

The Broadway Bulletin

A monthly publication of Opportunities for Otsego

The leader in developing innovative solutions that promote healthy lives, thriving families, & caring communities

December 2025
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BHF Receives National Accreditation

The Building Healthy Families Team was awarded a Certificate of Accreditation through Healthy Families America (HFA), an evidence-based program designed to improve the health and well-being for infants and children through home-based service provision. The process of accreditation involves an intensive self-study component, site visits, data collection, reporting, and analysis. Evidence of service quality is submitted to national reviewers using formal outcomes data and in-formal input from participants, staff, and community partners. To obtain such recognition, the program is responsible for the development and implementation of policy procedures in line with the HFA Best Practice Standards and its local multi-site system, Healthy Families New York. Accreditation is effective for five years and links the program to exclusive training opportunities and other resources.



Achieving national accreditation through Healthy Families America is an extraordinary accomplishment - and one the entire Building Healthy Families team should be incredibly proud of. This honor celebrates their dedication, heart, and their unwavering belief in the power of strong, supported families. Congratulations to each of you for reaching this milestone and for making a lasting difference in our community!

Submitted by Treena Halstead, Building Healthy Families Program Manager

Important HEAP and SNAP Updates

The 2025–2026 regular **HEAP season opened on Monday, December 1, 2025**. Benefits vary depending on household circumstances (e.g. heating type, rent/own status, vulnerable status), with potential support ranging from a small “base” amount to upwards of \$900+ for households paying directly for fuel. The “Emergency HEAP” benefit - for people who are out of fuel or facing a utility shut-off - is scheduled to open January 2, 2026, contingent on federal funding and allocation confirmation. *Note: The Clean & Tune benefit for heating system maintenance will not be offered this season. The absence of this benefit may hinder the Weatherization Program from completing work on eligible homes.*

New York State fully issued November SNAP benefits using federal funds, despite recent delays tied to the federal government shutdown. **December SNAP benefits are expected to be issued on schedule, with no announced delays.** Under new policy, the waiver on work-requirement rules for “able-bodied adults without dependents” (ABAWD) remains in effect statewide. The ABAWD time-limit/work-rule changes are scheduled to become effective in New York State on March 1, 2026. Those potentially affected by ABAWD rules should reach out to their local Department of Social Services. Qualified ABAWD people are encouraged to apply for employment opportunities with OFO.

Staff are encouraged to reach out to Jasmine Chianta, Community Advocate, if they are working with families who are struggling to heat their home and/or are facing food insecurity. Staff should check with families to see if ANY household member - not just adults - receive Medicaid, as additional resources may be available through the Social Care Network (SCN). Medicaid Member name (correct spelling) and Date of Birth are required to check for initial SCN eligibility.

Submitted by Megan Martin, Planning & Research Director

Save The Date

12.01.2025 - 12.05.2025 - Winter Spirit Week: The Staff Appreciation Committee has planned a week of activities to bring a bit of relaxation, and a lot of joy and togetherness:

- Dec. 01 - PJ Day
- Dec. 02 - Cheers & Treats
- Dec. 03 - Festive Frocks
- Dec. 04 - Cookie Exchange at Sites
- Dec. 05 - Deck the Halls

Remember to send photos of your festiveness to Megan Martin, so they can be shared with all...and the possibility of earning bragging rights.

12.22.2025 - 01.04.2026 - Head Start Closed for Holiday Break

12.25.2025 - Agency Closed: Agency offices will be closed in recognition of the holiday.*

01.01.2026 - Agency Closed: Agency offices will be closed in recognition of the holiday.*

01.19.2026 - Agency Closed: Agency offices will be closed in recognition of the holiday.*

The Emergency Housing and Violence Intervention Program 24-hour hotlines and shelters will still be accessible to those in need.

OH, SNAP!

Household receiving SNAP are automatically eligible for WIC and Head Start.

Head Start: Immediate Openings

Head Start has been a cornerstone of OFO since 1967, supporting our mission to promote healthy lives, thriving families, and caring communities. Today, **Head Start has the capacity to serve 229 families, yet we are currently serving fewer than this total** - meaning many eligible children in our community are still not receiving the early learning, health, and family support they deserve. Your referrals can change that.

Staff across all of our programs - whether you work in our shelters, on a weatherization crew, or in an administrative role - may be the first person to notice when a family could benefit from early childhood services. A simple conversation can open the door to life-changing support for children - aged birth to 5 - and their family.

