



# ANNUAL REPORT

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

[WWW.OFOINC.ORG](http://WWW.OFOINC.ORG)

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## MESSAGE FROM CEO

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As we reflect on 2025, I am filled with deep gratitude and pride for the resilience, compassion, and unwavering commitment that define Opportunities for Otsego. This past year reaffirmed the strength of our mission - to be the leader in developing innovative solutions that promote healthy lives, thriving families, and caring communities - and the extraordinary power of people coming together in service of one another. Across every program and service area, our team showed up each day with creativity, empathy, and determination, meeting complex challenges with open hearts and an unrelenting focus on the individuals and families who place their trust in us.

2025 was a year shaped by both growing need and meaningful progress. Families across Otsego County continued to face housing instability, food insecurity, rising energy costs, and barriers to health, safety, and

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*Meaningful change begins by meeting people where they are and listening closely to what they need.*

opportunity. These challenges are not abstract - they are lived realities for our neighbors, friends, and families. In response, Opportunities for Otsego delivered integrated, person-centered solutions that addressed immediate crises while also creating pathways toward long-term stability. We remained committed to seeing the whole person, understanding each family's unique circumstances, and walking alongside them as partners in their journey forward.

Over the past year, we also advanced several new initiatives designed to respond to emerging community needs and strengthen our network of support across the county. These efforts reflect our belief that meaningful change begins by meeting people where they are and listening closely to what they need. By adapting our programs, strengthening collaborations, and embracing innovation, we continue working toward a future in which every individual and family has access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.

As a Community Action Agency, Opportunities for Otsego is rooted in community voice and collective problem-solving. In the spring of 2025, more than 100 community partners, service providers, advocates, and residents gathered for the Opportunities for Otsego Community Needs Forum. Together, we engaged in thoughtful dialogue to identify the most pressing needs facing Otsego County and to generate ideas and solutions that help families not just survive but get ahead. The insights shared during this forum played a critical role in shaping our 2025 Community Needs Assessment and informing future planning under our Results-Oriented Management and Accountability framework. This process ensures that our work remains responsive, data-driven, and grounded in the lived experiences of our community.

The true measure of our work lives within the stories woven throughout this report - stories of perseverance in the face of hardship, of hope restored during moments of crisis, and of lives strengthened through support, partnership, and opportunity. Behind every story is a dedicated team of staff who bring skill, compassion, and integrity to their work, and who are deeply committed to responsible stewardship of the resources entrusted to us. In 2025, Opportunities for Otsego continued its strong fiscal management, directing the vast majority of funding straight into client services. This commitment allows us to maximize impact, remain accountable to our community, and respond thoughtfully to evolving needs.

As we look ahead, we do so with humility, determination, and optimism. The challenges facing our neighbors are complex and ever-changing, but so is our resolve to stand with them. On behalf of our staff and Board of Directors, thank you to our funders, partners, volunteers, and supporters for believing in this mission and walking alongside us. Together, we will continue building healthier lives, stronger families, and more caring communities - today and for generations to come.



Tanya Shalor  
Chief Executive Officer

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# COMMUNITY IMPACT

From October 2024 through September 2025, Opportunities for Otsego supported 2,441 individuals from 1,138 households across rural Otsego County. Of these households, 81% live below the Federal Poverty Level, and 94% fall below the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) threshold, indicating ongoing challenges in affording basic needs.

Among those benefitting from agency supports: 51% are school age or younger; 5% are seniors; 35% have post-secondary education/college degrees; 5% report a disability; 80% are caregivers; 30% are homeowners; and 50% are renters.

76

## SAFE SHELTER

Thirty-four adults and forty-two children received temporary, safe housing through OFO's family homeless and domestic violence shelters.

802

## FOOD SECURITY

Through access to nutrition resources via WIC and our new stop-gap food pantry, 802 individuals experienced reduced food insecurity, improved health, and greater disposable income.

921

## VICTIM SUPPORT

The Violence Intervention Program responded to 921 unique callers through its 24-hour crisis hotline - providing immediate support, safety planning, and connections to vital resources for individuals in crisis.

30

## TRANSPORTATION

Thirty low-income adults were able to maintain employment and gain access to food resources, laundromats, and other basic needs through vehicle repair assistance and resources offered by Wheels to Work and our Community Advocate.

