



CAYUGA/SENECA COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY YEAR IN REVIEW

Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency: A year in review



DECEMBER 15, 2014 6:30 AM • [LAURIE A. PICCOLO](#) | [SPECIAL TO THE CITIZEN](#)

As we usher in the new year with the promise of a brighter future for our customers, I would like to thank the countless partners and supporters who make Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency's work possible each and every day. Local business owners, health and human service providers, school district personnel, civic organizations, foundations, government leaders and individuals together create a network of support

for our community's low-income residents.

Poverty is a complex problem requiring sophisticated solutions. Individual accountability and personal responsibility are only part of the equation. We must continue to work collaboratively to effect system change that supports economic security for all. We must create a community that offers living wage jobs, affordable, accessible child care, safe, affordable housing, early childhood education, job training and adult education. However, even if all of these pieces are in place, we must recognize that many individuals who are grappling with physical, mental and/or developmental disabilities will still face significant barriers to self-sufficiency.

This past year, the agency took a lead role in educating the public, our partners and ourselves about poverty issues. We were at the forefront of discussion about the War on Poverty's 50-year record of failure and success. We organized Bridges out of Poverty training for over 200 professionals, hosted an open house and poverty speak-out at our new location at 89 York St., partnered with multiple agencies to organize a poverty simulation at West Middle School, and worked in partnership with The Citizen to support its multimedia series "Wealth of Hardship: Cayuga County's Growing Poverty Problem."

In addition to these awareness activities, 2014 was a hallmark year for program expansion at the agency. In collaboration with multiple partners, we now offer employment support for disabled individuals, expanded advocacy and transitional housing opportunities for victims of domestic violence, emergency housing repairs for senior citizens, full-day Universal Prekindergarten education for children attending Head Start within the Auburn and Jordan-Elbridge school districts, financial literacy training for Head Start parents, and enrollment services to connect people in poverty to mainstream supports, including food stamps, Medicaid and Child Health Plus.

The agency continued its partnership with The Citizen and Rotary Clubs of Cayuga County to administer Warm the Children; however, through program restructuring, we more than doubled the number of children provided with warm winter coats — over 600 and counting! We also partnered with the McGrath family to establish a new scholarship program honoring the legacy of former board chair Brendan McGrath to provide financial assistance to income-eligible individuals seeking to advance their education through pursuit of a college degree or technical certification.

Next year marks the 50th anniversary of Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency, established in 1965 through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to fight the war against poverty locally. To commemorate our milestone anniversary, we will host an exhibition in partnership with the Cayuga Museum during the months of April and May titled "Changing People's Lives: Celebrating 50 Years of Community Action." Save the date for the opening reception on First Friday, April 3!

As the demographics and economics of our community change over time, so do the needs of our low-income population. Historically, Community Action has been a leader in addressing those needs, serving as an incubator for new programs and services, many of which have since developed a life of their own. Family Planning (now at East Hill Medical), Cayuga County Homsite Development Corp., the Auburn Farmers Market, Sexual Assault Victims Advocate Resource and Big Brothers Big Sisters (now Y-Pals) all originated under Community Action's umbrella. We look forward to sharing our story with you, which continues to be written as our community evolves, and is the story of helping people to help themselves achieve economic security and self-sufficiency.