



Hartwick College Kappa Sigma Fraternity - Playground Beautification Project at Opportunity House emergency shelter funded by The City of Oneonta, Community Initiative Program

ANNUAL REPORT

2023/2024

Opportunities for Otsego

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

Letter From The CEO



Tanya Shalor

Chief Executive Officer

*It is with great humility and pride to
lead the OFO team in 2025. Together
with determination, we will impact the c*

2024 was quite a transitional year for Opportunities for Otsego. We were deeply saddened with the passing of our agency's former Executive Director and matriarch, Cheri Albrecht. Her legacy will live on within our walls and community. Dan Maskin, serving 20+ years at the helm of this agency, retired in July. His leadership and impact on our team and clients are hard shoes to fill. While at OFO for close to 15 years, it was in July that our dedicated Board of Directors gave me the opportunity to serve in the Chief Executive Officer role to continue our mission of being the leader in developing innovative solutions that promote healthy lives, thriving families, and caring communities.

I am thrilled to present our Annual Report and highlight a few of the many accomplishments over the past year. While we are happy to share OFO achieved another perfect independent audit, the real triumph is that we minimize our administrative costs and spend over 90% of all funding received directly on client services which is above the industry standard. That means for every \$1.00 spent, roughly \$0.90 goes to supporting the programs that truly impact the lives of those we serve.

In early fall 2024, Head Start released new performance standards for programs which now include a housing adjustment to determine eligibility. For Head Start applications, any portion over 30% of household income spent on housing costs can be excluded for income determination which has been a game changer for families to be eligible



*What I am fortunate to
her with compassion and
community we call home.*

for this early childhood education program. In addition, we now offer a Home-Based Head Start model for preschool age children, which is vital for participation in our rural communities where transportation is a barrier, and opened another Toddler classroom for kiddos due a high demand for this age group.

Homelessness in Otsego County continues to rise. Many groups and organizations have formed to try and move the needle in the right direction. OFO is in the forefront of those discussions along with our many partners to combat the issue. In 2023, the agency run 24 hour/7 day a week homeless shelter transitioned to a family only emergency shelter and made some major upgrades to the building erected in 2002. We continue to focus on and offer wrap-round services to our clients and rapid rehousing services to those that are temporarily housed in the County to obtain safe and affordable housing.

With the support of our Board of Directors, our hardworking and dedicated staff, funders and community partners, we can collectively share in these achievements that help our low-income families in Otsego County. The following report is filled with stories and statistical data of those served over the past year. We can't do what we do without you. We encourage you to visit our website for specific program information and follow our Facebook page for updates and agency information and happenings.

Janya Shalor

Making a Difference

Opportunity House

“Hudson”, “Sonya”, and their school-age child moved to the area to be closer to family. Hudson quickly found a job and the family a place to live. They were established in their new home for over a year when Hudson lost his job. With nowhere else to turn, the three-person family moved in with Sonya’s sister temporarily. After two weeks, the landlord insisted that Hudson, Sonya and their child leave. The young couple and their child were homeless and living in a tent for three months before seeking assistance from the Department of Social Services and entering Opportunities for Otsego’s family homeless shelter. While at Opportunity House, staff provided necessary resources so the young child could be successful in school; connected the family with Wheels to Work and CDO Workforce; and coordinated rental subsidies through available grant funds. Opportunities for Otsego’s Housing Coordinator continues to provide ongoing case management to assess the family’s needs, housing stability, and offer resources and support as needed.



“Our home visitor went the extra mile, did some research, and came back and discussed information with us. This made us really feel like she cared about our family and respected our culture.”

Building Healthy Families Participant

Energy Services

Opportunities for Otsego's Energy Services program needed to get creative to help an ailing, elderly couple whose home heating situation was inadequate and posed health and safety risks.

The couple built their home after retiring from the family farm. The homeowners used a wood stove for their main heat source and an oil-fired furnace as a backup for when the wood stove went out at night. The couple stated that they ran out of money while building the home, so insulation was not installed in the attic. The couple planned to insulate the attic when they built up a cash reserve, but that day never came.

Opportunities for Otsego home-energy audit found significant health and safety issues, which if not addressed, would defer the project. Our Energy Services program reached out to the state Weatherization Assistance Office and Empower Program to get approval to replace the wood stove with a new furnace; however, was denied as projects switching fuel sources are not permitted. Alternatively, approval was granted to replace the furnace, but the wood stove could not be addressed. Opportunities for Otsego was not satisfied with this solution, as health and safety issues would still exist, and the furnace heat would be insufficient to keep the elderly couple comfortable like the warmth of their wood stove.

Opportunities for Otsego reached out to Otsego Rural Housing Assistance (ORHA) for help. Despite the long wait list, ORHA rearranged their work schedule to replace the wood stove with a pellet stove. Energy Services staff then assisted the couple in applying for HEAP. The HEAP Clean-and-Tune contractor confirmed Opportunities for Otsego original audit findings and arranged to replace the furnace and oil tank. Energy Services was then able to finish the job with attic insulation and air sealing measures on the home.

