

# COMMUNITY ACTION

of Greene County, Inc.



## 2021 Annual Report



Creating Opportunities... Fighting Poverty... Changing Lives

It almost doesn't seem real, that 2021 was the second year of a global pandemic! In some ways it seems a lifetime ago, in some like it was just yesterday. Like so many others, we struggled with keeping up with protocols, protecting staff and consumers, maintaining staffing levels, and most importantly, continuing services.

A double-edged sword, despite the hardships, the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Covid also brought opportunities, with additional funding to combat some of the issues facing struggling Greene County residents, most notably in the areas of housing and homelessness.

We experienced some restructuring this past year. Due to increased demands by both our funders and clientele, our Family and Community Services (FCS) and Victim Services were divided into two separate departments, with separate management. FCS is made up of our housing and homelessness programs, Healthy Homes, emergency food pantry, mobile food pantry, and other emergency services and self sufficiency programs. Victim Services includes both our residential and non residential services in both Greene and Columbia Counties, as well as our Columbia Greene Crime Victim Advocacy programs.

In partnership with NYS OTDA and Greene County Department of Social Services, we began providing prevention and rapid rehousing services to homeless and at-risk individuals in Greene County through the ESG-CV program. As a result of lack of housing stock and rapidly increasing rents, many persons of limited means are unable to obtain safe, affordable housing. Through September 30 of 2022, ESG funds can assist these households.

In June, again partnership with OTDA and Greene County Social Services, we began assisting renters who were in arrears due to the pandemic, with ERAP, or the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. Through an online portal, either renters in arrears or landlords owed money, due to Covid, could apply for rental assistance for up to 12 months, back to March of 2020. Meeting our contractual obligations, we educated the community on the availability of the assistance, in part through radio ads and social media, and then provided computers, internet access, and staff assistance with the applications. While the process had its flaws, especially in the beginning of the rollout, many landlords received payment through this opportunity, and renters were protected from evictions.

Once ERAP funds were depleted, we were still able to provide rental assistance through STEHP (solutions to end homelessness program), ESG (emergency shelter grants) as well as through our Community Services Block Grant and private foundation grants. We are waiting on finalization of a contract, again through OTDA, for RSP, or Rental Supplement Program. Through this program households earning 50% or less of AMI would be eligible for assistance through rental subsidies at 85% of the FMR, and pay no more than 30% of their income towards rent. We are currently waiting on final approval to begin administering this program.

While we are appreciative of these funding opportunities to address the most basic necessity- housing- we recognize that we are experiencing a major housing crisis beyond what we have the resources to address. In 2021 the HUD Fair Market Rent in Greene County for a one bedroom apartment was \$834, and as you know, one bedrooms are being advertised locally for over \$1,000. Affordable housing for our workforce and youth, low-income housing that is safe and decent, is one of if not the most pressing needs we see. Short term rentals are taking up much of the available housing stock, leaving many unable to pay rent.

In addition to housing, other emergency assistance provided through various funding sources the past year included car repairs to allow transportation to work, providing bus passes to Greene County Transit, hot water heater repairs, and utility payments, to name a few.

Our Weatherization crew experienced great difficulty in working towards their production goals this past year, due in part to Covid restrictions, and also due to the inability to obtain the supplies needed, such as insulation, lumber, etc. They were awarded a separate grant through NYSHCR with ARPA funds that will allow the crew

to perform work that normally would result in us deferring the jobs. The purpose of the grant is to prepare homes for electrification, working towards full electrification, and will result in the program being permitted to invest more money in each job towards that end. We were granted funds to complete work on four (4) homes through ARPA. We have had a vacancy in the tech position on our crew, and are actively seeking to fill that position.

Due to staffing shortages, our Greene County domestic violence shelter remained closed in 2021. We continue to provide services for victims of domestic violence and their children at our Columbia County residence. In order to attract new applicants, and retain staff, we examined our salary structure, are offering a higher wage, and a sign on bonus. Due to the difficulty especially in hiring for our overnight positions, we have been working off a waiver from NYSOCFS, our licensing agency, since July, and have not been staffed over night. Working off a recommendation from OCFS, our Board of Directors recently approved, for both counties, moving from a shelter model for residential services for survivors of domestic violence, to a safe dwelling model, which does not require staffing – only that staff is on call and available in the case of emergencies. We will continue to provide on site staffing and support services in each location from 9 am to 6 pm, and have added additional security at each location which can be monitored and controlled remotely. The Victim Services Program was also the beneficiary of several grants that were purposed to respond to Covid, as well as to help families relocate for safety.

