “evidence-based” curriculum, materials and processes that have been proven through research to be effective, in all services offered. Data has shown an increase in knowledge, skills, and a positive impact on life application for participants who complete the series. The long-standing difficulty, however, has been the under-utilization of this valuable, free resource among COI customers.

Data analysis identified multiple barriers among low-income individuals and families which prevent regular commitment and participation in group opportunities. Some barriers include transportation, child care, fuel costs, and scheduling around work commitments. Another factor for consideration is that a small percentage of people are not comfortable addressing certain life areas in a group setting. In response to these concerns, Family Services has developed a virtual option for customers to access educational opportunities or community resource settings from their homes at times that are available or convenient for them. This will allow them to gain knowledge and support to build personal assets and skill sets.

The first module that has been created is the parenting toolbox, which provides valuable information about child development. Participants will learn the different tools and strategies at each stage to foster growth, healthy coping, positive social skills, pro-social behaviors, and school success from birth through adolescence. Participants are given an opportunity to ask the facilitator questions and follow-up with a support-group to further networking and build a natural support system. For parents who have specific interest in additional topics such as bedtime routines, toilet training, and managing challenging behaviors, additional specialized modules will be available.

The modules will be available on the COI web site. Customers who register through service staff will receive log in information and a certificate will be issued upon completion of each series. In this way, customers work at their own pace and ask questions as needed to take full advantage of the information provided. Handouts and supplemental activities are also made available for implementation and practice. Once all modules are made available to customers, COI will begin to make the services available to others who are not enrolled for a small fee to sustain the initiative. Information will be available at www.chautauquaopportunities.com as services develop.
Reducing Health Care Costs Through Improved Consumer Education & Involvement

Health care costs continue to climb, affecting the number of individuals who seek and utilize the healthcare system. Things that directly affect health care costs include improved technology, inflation, the cost of prescription drugs, fewer hospital admissions, an increase in risky behaviors (drugs, promiscuity, etc.), a reduction in reimbursement from the government, rising numbers of cases of uncompensated care, the aging population, increasing cases of chronic illnesses, and the rise in malpractice suits. At Chautauqua Opportunities, it is our hope that we can educate consumers about the cost of health care, how it affects them, and how people can work to reduce the rise in healthcare costs through proactive health practices.

Some educational topics that the Health Division is exploring in the strategy to reduce the overall cost of health care include care coordination, understanding how your body works, identifying medical and dental habits; nutrition and you, and recipe for healthy living. If consumers become more engaged in their well-being and overall level of care, the end result may be seen in reduced health care costs. If we can teach consumers to review and negotiate medical bills, have someone audit their bills for errors, look for and utilize tax credits related to medical care, and have a primary care provider assist them in decision making, it will ultimately push providers to give only necessary medical care. Consumers will also know when to stay home and care for themselves, when and where to seek medical attention, where to find free or reduced cost health services available in the community, when to seek a second opinion or ask for the cost of healthcare prior to treatment. They will be more aware of what it costs to be healthy and remain healthy and will seek to avoid being unhealthy unlong with planning ahead, talking with insurance and medical providers, and saving for costly procedures by taking their health care into their own hands.

By teaching how life habits relate to and affect their ability to care for themselves, people will be more apt to understand insurance coverage, drink more water, to not be intimidated of what it costs to be healthy and remain healthy and will seek to avoid being unhealthy unlong with planning ahead, talking with insurance and medical providers, and saving for costly procedures by taking their health care into their own hands.

Opening in March 2013, BWS started operations in Chautauqua County with only 2 trucks and three men. Since then they have expanded their service area to include parts of Cattaraugus County and Northern Pennsylvania while adding three more trucks and growing their staff to five persons. BWS provides waste and recycling collections to all their service areas on a regular basis. Service can be structured to meet customer needs. BWS continues to grow in all their markets and attribute this growth to excellent customer service, flexibility, low prices, and being locally owned. BWS is proud to serve local businesses such as St. Bonaventure University, Southern Tier Brewery and Tanglewood Manor. Additionally, they are growing by adding other businesses such as Davidson’s and PetSmart to their client list.

Cliff Wilkin states, “BWS greatly thanks CODI for their fantastic encouragement of local businesses such as ours in such a vital resource as waste and recycling collection. This support will greatly aid in maintaining a competitive and economical marketplace for environmental services in our community. Lastly, we would like to point out the very reasonable closing costs for the funds received” CODI charges a closing cost of only 2% of the loan plus collateral filing fees.

BWS is owned by John Beichner, Sean Dixon and Cliff Wilkin. Persons interested in BWS services should contact Cliff Wilkin at 716-962-1020.

Beichner Waste Services (BWS) located in Sinclairville and serving Chautauqua and Cattaraugus counties, has received $50,000 in financing from the Chautauqua Opportunities for Development Inc. (CODI) loan fund. These funds will be used to expand services.