When Opportunities for Otsego last visited this home, the owners were extremely grateful for all the work that was done and expressed how much more comfortable they were in their home.



3,026

individuals benefited from
agency programs



81%

of households lived below
the Federal Poverty Level



16%

of persons accessing supports
identify as BI-POC



44

homeless households secured
affordable, permanent housing



191

victims were protected from
interpersonal violence (IPV)



276

children were gifted a
warm winter coat



24

low-income households had
reduced home energy burden



486

caregivers exhibited improved
parent-child interactions



65

street homeless had their basic
needs met (food, water, blankets)

Head Start

Pregnancy to Preschool

Early Head Start supports families from pregnancy until a child’s third birthday through home-based programming and a toddler classroom in Oneonta. Head Start offers center-based programming for children ages 3–5 through eleven classrooms in seven communities throughout Otsego County.

Enrollment

Opportunities for Otsego supports 100 children through Early Head Start and 206 preschoolers through Head Start. During the 2023-2024 program year, 130 children and pregnant women from 106 families were served through Early Head Start and 148 children from 145 families were served through Head Start. During operational months, the average Early Head Start enrollment was 75% and the average Head Start enrollment was 56%. The percentage of eligible children served through Early Head Start was 90%, and 82% of Head Start children served were eligible.

Health & Development


To ensure children are healthy and ready to learn, Head Start conducts and coordinates access to health and developmental screenings and links enrolled children and prenatal mothers/people to medical, dental, and mental health services. Through the support of the program, 78% of Early Head Start and 77% of Head Start children received a medical exam during the program year; 41% of Early Head Start and 43% of Head Start children received a dental exam; and 100% of both Head Start and Early Head Start teachers received assistance from the Mental Health Coordinator through observation and consultation.

Monthly Program Enrollment		
Month	Early Head Start	Head Start
August	65% (65/100)	**
September	67% (67/100)	49% (101/206)
October	76% (76/100)	50% (104/206)
November	75% (75/100)	53% (109/206)
December	67% (67/100)	53% (109/206)
January	76% (76/100)	56% (115/206)
February	77% (77/100)	57% (117/206)
March	81% (81/100)	59% (121/206)
April	77% (77/100)	60% (124/206)
May	77% (77/100)	61% (125/206)
June	77% (77/100)	61% (125/206)
July	78% (78/100)	**
** Head Start is not operational during August and July **		

Parent Involvement

The Head Start program regularly promotes parent involvement through: monthly parent groups and activity-based socializations; volunteer opportunities in the classroom, on field trips, and during special program events; parent-teacher conferences; and participation on Policy Council, the governing body of the Head Start program. Additionally, surveys are distributed annually to all enrolled families to gauge satisfaction with the program and gather parent feedback. Our program also offers a parenting curriculum, Devereux’s *Your Journey Together*, to help support parents in their role by building on knowledge and skills to support both parent and child resiliency to promote positive family outcomes.

Two Federal Reviews were conducted by the Office of Head Start during the 2023-2024 program year: The Focus Area 2 Review was conducted on-site, in-person in 10/2023 to address findings; The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Review was conducted remotely 11/2023-01/2024. Our program scored above the minimum threshold for both reviews. Opportunities for Otsego’s Head Start/Early Head Start 5 year grant period (04/01/2020-03/31/2025).



“My child loves the teachers and his classmates. He has learned so much and his social skills are fantastic. Head Start has helped him more than I could have alone at home.”

Kindergarten Preparation

Opportunities for Otsego’s school-readiness goals align with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, New York State Standards for the Pre-Kindergarten Common Core, and New York State Early Learning Guidelines. Activities help prepare children from birth to age five for Kindergarten by teaching foundational skills and encourage parents to be an active participant in their child’s education. Curriculum and assessment tools utilized by these programs (Partners for a Healthy Baby, The Creative Curriculum series, and Teaching Strategies GOLD online assessment) further align with New York State and national standards to promote growth over a continuum of learning that spans birth through second grade.



63

children developmentally ready for Kindergarten



236

children up-to-date on immunizations & medical visits



963

children exhibit positive growth through access to healthy food

Financial Report

Opportunities for Otsego received an unqualified opinion from independent auditors from EFPR Group on its financial statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024. This review marked the twentieth consecutive year in which external auditors found no audit findings regarding the prior year financial statements.

