



'PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE' EXHIBIT

## Agents of action: New Cayuga Museum exhibit 'People Helping People' celebrates 50 years of the Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency



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AUBURN | A lot can happen in 50 years. Just ask the Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency.

This year marks the 50th birthday of the Auburn-based nonprofit, which was officially incorporated in August 1965. To celebrate, the agency has paired up with the Cayuga Museum of History & Art to tell the story of the agency's past and present.

On Friday, the exhibit, "People Helping People: Celebrating 50 Years of Community Action," will debut at the Auburn museum.

Trish Ottley, the agency's marketing and development director, said it settled on creating an exhibit as a way to describe how community action agencies sprung from the War on Poverty. Agency leaders also wanted to give an overview of the local issues it tackles.

"We really wanted to look at not only programs, but **symptoms and causes of poverty**," Ottley said. "We are exploring issues like hunger and housing, early childhood development, health-related issues and the impact poverty can have on those areas."

To give exhibit viewers an idea of what the cultural climate was like when the War on Poverty commenced, Ottley said the agency used archived political cartoons, newspaper clippings and local photographs that date back to the agency's birth.

Finding the right objects to display, however, wasn't easy.

"It's been really interesting," Ottley said. "One of the biggest challenges was trying to figure out what objects we could include in the project to tell the story."

Along with using facts and photos detailing the agency's past, Ottley said it decided to include items used in the present.

In one of the Cayuga Museum's rooms, the agency's Domestic Violence Intervention Program displays T-shirts created by survivors of domestic violence. The shirts contain empowering messages, including "nobody deserves abuse."

Other items — ranging from practical to creative — are also included in the exhibit.

Beaded necklaces and glittery shirts made in the agency's Head Start program sit perched colorfully on a table. A bright red door cover used by the Energy Services crew to measure energy loss in clients' homes stands tall in another room, ready for viewing.

Ottley said one of the most unique parts of "People Helping People" is the part that will hopefully be created by attendees.

Food pantry shelving has been set up in the Genesee Street museum. Ottley said attendees are encouraged to bring nonperishable items to leave on the currently empty shelves during the nearly two months the Cayuga Museum will have the agency's exhibit on display.

Helping others, after all, is the force that continues to fuel the Cayuga/Seneca Community Agency. And that's what Ottley said the agency hopes attendees see when they peruse the exhibit.

"At the end of the day, community action is just about helping your neighbor," she said. "It's the common thread of humanity that connects us."

### **If you go**

**WHAT:** "People Helping People: Celebrating 50 Years of Community Action"

**WHEN:** Opening reception 5 to 8 p.m. Friday, April 3; exhibit open noon to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays through May 23

**WHERE:** Cayuga Museum of History & Art, 203 Genesee St., Auburn

**COST:** Opening reception free; admission afterward costs \$5 for adults and free for children and members

**INFO:** Visit [cayugamuseum.org](http://cayugamuseum.org) or [cscaa.com](http://cscaa.com)