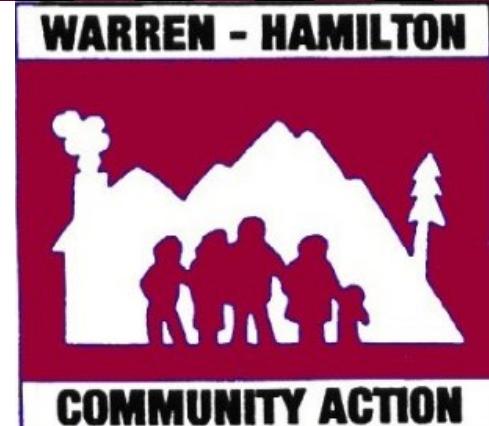




# WARREN-HAMILTON COUNTIES ACEO, INC.

## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



### Message from the Executive Director

Every year when I sit down to write this letter, I try to remember how I was feeling about the agency last year and compare it to how I feel now. Last year I was grateful for the fact that although our building had been sold, we were not going to have to relocate and some very needed repairs and improvements were in the works. Last year, however, I was also extremely worried about funding. The CARES grant we were awarded in 2019 ended in September of 2022. It was that funding that allowed for there to be an additional and much needed staff person in the Warren County pantry. It also allowed us to continue to provide North County Senior Transportation and emergency housing assistance. With no other funding on the horizon, I asked for the Board's permission to discontinue providing transportation as of the beginning of this year. Residents seeking emergency assistance funds were referred to other providers with the knowledge that these other entities also did not have the funds to meet the needs. Staff in the Warren County pantry lost a member and the position was not refilled. Sue Sawn, the Agency's long time Program Assistant retired. Her position was also not replaced. Luckily, current staff members in particular Mike Lajeunesse and Stephanie Gulick stepped up to help fill the void, however, absences and vacation time was taking their toll. At least one new staff member was desperately needed as was funding to provide emergency housing assistance.

Then, in the beginning of January, I received a call which changed everything. There was Rural Preservation Program funding available through the NYS Housing Trust Fund and would we be interested in applying. I was aware that there had been Rural Preservation Corporations in the area in the past, one in Washington County and one in Northern Warren/Hamilton Counties but that both of these entities no longer existed. Both of these Corporations focused on low-income housing construction and management neither of which this agency was particularly interested in pursuing. During the phone call I was informed that RPP funding did not fund construction or management of properties but was there to ensure agencies were financially capable of providing these services along with many other housing/homelessness services that we were already providing and always have provided. In January, the anticipated funding we would receive if our application was approved was just under 90,000 a year and would be renewable each year. Knowing how badly we could use an additional \$90,000 a year I submitted an application never truly expecting it to be approved. When I received notice that our application was approved and through the State budget process, funding had been increased to \$120,000, It was as if a heavy weight had been lifted. Although the Program Assistant position has not been reinstated, the pantry is back to being fully staffed and families are once again being assisted with emergency housing and I am grateful. Thank you to all our Staff and Board members who make this place possible and to some divine intervention in the form of a phone call.

Sincerely,

Lynn Ackershoek  
Executive Director





## Message from the Board President

As another year comes to a close, we can thank Lynn and her staff for a job well done. I believe the CAA has achieved the Agency's mission to provide resources and programs to nurture equal economic opportunity for low-income, elderly and disabled residents. Many thanks to Board members for their continued support of Community Action Agency goals.

*Jim Campinell*

Jim Campinell  
Board President



Randy Davidson and Robert Petty -Weatherization at work



Despite all the planning and preparation you put into something the unexpected is bound to occur, regardless if it's good or bad; it comes down to how you handle it.

When people think of our agency and what we do I'm sure Monarchs do not come to mind. However, as we participated in putting Indian Lake on the map of populators; with a window display and posters of the life cycle of Monarchs, not only did we bring awareness to their declining numbers but we also made individuals aware of the many services we provide and offer to county residents.