This year, the need for strong enrollment is especially urgent. Uncertainty in the recent federal funding process has affected Head Start programs nationwide. While we remained open, other programs in New York and across the country - depending on their grant cycle - were forced to close when funding was delayed. And because **Head Start funding is directly tied to enrollment**, serving fewer children puts OFO at risk of future reductions - reductions that would have a major impact on local children, families, and the agency.

OFO's Head Start program has taken proactive steps to strengthen enrollment and respond to shifting community demographics by diversifying program options that better align with the needs of local families. Families now have a choice of home-based program up to age 5; year-round center-based toddler programming in Oneonta; and center-based preschool programs in Oneonta, Morris, Richfield Springs, Unadilla, Cooperstown, and Schenectady.

If you come across a family with a young child, please share information about Head Start or connect them with someone on the Head Start team. **Every referral supports a child's future and helps secure the sustainability of a program that has been part of Opportunities for Otsego for six decades.**

Submitted by Megan Martin, Planning & Research Director

HEAD START OPEN ENROLLMENT

Getting the Ball Rolling from Infancy to Kindergarten



Home-Based Program

Services and support offered in your home once a week. Pregnancy through age 5



Center-Based Toddler

Year-round program for children age 18 months-3 years. Located in Oneonta



Center-Based Preschool

Comprehensive preschool for children age 3-5 years. Centers across Otsego County



Opportunities
FOR OTSEGO

607.433.8055

headstart@ofoinc.org



Celebrating the Season and Family

Head Start welcomed families to centers across the County to celebrate the Thanksgiving season with their children.



Staff Spotlights



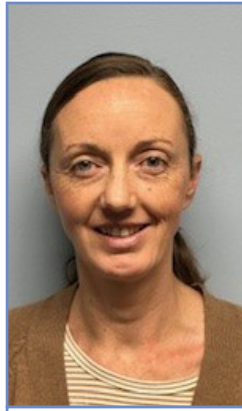
NEW
Keith Audette
Energy Services
Crew Laborer (Tech I)



NEW
Mandy Erwood-DuMond
Emergency Housing
Program Manager



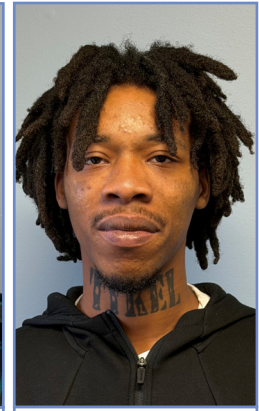
NEW
Shayla Giordano
Emergency Housing
Shelter Associate



NEW
Aimee Hadleigh
Emergency Housing
Shelter Associate



NEW
Kelly Hunt
Schenevus Head Start
Classroom Aide



NEW
Kyel Jones
Energy Services
Crew Laborer (Tech I)



NEW
Darci Shepard
Emergency Housing
Shelter Associate



NEW
Marilou Trifiletti
Emergency Housing
Shelter Associate



PROMOTION
Jessica Eklund
Violence Intervention Program
Senior Counseling Advocate



MILESTONE
Heather VanCleeef
BHF Team Leader
20 Years

Now Hiring

Are you looking for a change or know someone who be a perfect fit for OFO? **We have openings in programs across the agency with varying schedules, levels of experience and responsibility.**

For details and application instructions, visit
ofoinc.org/jobs

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work

We are thrilled to share that our recent **“Awareness to Action” Food Drive** received an incredible outpouring of support from the community. Thanks to the generosity of local residents, staff, and area businesses - including **Hair Design by Cherie**, **Scoville-Meno Honda of Oneonta**, and **Foothills Performing Arts and Civic Center** - we collected nearly 1,000 pounds of food to stock our pantry and support families experiencing food insecurity.

This impressive collection is *in addition* to the resources received through our new partnership with the **Community Cupboard of Edmeston**, as well as more than \$3,000 in donations from individuals, local businesses, and the **Community Foundation of Otsego County**.

This outpouring of support is a powerful reminder of what we can accomplish when our community comes together. Every donation - large or small - helps ensure that individuals and families in need have access to essential resources.

A huge thank you and my utmost appreciation to: **Jasmine Chianta, Community Advocate**, for spearheading the food drive and organizing our new pantry space; **Tom Reardon, Facilities Supervisor** and **Jason Pope, Maintenance Mechanic** for doing a lot of the heavy lifting and delivering food; **Jill Oliver, Human Resources Coordinator** for her enthusiasm and support of our new food pantry; and **Ally Porcak, Executive Assistant** for managing incoming donations and ensuring all in-kind contributions were properly recorded.

Teamwork makes the dream work—and this team truly delivered!

Submitted by **Megan Martin, Planning & Research Director**