45

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Forty-five low-income households in Otsego and Chenango Counties received a home energy audit to identify efficiency and safety needs, with subsequent weatherization measures to reduce energy costs and improve health and safety.

457

## FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

Through home visiting and center-based services provided by Building Healthy Families and Head Start, 457 families were provided parenting support to strengthening caregiving skills and enhancing overall family well-being.

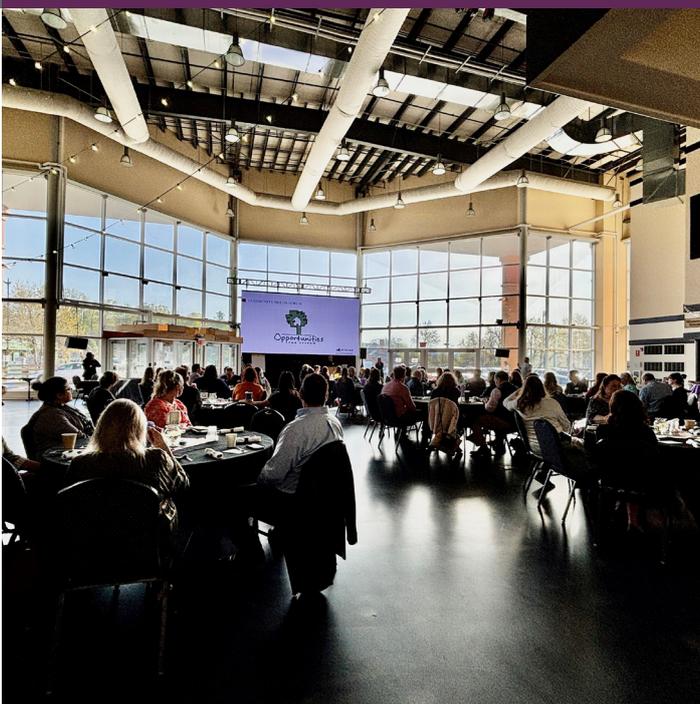
A mother of three was overwhelmed, facing imminent homelessness after weeks of couch surfing with her children. With nowhere else to go and only days before she would be asked to leave, she struggled to complete a lengthy Department of Social Services application and reached out to Head Start center staff for help. As we worked through the paperwork together, it became evident that domestic violence had triggered the loss of her housing, income, vehicle and overall stability - setting off a chain of events that left her family without a safe place to call home.

Together, we shifted focus and connected her with the Violence Intervention Program. That same evening, she and her children were approved for safe shelter and supportive services, including advocacy and assistance toward permanent housing. Through tears, she shared her relief knowing her "babies" would no longer have to wonder where they would sleep each night.



## WINTER COATS

Through the support of the Community Foundation of Otsego County, 185 winter coats were distributed to young children enrolled in agency programs and staying in OFO shelters.



Community Action Agencies across the nation respond to local needs by delivering services and programs that empower individuals, strengthen families, and build resilient communities. In spring 2025, more than 100 community partners convened for Opportunities for Otsego Community Needs Forum to identify needs within Otsego County and generate solutions to help families get ahead. Insights from the forum helped shape OFO's 2025 Community Needs Assessment and informed agency strategic planning under our Results-Oriented Management and Accountability framework.

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## IN THEIR WORDS

A mom came to WIC struggling to breastfeed due to her baby's lip and tongue ties but was determined to make it work. With the support of our Breastfeeding Peer Counselor and the rest of the WIC Team, mom was provided guidance, encouragement, and strategies to help her maintain her milk supply and improve latch while the ties were treated and healed. Thanks to her dedication and continued support, she is now successfully breastfeeding her little guy - and has been for over a year. WIC continues to support her as he grows, and her journey is a true example of perseverance and success in breastfeeding.

"The program has been a huge support for me from the very first day....My advocate is one of the most trusted individuals I have for support with all that has happened to me."

A homeowner reached out to our Weatherization Program after her oil tank was red-tagged, stopping fuel deliveries and forcing reliance on space heaters. Six upstairs windows were also failing. Using Weatherization Repair Fund, OFO addressed the immediate need of replacing the oil tank, and with base Weatherization funds we replaced the windows, improved the furnace distribution system, and air sealed the home. Following the improvements, the homeowner got rid of the space heaters and now heats her home safely and efficiently.