Word certainly increased and individuals took notice and became invested in what we do. Not only have the number of monetary donations, food drives, collection of necessities and drop offs of household/clothing items increased; we also acquired the attention of an individual who is holding a raffle in our honor.

Once again we had a very successful traditional Christmas for children due to the wonderful support we received. The Kiwanis of Herkimer County provided one hundred seven children with a minimum of five gifts each, six cousins chose to adopt four children rather than buy for each other, and the Knights of Columbus adopted two families.

On average we served 164 individuals (61 children, 69 adults, 33 elderly) on a monthly basis. The four highest months were May (185), September (189), November (180) and December (213). We continue to provide ten days worth of food (3-meals and 2- snacks) for each individual; and when available we include toilet paper, toiletries, feminine products, diapers and cleaning products.

In August we began to collect school supplies and backpacks. Since then we have provided forty-six families with assistance; accounting for eighty-three students for school supplies and fifty backpacks. We also continue to keep lockers stocked with supplies, within two schools so children can take as needed.

The Indian Lake Community Garden geared up for a successful season. A new fence and cultivator were purchased, an increased number of families worked cohesively in the garden, and three hundred nine packet of seeds were utilized by fifty-eight individuals

Then we were quickly reminded of how temperamental the weather can be in the Adirondacks. Frequent and extreme fluctuations throughout the growing season were endured. So after all the planning and preparation I put into the garden; I was done! No if ands or buts I would not do another garden.

That was until I was reminded of the Monarchs and the benefits they offered not only to our agency but to their population as well as the gardeners who persevered and are planning for next year. Therefore, I will be replacing the vegetable plot we oversee into a 12'x35' pollinator garden. This will in turn benefit all future gardeners and regardless of the weather I will let nature do all the work.

Hamilton County is very unique and our methods aren't always conventional, however we make them work.

Debby Ameden





## Staff Members

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Lynn Ackershoek - Executive Director  
Kathy French - Fiscal Officer  
Michael Lajeunesse - Case Manager/Emerg. Servs  
Stephanie Gulick - ASP Director  
Jim Wood - Warren Cty NOC Worker  
Theresa Whiting - Warren Cty NOC Worker  
Lauren Ingignoli—Warren Cty NOC Worker  
Deborah Ameden - Hamilton County Director  
Darcie Swieton - Hamilton Cty NOC Worker

Andrew Pritchard - Weatherization Director  
John Miller - Wx Admin. Assistant  
Andy McMurray - Energy Auditort  
Ryan St. Amour - Energy auditor  
Robert Petty - Weatherization Foreman  
Randy Davidson - Weatherization Foreman  
Joshua Flewelling - Weatherization Laborer  
David Blackmere—Weatherization Laborer



**Every year, Glens Falls DPW assists with the Postal Food Drive**

## 2022-23 Funding Sources

NYS Department of State - Community Service Block Grant  
NYS Homes and Community Renewal - Weatherization  
NYS Housing Trust Fund—Rural Preservation Program  
NYS Department of Education - Summer Lunch Program  
NYSERDA - Empower New York  
Warren County Probation & Youth Bureau - Alternative Sentencing Program

Glens Falls Community Development - Project Option  
Regional Food Bank of NENY, Charles Wood Foundation, Stewarts, National Grid, Local private Corporations & Local Retailers, Service Organizations, Farmers and Individuals

**Thank You!**

## 2023 Board of Directors

### Public

John Strough - 1st Vice Pres.  
Peter McDevitt - Treasurer  
Ed Donahue  
Edna Fraiser  
Frank Thomas

### Private

Jim Campinell - President  
Viki Anderson  
Cathy Catalfamo  
Armand (Chuck) Frigon  
Rachel Fortini Valk

### Low-income

Roberta Bly  
Shari Marci - Secretary  
Joanne Mathews  
Christina Maresco  
Hana Hall

