



## McGrath's legacy of giving McGrath's legacy of giving

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"We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give."

— Sir Winston Churchill

Brendan McGrath was deeply committed to giving back to his community. This is clearly evidenced by his 21 years as a volunteer board member for the Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency, 19 of which he served as the board chairperson. Under Brendan's leadership, the agency experienced the expansion of numerous programs and services, including Head Start, Early Head Start, Essentials for Employment, Green Jobs Training Program Transitional House, Homeless Assistance, Weatherization and the expansion of programs in Seneca County.

Nelsa Selover, board secretary, said, "Brendan lived his life by example; he did it modestly and without recognition and fanfare. He was blessed and he paid it forward for people less fortunate through this agency; it is what this agency is all about. He was rare."

At the time of his accidental death in March of 2010, Brendan's family requested that donations be made to the agency in his memory. The agency utilized the memorial donations to address key needs faced by the agency and our customers. In spring of 2011, his wife, Mary, told the agency that she and her children would like to establish a formal mechanism for keeping Brendan's work alive at the agency. The Brendan McGrath Memorial Fund continues the work that began in 2010, making a difference in the lives of struggling families in Cayuga County.

One of the projects the funding has supported consisted of improving the three apartments at the agency's Transitional House in Auburn to create a welcoming and safe environment for homeless families. More than just shelter, the Transitional House provides a unique service to homeless families in Cayuga County; it offers fully furnished apartments and supportive case management to homeless families who face multiple barriers to obtaining permanent housing. While living in safe, stable housing, families benefit from intensive long-term case management through which they identify and work toward goals, learn new life skills and prepare for long-term permanent housing. After years of use with limited funding for repairs, the furniture and walls of all three apartments were in bad shape, creating a negative environment for families. The Brendan McGrath Memorial Fund afforded the agency the opportunity to repair and replace furniture, to repair and paint walls, and to make many other repairs in the apartments when they were unoccupied between families. The fund helped to not only make the apartments livable, but also to create a comfortable, trusting environment where each family can relax and focus on partnering with staff to take their next steps toward self-sufficiency.

A second exciting use of the fund consisted of making the homes of children who participate in the Head Start program safer. Head Start is a federally funded, comprehensive child development program for income-eligible children ages 3 to 5 and their families. Parent

involvement is the foundation of the program that provides health, nutrition, education, disability and family services.

This year, the Brendan McGrath Memorial Fund helped provide items to improve the health and safety of the homes of families participating in Head Start. Items included cabinet locks, outlet covers, refrigerator latches, non-slip bath mats, doorknob childproofing, first aid kit items, and smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. This was a simple step to prevent significant health issues that would not have been possible without the fund.

We are grateful that Brendan's legacy continues in the agency's work. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to the Brendan McGrath Memorial Fund, you may mail your checks to Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency, 65 State St., Auburn, N.Y. 13021.

Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency is a not-for-profit corporation whose mission is to assist people to achieve and sustain self-sufficiency and self-dignity. The agency was incorporated in 1965 through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to fight the war against poverty locally.

The agency has gained a positive reputation throughout the community for implementing innovative programs to meet community needs and for changing society's stereotypes regarding poverty.

The agency currently administers more than 15 programs in Cayuga and Seneca counties, including Emergency Services, Healthy Families, Homeless Prevention and Intervention, Head Start, Supportive Services, TASA, Domestic Violence Intervention Program and Weatherization.

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