Chautauqua Opportunities for Development Inc. (CODI) is a local non-profit organization and Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) operating the Chautauqua Microenterprise Loan Fund. CODI is affiliated with Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. (COI). This loan fund assists new and expanding businesses in Chautauqua County. Funds
Our Incentive Club encourages security. homeless people move toward economic program to help low-income and

That’s why COI developed an innovative program to help locate and enroll children toward economic progress. Incentives consist of gift cards, such as oil changes, small appliances, and school supplies, or gas.

COI would appreciate your support for the Incentive Club. Your kind donation will assist us in providing a ladder out of poverty for approximately 100 - 150 families.

Donations will be sent to the attention of Edward Woloszyn, Controller, at 17 West Courtsey Street, Dunkirk, NY 14048. A receipt will be sent to you for your tax-deductible contribution. Your assistance in funding the Incentive Club will truly make a difference.

The Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. Incentive Club

Chautauqua County has the highest rate of youth poverty in New York State outside of New York City. That’s why COI developed an innovative program to help locate and enroll children toward economic progress. Our Incentive Club encourages customers to progress toward economic security by giving incentives for reaching milestones. Incentives consist of gift cards for them to purchase baby or school supplies, small appliances, and auto maintenance such as oil changes or gas. COI would appreciate your support for our Incentive Club model of helping people toward self-sufficiency. Your kind donation will assist us in providing a ladder out of poverty for approximately 100 - 150 families.

Chautauqua County is home to the Chautauqua Children’s Safety Education Village (CCSEV), one of fewer than twenty similar projects in the country. The CCSEV’s goal is to provide a comprehensive, hands-on, age-appropriate safety training experience for school-age children that includes fire, traffic, pedestrian, bicycle, and home safety training.

COI became involved in the Safety Village in 2007 when it was asked by CCSEV board members to help locate funding for construction and ongoing operation. The agency was able to secure Transportation Enhancement Program funding through the NYS Department of Transportation (NYS DOT) for construction of the education and storage buildings that make up part of the facility.

Located on a two and one-half acre site on the grounds of the Hewes Educational Center in Ashville, the Safety Village is a child-sized village made up of over twenty scaled-down buildings. It is complete with paved streets, sidewalks, traffic signs, a railroad station with a working railroad crossing and working traffic lights. The Education building has two large classrooms and a fully equipped model home, including a kitchen and bedroom area that is used to teach children how to escape from a fire. COI became part of the Safety Village streetscape in 2011 by erecting a building on the site with funding from the Ralph C. Sheldon Foundation and labor contributed by COI employees. Traffic safety lessons begin in the classroom where children are taught that they should cross at a crosswalk if one is available and the dangers of crossing between cars. Children practice walking through the streets of the village looking for crosswalks, and then practice looking both ways, waiting for a signal, and crossing in the crosswalk. Classroom lessons for bicycle safety include instruction on proper safety gear and the importance of wearing a helmet.

Congrats Graduates!

Staff and Management at COI want to give a hearty congratulations to the 4 residents of the Transitional Independent Living program on their recent graduation from high school!

Giovanni Roble-Melendez graduated from Dunkirk High School and is attending Jamestown Community College (JCC) to study business and accounting.

Yvette Hernandez-Paredes, also a graduate from Dunkirk High School, is also continuing her education at JCC with plans to become a mortician.

Cassadaga Central School graduate Chelsey Knapp plans to attend BOCES for Cosmetology. Devyn Unruh graduated from Jamestown High School and is enrolled at JCC with plans to transfer to Alfred State to study Veterinary Science.

Yvette Hernandez-Paredes, also a Cassadaga Central School graduate with plans to become a mortician.

The Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. Incentive Club

Contributors to the Incentive Club

Would you like to receive our newsletter? You can do so by visiting our website.

The Community
ABOUT US

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. is fighting the war against poverty by empowering low income individuals and stabilizing the vulnerable among us. We believe that all Americans have the right to achieve all they are able to.

We will strive to create economic opportunities that afford each individual a ladder out of poverty and improve the overall well being of the entire community.

It is our commitment to restore each individual’s dignity and assist, through supportive services, each one to attain short and long term goals that move them toward economic stability.

We use a customer driven, strength based, model that assists customers from crisis toward economic security and is measured against Results Oriented Management Accountability (ROMA) based continuums of care. ROMA is the nationally approved measurement of human service delivery.

Staff are trained and certified in financial social work; customers receive long term financial education, the goal of which is to empower individuals to make sound, financial decisions that will lead to the accumulation of wealth and ultimately toward economic security.

CALL (716)366-3333 EXT. 1246 FOR SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION OR VISIT WWW.CHAUTAUQUAOPPORTUNITIES.COM