## Alternative Sentencing

This Alternative Sentencing Program works with all of the courts in Warren County. Most of the participants are sent from Glens Falls Court and Queensbury Court. However, ALL of the courts send participants. These participants are sent to different 501 C-3 facilities to volunteer. The court orders these participants to a certain number of community service hours. The facility this program utilizes the most is The Open Door Mission. The reason being for this is the fact that they are open every day of the week. These participants have to volunteer their time around their work schedules and their everyday life schedules. Some of the facilities that this program uses are: Churches, libraries, food pantries, and transfer stations. We really try to accommodate the participant in the fact that we try to find a facility that is close to them and operates at the times the participant can get there.

This program works closely with the two drug courts in Warren County. These are the Misdemeanor Drug Court held at the Glens Falls Court by the Honorable Judge Gary Hobbs and the second one being the Felony Drug Court program held at The Warren County Court by the Honorable Judge Robert Smith. The participants will get community service hours if they miss a call in or miss or late to an appointment. All of the participants that have been through the program have been very easy to work with. The two programs work well with the Alternative Sentencing Program.

During the time frame of 1/1/2023 – 10/31/2023; there have been 154 participants that have entered the Alternative Sentencing Program. Out of the 154; 98 of these participants were males, 54 of them were females and the last 2 of them were non binary (no assigned gender.) So far out of the 154 participants 92 of the participants have completed their court-ordered community service.

Best,

Stephanie

## Some 2023 Highlights

	Warren	Hamilton	Wash		Additionally in Warren County
Emergency Food Baskets	866	770			
Food Pantry Visits	20,723	498			519 Summer Lunches served
Clothing Depot Visits	6,076	1,009			3,888 Volunteer hours (Both Counties)
Weatherization Units	35	3	43		131 Successful Alternative Sentencing Completions
Emergency Services	23	10			646,435 pounds of donated food received
Seniors Transported	17				
Transportation Trips made		224			

Warren-Hamilton Counties Weatherization Assistance Program had a successful 2022-23 contract year completing 95 units in Warren, Hamilton, and Washington Counties. This was the second year Warren-Hamilton served Washington County under its Weatherization Assistance Program. All three counties total 3586 square miles.

Warren-Hamilton initially received \$834,218 in funding for the 2022-23 contract year giving us the ability to weatherize 84 homes with an average cost per unit of \$7913. New York State extended our 2022-23 contract that normally ends March 31<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> 2023. This added an additional 3 months to our contract and an amendment bringing our 22-23 contract to \$1,053,566. This gave us the ability to weatherize 95 homes.

This year Warren-Hamilton received 2 grants to weatherize low income housing. The first grant is our regular weatherization funding. We received \$1,006,276 to weatherize 72 homes this 2023-24 contract year. The 2<sup>nd</sup> grant we received is a BIL Grant. BIL stands for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The BIL Grant we received is for \$719,971 and it covers a 2 year period and an additional 64 homes to be weatherized.

This summer Warren-Hamilton continued to participate in the Cooling Emergency Program run through each County. The Cooling Program runs from May 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup> each year or until the funding is depleted (whichever comes first). New York State continued for its 2<sup>nd</sup> year to be open to all income eligible clients compared to previous years when clients must have a medical condition to be eligible. This year we served 74 clients with cooling emergency air conditioners (16 more ACs than last year and the program ended early because the funding ran out).

Our goals for the 2023-24 Contract are to complete our WAP and BIL Contracts on time. Additionally, we put bids out for new vehicles hoping to get 2 new auditor vehicles. We are requesting 1 new vehicle through our WAP contract budget and 1 new vehicle through our BIL contract budget.

Our accomplishments this year include completing our contract on time. Performing Quality Control Inspections (QCI) gives us a lot of satisfaction while viewing the work that has been completed. Our crews do excellent professional work. The testing we perform at the final inspection proves the energy upgrades made were successful. The best part of the QCI inspection is the client's reactions to the work. Our clients are generally very happy with the work and have lots of good things to say about the crew. Our crew is very knowledgeable and informative to our clients explaining what we're doing and if we're going to make any changes.