After being released from jail in March, "Abe" experienced homelessness and was housed through the Department of Social Services at Phoenix Orchard before entering OFO's Rapid Rehousing program. With OFO's support, Abe secured permanent, affordable housing, maintained his sobriety, picked up side work while awaiting his SSI determination, and independently paid his December rent. Abe continues working with OFO and is making steady progress toward long-term stability.



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# NEW INITIATIVES

Over the past year, Opportunities for Otsego advanced several new initiatives to address emerging community needs and strengthen support for families across Otsego County. These efforts reflect our commitment to meeting families where they are and ensuring that every member of our community has the resources and opportunities needed to thrive.



**SOCIAL CARE NETWORK**

In partnership with Care Compass Collaborative, OFO is helping to identify and connect local Medicaid Members with health-related social services, including housing, food, and transportation, to enhance and support their overall well-being.



**FOOD PANTRY**

OFO expanded its stop-gap food pantry to meet the growing need of individuals and families engaged in agency services. This pantry helps alleviate transportation barriers and limitations in accessing other community pantries and meal programs.



**CREEKSIDE INDUSTRIES**

Monthly, OFO hosts Creekside Industries of ARC Otsego for their low-cost diaper sale, helping families with young children stretch their household budgets so they may meet other essential needs such as food, housing, and transportation costs.



**BALANCE OF STATE C.O.C.**

To better serve Otsego County residents, OFO transitioned to the New York State Balance of State Continuum of Care, which offers a broader network of resources and an integrated approach to secure stable, safe, and affordable housing for those in need.

# HEAD START

## PUBLIC REPORT

**Pregnancy to Preschool** • Early Head Start supports families from pregnancy until a child’s third birthday through home-based programming and two toddler classrooms in Oneonta. Head Start Preschool offers home-based and center-based programming for children ages 3–5. Center-based programming is offered through nine classrooms in six communities throughout Otsego County.



**Parent Involvement** • Opportunities for Otsego’s 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; 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 knowledge and skills to support both parent and child resiliency to promote positive family outcomes.

**Enrollment** • Opportunities for Otsego’s Head Start program supports 90 children and prenatal individuals through Early Head Start and 139 children through Head Start Preschool. During the 2024-2025 program year, 127 children and prenatal individuals from 99 families were served through Early Head Start and 155 children from 140 families were served through Head Start Preschool. During operational months, the average Early Head Start enrollment was 93% and the average Head Start Preschool enrollment was 92%. The percentage of eligible children served through Early Head Start was 90%, and 85% of Head Start Preschool children served were eligible.

MONTHLY ENROLLMENT		
Month	Early Head Start	Head Start
August 2024	78% (78/100)	*
September 2024	87% (78/90)	78% (109/139)
October 2024	84% (76/90)	78% (109/139)
November 2024	93% (84/90)	80% (111/139)
December 2024	92% (83/90)	88% (123/139)
January 2025	93% (84/90)	95% (132/139)
February 2025	97% (87/90)	98% (136/139)
March 2025	98% (88/90)	99% (137/139)
April 2025	100% (90/90)	100% (139/139)
May 2025	100% (90/90)	100% (139/139)
June 2025	99% (89/90)	99% (138/139)
July 2025	99% (89/90)	*

\*Head Start Preschool is not operational during August and July\*

The program reduced enrollment in September 2024, so the “possible” enrollment number for August 2024 was higher



“I enjoy how much Head Start does for the kids. Services like teeth brushing, healthy meals, providing a safe place to learn with other kids, teaching letters, numbers, classroom rules, and safety procedures make sure all of a child’s important needs are being met.”

**Kindergarten Preparation** • Opportunities for Otsego’s Head Start program formulated school-readiness goals that 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 encouraging 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.



### MEDICAL

65% of Early Head Start and 58% of Head Start Preschool children received a medical exam during the program year



### DENTAL

68% of Early Head Start and 67% of Head Start Preschool children completed a professional dental exam



### MENTAL HEALTH

91% of Early Head Start and 80% of Head Start Preschool teachers received assistance from the Mental Health Coordinator through observation & consultation

**Health and 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 individuals to medical, dental, and mental health services. Outcomes achieved through the support of the program are noted above.