Statement of Activities: FY2024

Revenue

Contracts and Grants	7,358,666
WIC Food Instruments	532,656
Program Service Fees	609,295
Program Revenue	214,830
Contributions	43,176
In-Kind Contributions	293,396
Other Revenue	716
Interest Income	10,257
Net Appreciation	44,904
Loss on Disposal of Fixed Assets	(1,991)
Total Revenue	9,105,905

Expenses

Child & Family Services	5,711,740
Crisis Intervention Services	1,475,165
Energy Services	770,698
Other Human Services	365,068
Management & General	965,467
Fundraising	2,963
Total Expenses	9,291,101

Net Change in Assets	(185,196)
Net Assets: Beginning of Year	1,609,700
Net Assets: End of Year	1,424,504

The federal Head Start Act requires local programs to provide an annual report to the public, including a proposed budget for the fiscal year. Opportunities for Otsego's Head Start program anticipates an operating budget of \$4,800,800 for FY2025, of which 77% has been allocated for personnel and 23% for other operating expenses. In addition, Head Start must procure \$1,200,200 in In-Kind donations to satisfy federal matching fund requirements.

Economic Impact

During Fiscal Year 2024, Opportunities for Otsego invested \$5,965,765 back into the local community:

- \$4,949,280 in employee wages
- \$532,656 in WIC food benefits redeemed at local grocery stores and Farmers Markets
- \$252,813 in home energy conservation measures and health and safety improvements completed on private homes and multi-unit housing complexes
- \$121,003 in rental subsidies and security deposits paid to local landlords
- \$110,013 paid to local vendors to assist low-income households in obtaining food, transportation, and other basic needs

To view our complete financial report visit ofoinc.org/about-otsego

“I was alone battling the long term effects of abuse for too long before I knew that VIP even existed. Once I did, my experience completely changed. My advocate guided me through the worst nightmare with the utmost professionalism... [making me] feel protected...I learned of so many support outlets that I didn’t know existed, and I gained deep strengths...I cannot say enough about this incredible team and organization, and all that they do...to support victims of abuse and trauma.”



Board of Directors

Officers: Lisa Samols (President); Fanny Clements (Vice-president); Dr. Benjamin Friedell (Secretary); David Merzig (Treasurer). Members At Large: Elizabeth Blasco; Douglas Brenner; Daniel Buttermann; Dr. Alan Donovan; Marguerite Dykes; Amanda Mathewson; Tim Parsons; Susan Szczepanski

Per federal statute, Opportunities for Otsego Board of Directors is composed of one-third representatives of the low-income community; one-third from the private sector; and one-third elected public officials or designee.

Support Our Mission

With sincere appreciation, we acknowledge the volunteers, donors, funders, and community partners who support Opportunities for Otsego. Donations - large and small - are an investment in our community, providing hope and opportunity to our friends and neighbors in need.

Donate

Through our secure online platform, Opportunities for Otsego can accept:

- One-time and reoccurring donations. Donations may be directed to a particular cause or you may choose to donate to our general fund, which allows us to put funds where it is needed most.
- Memorial and honorarium gifts. As requested, we can send condolences or wishes on your behalf.

You may also provide direct support or celebrate a special event by coordinating an online fundraiser.

Credit Card, Debit Card, PayPal, Google Pay, and Venmo accepted



Gifts In-Kind

Opportunities for Otsego relies on the help of the community to meet annual budget-matching requirements. Through non-cash donations you are helping us achieve our mission. Visit ofoinc.org/lend-hand to view our program Wish Lists.

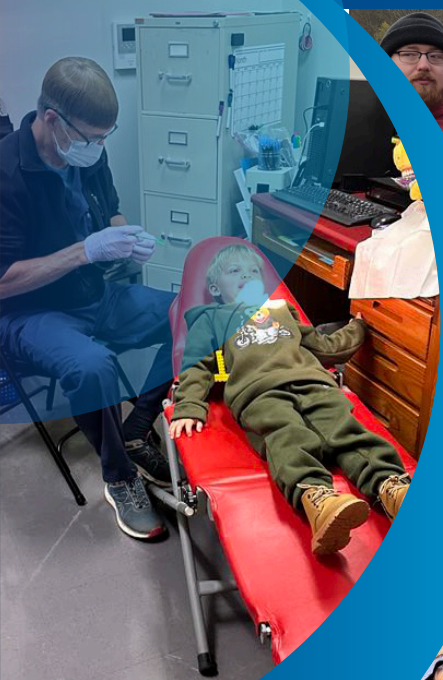
Volunteer

Opportunities for Otsego recognizes the vast knowledge and talents of the community and offers volunteer opportunities through many programs. We encourage individuals, businesses, community groups, school clubs, and youth organizations to assist with:

- Program operations
- Awareness campaigns
- Fundraising
- Supply drives

Community members are invited to contribute to our mission through membership on the Building Healthy Families Program Advisory Board, Head Start Policy Council, or our Board of Directors.

Monetary gifts to Opportunities for Otsego may be tax-deductible. Opportunities for Otsego, Inc. (OFO) is a 501c3 not-for-profit organization registered with the New York State Attorney General's Charities Bureau pursuant to both Article 8 of the Estates, Powers and Trusts Law and Article 7-A of the Executive Law. OFO's Charities Registration Annual Report can be obtained from the State of New York Office of the Attorney General Charities Bureau 120 Broadway, New York, New York 10271.





Violence Intervention Program "Don't Fear Your Provider" Campaign

Opportunities for Otsego

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