Our Mobile Food Pantry continued to be busy throughout the year, and now is scheduled to deliver food one day each week, to different parts of the County. Recipients are homeless located in motels, seniors with limited or no transportation, and individuals and families who are in quarantine. In addition to our Emergency Food Pantry and Mobile Pantry, this year we opened a “Free Farm Stand” each Tuesday afternoon. With fresh, local produce donated by local farmers, and received through The Peoples’ Place in Kingston, each week staff collected the donations and distributed beautiful and nutritious fruit and vegetables to the public. As you can imagine, this was extremely well received!

In October of 2021 the Board of Directors opted to cease operations of the Grow it Forward Greenhouse Project. Starting up in the height of a pandemic proved too difficult, and the project was not able to sustain. The property we had purchased for the project will be sold in 2022 in order to recoup our investment.

Like many other employers, Covid and “the great resignation” caused us to look at our hiring practices, pay scale, and work life balance offered to our staff. As a non profit, our staff are underpaid in comparison to municipal and state positions, or those in the private sector. We often invest in staff, train them, and then have them resign to go to either local Department of Social Services or NYS positions. While we are not able to compete with those wages and benefits, we have made changes to attract and retain staff. Staff did receive incentive payments for working and providing services through the Covid pandemic. The starting salary for all staff was raised with an increase of \$2 after 3 months, and a \$500 sign on bonus after six months. In order to do this, we combine a few positions, opting to do more with less. For residential victim services, a full time schedule of a four day work week is offered. For office staff, we now offer a nine day pay period, with staff receiving an additional day off every other week. Existing staff are enjoying the time away offered, and applications for vacant positions have increased.

Despite the risks associated with working through COVID, and the increased demands on non profits from funders and regulators, our staff continued to serve those in our communities who need assistance, and made sure that our services were uninterrupted. Our staff demonstrated resilience and were determined to fulfill our mission of “Creating Opportunities, Fighting Poverty, Changing Lives.”

Sincerely,

Florence Ohle  
Executive Director

## **Community Action of Greene County Inc.**

### **Senior Staff**

Executive Director	Florence Ohle
Controller	Leslie Dawson
Director, Family & Community Services	Barbara Palmateer
Director of Victim Services	Stephanie Spordone
Director, Weatherization Assistance Program/ Facilities Maintenance	Eugene Kelly
Thrift Store Manager	Bryan Hale

### **Board of Directors**

President	Tracy Ricci (representing NYS Assemblyman Chris Tague)
Vice President	Lori Torgersen
Treasurer	Carrie Multari
Secretary	Carol Pfister (Representing Village of Athens Trustee Gail Lasher)
	Maryann Scalera
	Nancy Barton
	Tracy Jo Szepessy
	Aidan O'Connor Jr.
	Julie Wade
	Beth Daly

### *At A Glance*

Food Pantry	1,957 persons, 239 unduplicated households, 1136 food packages, 17,613 meals
Mobile Food Pantry	346 families, 644 individuals
Feeding America	144 food pickups, 57,078 lbs. of food
Farm to Food Pantry	47 food pickups, 19,295 lbs. of food Lbs. distributed to other pantries – 4117.75
Pay it Forward Thrift Store	109 donations valued at \$54,597 46 vouchers distributed for \$1,120
Emergency Assistance	28 rent/ security, 19 utilities, 5 internet, 4 home repairs, 7 car repair, 1 furnace repair, 4 car insurance, 4 motel stays, 4 mortgage payments, 1 phone bill, 1 bed bug infestation, 1 air purifier and purchased baby items
Healthy Homes Case Management	15 households
STEHP (Solutions to End Homelessness)	Rapid Rehousing (literally homeless) 26 individuals, 15 households assisted with security or rent Prevention – 107 individuals, 47 households at risk of becoming homeless served with rental arrears
Resource Room (computer, phone, fax use)	49 unduplicated people, 96 visits
VITA	157 tax returns, \$252,469 in federal refunds
Weatherization	7 households completed, 12 in progress
Here Comes Christmas	258 children served
Domestic Violence Hotline Calls	1,590
Shelter – Greene County	closed
Shelter – Columbia County	124 residents
Greene – Orders of Protection	74
Columbia – Orders of Protection	78
Victims' Advocacy Program	16 innocent victims of crime were assisted



At left, staff set up for “Free Farm Stand Tuesday” Picture on the right is a donation of fresh, local produce from Lo Farm in Catskill.