Warren-Hamilton still continues to coordinate and work with other programs such as NYSERDA and our local Department of Social Services. We have and will continue to work together to leverage funds from these other programs to provide the best services for our clients.

The Weatherization Assistance Program is a free program for income qualified homes. If a household receives HEAP or SNAP, that automatically makes a household income eligible for our services. Proof of income through pay stubs is also an acceptable proof of income. To find out more about the Weatherization Assistance Program please call us at (518) 793-0636. We mail or email applications out or they can be picked up at Community Action Agency at our 190 Maple Street address here in Glens Falls, M-F. They can also be picked up at our Hamilton County Community Action Agency location next to the Town Movie Theater at 726 Main St, Indian Lake, NY 12842.

The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) is administered in NY State by Homes & Community Renewal (HCR). HCR receives funding from the US Departments of Energy (DOE), and Health and Human Services (HSS).

Andy Pritchard  
Weatherization Director

## Project Option

The Project Option case manager advocated for 41 households in Warren County during the previous 12 months. One aspect of advocacy included completing online employment applications and as a result, 10 individuals who were unemployed obtained employment. Clients expressed improved self-esteem and stability which included the following statement: "In my entire life I have never been more stable or happier." To increase the probability of maintaining safe, affordable housing Project Option prioritizes subsidized housing. This includes Section 8 Community Vouchers and apartments with built-in-subsidies, such as senior housing. A total of 8 households who were homeless, or at risk of homelessness obtained an apartment that included a housing subsidy. They ranged from 21-year-old parents of a new born to a 75-year-old male. Difficulty in obtaining apartments that fit in the Glens Falls Housing Authority payment standard increased the previous few years, which resulted from a declining number of available apartments and increasing rents. In addition to advocating for housing and employment, case manager ensures that applications and recertifications for formal supports, such as SNAP, HEAP, Temporary Assistance and HUD are completed in a timely manner. Finally, most Project Option households contained at least 1 individual who was referred for outpatient mental health and substance abuse treatment centers. Overcoming addiction and mental illness are prerequisites for stability.

Michael Lajeunesse

Project Option Case Manager

## Emergency Services

Families enduring a crisis have a partner in Warren-Hamilton Counties Community Action Agency. During the previous 12 months the agency provided Emergency Services for 30 households in Warren County. The most vulnerable population were children and as a result, the agency paid back rent for 10 families that included minors. Children in these families ranged in age from 6 months to 16 years old. Causes of delinquent rent included the following: Covid-19 loss of income, lost employment, reduced hours, or separation/divorce. In addition to assisting with rental arrears, Community Action provided emergency housing for 19 households. As with back rent, assisting children was prioritized. A total of 29 children obtained emergency housing, which included 17 of 19 homeless households. The remaining 2 households included a 73-year-old male with prostate cancer and a disabled female. Finally, the agency assisted a female with 2 children who exhausted her Emergency HEAP benefits by filling her oil tank. Community Action and North Country Ministries, the 2 organizations in Warren County that have administered the Care & Share program, did not receive login credentials for the 2022-2023 heating season. All requests for Care & Share were referred to the local National Grid consumer advocate.

Michael Lajeunesse

Emergency Services Director





## Community Support - THANK YOU!!

### SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS

**Warren-Hamilton Counties Community Action is on FACEBOOK. You can look the facility up through our name or [facebook.com/wahaaceo](https://www.facebook.com/wahaaceo).**

Take the time to check us out and give the page a thumbs-up. When you do, it spreads the word that we are out there for the community. The page will provide a browser of our information and what services we offer. Posted on the FACEBOOK page you will also find some pictures of the facility.

Have a question for the staff at the agency? Feel free to message us online and we will respond in a timely manner to direct you to the proper staff person.



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