**Program Monitoring** • 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. This review resulted in three areas on non-compliance (an area in which a program is out of compliance with Federal requirements) and one area of deficiency (a systemic or substantial material failure of a program in an area of performance, systemic or material failure of the governing body to fully exercise its legal and fiduciary responsibilities, or an unresolved area of non-compliance). Areas of non-compliance included: implementing a research-based coaching strategy for staff; establishing a Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee; and correct storage of children’s toothbrushes after daily use. The identified deficiency was regarding children receiving an initial oral health exam within 90 days of starting in the program. This area of performance is something the program has continued to struggle with due to the lack of pediatric dental providers in our rural region and providers that accept Medicaid (which most of OFO’s Head Start families participate in). The program has corrected the areas of non-compliance and continues to take measures to address the deficiency through training, policy updates, seeking new collaborations in the community, and creating new internal procedures; The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) review was conducted remotely 11/2023 – 01/2024. Our program scored above the minimum thresholds in all three CLASS domains (emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support).

Opportunities for Otsego’s new Head Start 5-year grant period runs from April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2030. Over the course of this new grant period, our program is due to receive a Focus Area 1, Focus Area 2, and CLASS review.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

Over the past year, Opportunities for Otsego invested \$6,127,031 into the local economy while delivering life-changing services, proving that when we invest in people, the returns are limitless.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

## \$6,127,031

- \$5,135,077 in employee wages
- \$508,253 in WIC food benefits redeemed at local grocery stores and Farmers Markets
- \$218,340 in rental subsidies and security deposits paid to local landlords
- \$69,822 in home energy conservation measures and health and safety improvements completed on private homes and housing complexes
- \$195,539 paid to local vendors to assist low-income households to address food insecurity, transportation barriers, and acquire other basic needs

## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

For the twenty-first consecutive year, Opportunities for Otsego received an unqualified audit opinion from independent auditors at EFPR Group for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2025. This consistent record of clean audits reflects Opportunities for Otsego unwavering commitment to financial integrity, strong internal controls, and responsible stewardship of the resources entrusted to us by our funders, donors, and community.

REVENUE	EXPENSES																																								
\$9,779,433	\$9,648,673																																								
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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 FY2026, of which 77% has been allocated for personnel and 23% for other operating expenses. In addition, Head Start must procure \$1,200,200 in local donations to satisfy federal matching fund requirements.

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# SUPPORT OUR MISSION

With sincere appreciation, we acknowledge the volunteers, donors, funders, and community partners who support Opportunities for Otsego. Every donation - large or small - is an investment in our community, bringing hope and opportunity to our friends and neighbors striving to get ahead. Visit us online to support our mission and see how your generosity can make a real difference.



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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Officers** • Lisa Samols (President); Fanny Clements (Vice-president); Dr. Benjamin Friedell (Secretary); David Merzig (Treasurer)

**Members At Large** • Dr. Elizabeth Blasco; Douglas Brenner; Daniel Butterman; Dr. Alan Donovan; Marguerite Dykes; Amanda Mathewson; Tim Parsons; Susan Szczepanski

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### DONATE

Donors may make one-time or recurring cash gifts online and direct their support to a specific program or our general fund, allowing resources to be applied where they are needed most. Upon request, we send condolence or well-wishes for memorial and honorarium gifts. Supporters can also engage others by coordinating a fundraiser or crowdsourcing through our online platform. *Credit Card, Debit Card, PayPal, Google Pay, and Venmo accepted*



### GIFTS IN-KIND

Opportunities for Otsego relies on strong community support to meet annual budget-matching requirements. In-kind contributions - such as food drives and other non-cash donations - play a vital role in helping us fulfill our mission. Visit [ofoinc.org/lend-hand](http://ofoinc.org/lend-hand) to view our program Wish Lists.



### VOLUNTEER

Opportunities for Otsego values the skills and talents of our community and offers volunteer opportunities across many programs. Individuals, businesses, community groups, school clubs, and youth organizations can support program operations, awareness campaigns, fundraising efforts, and supply drives.



### SCAN TO GIVE

Through our secure online platform, you may make one-time and reoccurring donations. Donations may be directed to a particular cause or our general fund, which allows us to put funds where they are needed most.



# 2025

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## CONTACT US



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