Staff tended to our own garden, growing fresh produce and herbs to distribute through our pantry!



# State of New York

## Executive Chamber

### Proclamation

**Whereas**, domestic violence is a heinous crime that has a profound impact on all people across New York State, often with tragic consequences for victims, children, families, and entire communities; and

**Whereas**, domestic violence is a pattern of behavior used by an individual to establish and maintain power and control over their current or previous intimate partner; the behavior includes abusive tactics, threats and actions that may or may not rise to the level of criminal behavior; the tactics may include physical, emotional, financial and sexual abuse; and

**Whereas**, sadly, the incidence of domestic violence remains widespread in New York State, with 282,535 calls made to the state and local hotlines in 2020, and these reported instances of domestic violence are only a small representation of the full breadth of the problem; and

**Whereas**, the State's network of domestic violence programs provides a range of essential services, including the provision of residential services to approximately 11,051 victims and children, and non-residential services to nearly 36,692 victims and children in 2020; and

**Whereas**, New York State is the only state in the country with an executive-level agency, the Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, dedicated to preventing domestic violence and improving response to victims; and

**Whereas**, New York State continues to lead the nation in enacting laws that enhance safety for victims of domestic violence and that hold offenders accountable for their behavior; and

**Whereas**, New York State classifies domestic violence survivors as a protected class, and imposes protections to prevent harassment and discrimination in the workplace, and prohibits wage discrimination for substantially similar work because of this status as a protected class; and

**Whereas**, during this month-long observance and throughout the year, New Yorkers take a strong stand against all forms of domestic violence and offer our unequivocal support to victims; we take this opportunity to thank our legal, law enforcement, and judicial communities, and the many public and private entities that provide domestic violence services, while sending a clear message to abusers that such crimes will never be tolerated;

**Now, Therefore**, I, Kathy Hochul, Governor of the State of New York, do hereby proclaim October 2021 as

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

in the Empire State.



**Given** under my hand and the Privy Seal of the State at the Capitol in the City of Albany this first day of October in the year two thousand twenty-one.

*Kathy Hochul*

Governor

*[Signature]*

Secretary to the Governor  
Karen Persichilli Keogh



We were honored to receive recognition this past year from the offices of Governor Hochul for Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Senator Schumer as he promoted the Advanced Child Tax Credit, and Senator Michelle Hinchey, who toured our food pantry and spoke with staff about the challenges facing Greene County residents.



In addition to others, we were beneficiaries of the Bank of Greene County's Charitable Foundation, which supports our Food Pantry, and also the Catskill Elks Lodge Gratitude Grant.





We partnered with Greene County officials in 2021 distributing both masks and testing kits in response to the COVID 19 pandemic. Masks (along with winter hats) decorated our holiday tree in our lobby.



Officer Tom Plank, aka Santa Claus, visited homeless children placed in area motels, along with staff, distributing gifts and bringing holiday cheer and hope.



Community Action  
of Greene County, Inc.

2021

Funding Source	STATE	FEDERAL	LOCAL	PRIVATE
Columbia County Dept of Social Services			\$49,989.93	
Community Services Block Grant - NYS Dept. of State		\$519,446.72		
Donations				\$119,684.40
Emergency Food & Shelter				
Federal Family Violence Prevention		\$36,902.38		
Fee for Service & Program Income				\$65,701.25
Foundation Grants				\$41,527.78
Greene County Dept. of Social Services			\$109,456.30	
Greene County Legislature			\$40,000.00	\$0.00
Greene County Youth Bureau			\$0.00	
Interest Income				\$41.93
LDSS ( Domestic Violence Per Diems)			\$343,383.80	
NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal	\$17,473.63			
NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services				
Federal SBA Paycheck Protection Pro		\$208,387.46		
NYS Office of Temp/Disab Assist (STEHP & ESGCV)	\$280,725.68			
NYS Office of Victims Services	\$260,586.72			
Other Grant Funding				\$15,875.98
Pay it Forward Thrift Store Income				\$57,851.38
Transitional Housing Income				\$12,826.40
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development		\$58,858.99		
IN KIND Services, Non Monetary Donations and Services				\$160,001.99
Rent, miscellaneous income				\$20,400.10
Totals	\$558,786.03	\$823,595.55	\$542,830.03	\$493,911.21
<b>TOTAL AGENCY INCOME:</b>		<b>\$2,419,122.82</b>		

**Community Action of Greene County, Inc.  
Annual Income  
2021**

