

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

September 2024

Vol 2

Ribbon Cutting at Redmill Property

By Danelle Nolan

The Red Mill Apartments in New Berlin cut the ribbon on its new apartment complex that has 18 units for low income families in Chenango County.

The \$5.2 million project received state funding to address the county's housing crisis. Town of New Berlin Supervisor Wendy Rifanburg said the apartments were given renovations after being run down for decades.

"I have been called as a board member to look at them and they were not maintained and kept," Rifanburg said. "Now there's going to be a maintenance on grounds to help anybody that needs help with fixing anything, and it's just going to be fantastic."

This project was led by Greater Opportunities for Broome and Chenango Inc. as an effort to get the grants to the area. Greater Opportunities CEO Mark Silvanic said the apartments aim to revitalize housing in the community.

"Being that it's in our county, we thought it was a good idea to start here," Silvanic said. "These grants are very, very infrequently going to rural communities, so New Berlin being a rural community is a perfect place for it."



Welcome Back

By Mark Silvanic

I am thrilled to welcome many of you back from your well-deserved summer break. As the CEO of Greater Opportunities, I always look forward to the start of the new school year, when our agency returns to full size and our Head Start staff join us again. You are an essential part of our mission to provide high-quality early childhood education and family support services to our community! For those yearlong staff, I thank you for continuing to work to make your community a better place. Each of you in your own way, in your own program, help to make our agency one of the premier non-profits in the area. Greater Ops has the reputation of being a place that our community can count on. From homelessness to home ownership, from a newborn baby in our Early HeadStart program, to class valedictorian in their high school, we've helped folks buy their first homes and fix their old ones. You do GREAT Work! A goal of mine this year is to be more visible in program meetings, and at centers and housing sites. As our agency has grown, it has made those moments more difficult. I want to see things with my own eyes, hear from staff directly on both the successes and challenges that we face in our programs. I am a firm believer in listening to the "boots on the ground" reports that come out of your own mouths. I try to take this information into each decision I make. An example of this is the addition of an extra day in personal time for our 10-month staff. We have struggled with making sure that we have coverage. Increase use of sick time, and an increase in "no-pay" requests have created a difficulty in staff coverage. Instead of just cracking down and getting stricter on "no pay" requests (which we are doing) we also looked at what might be causing this and decided to add an additional day to make it easier for school staff to plan those life events that come up for us all. We did this based off of your discussions in your own program meetings. Understanding things from both the employee's perspective as well as from the employers, can be difficult for both sides. It is my belief as someone who has walked on both sides of these issues, that the best solutions take into account both perspectives. As I begin my 15th year here at Greater Opportunities, I can't believe the growth and changes that have taken place. This agency has become a large agency. There was a day when I knew most staff by name. This is not the case anymore. For those new staff who have not met me, please stop by my office if you're at our main buildings and say hello. I enjoy meeting and talking to all of our team. I will make sure that I take the opportunity to do the same, when I'm at your center/site! We have some exciting projects lined up for the 2024-25 year that you can read about in this issue. In Chenango County, we are working on a housing project in New Berlin that will create 30 affordable units for low-income families. This project is funded by the New York State Homes and Community Renewal and will feature energy-efficient design and green space. In Binghamton, we are launching a new Munsell Street project that will create 40 apartments for seniors and veterans. This project is a collaboration with the Broome County Office for Aging and the Southern Tier Veterans Support Group. We have a multitude of trainings for our HeadStart parents, that will help to pass on life skills and create healthier environments for the children whom we are tasked with educating. These projects are examples of the good work we do to make our community a better place. We are not only providing housing, education, home repairs, etc, but also empowering people to achieve their goals and dreams. I am proud of our staff and the impact we have. I hope that you are too!, Thank you for your dedication and commitment to our agency and our clients. I look forward to seeing you soon and working with you in the coming year!

Farm to Table- Early Head Start Style

By Karen Randall



The Chenango Early Head Start Family Center is the first of seven sites to participate in a fun filled collaboration with The Rural Health Network of South Central New York and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County. Imagine the sight of 16 taste-testing toddlers, who are brimming with excitement to sample the kale salad. At the same time, the parents and caregivers are in the training room, just down the hall, learning new cooking skills, learning how to use the contents of their Community Supported Agriculture Boxes (CSA boxes), and sharing recipe ideas amongst themselves. This is Head Start magic happening before our eyes! From farm to the dinner table, this program is helping families connect to their local food sources where they can obtain locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs, and by providing opportunities for hands-on gardening experiences and nutrition and agricultural education. Throughout the summer our Early Head Start families enrolled in the center based classrooms will access CSA boxes on a monthly basis filled with seasonal ingredients at no cost through a Farm to Early Care and Education grant.

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Safe Digging-Home Projects

By Brett Dean

It's a good idea to call about ANY type of outdoor digging project. Some examples include:

- Landscaping
- Digging holes for fence posts or a mailbox
- Anchoring supports for decks and swings sets
- Planting trees
- Removing tree roots
- Driving landscaping stakes into the ground
- Installing a retainer wall

Contacting UDig NY is the first step in your safe digging project.

• Whether you are planting a tree, installing a fence, building a deck, etc., no project that involves digging is too small.

• Digging without knowing the approximate location of underground utility lines within your work area could result in injury, repair costs, fines, and inconvenient outages for your community.

Step 1: Click or call before you dig

- Submit a location request with UDig NY online or by phone at 811. It is free and easy.
- You will receive a Location Request number and a list of member utility companies that will be notified of your planned digging project.
- UDig NY member utility companies do not locate and mark private facilities on your property.

Step 2: Wait & Locate

- New York State law requires all member utility companies to respond to your Location Request within two (2) business days (not including the day of submission), or before the date/time of your intended work start.

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New Construction Projects are Underway

By Kelly Robertson

Exciting news is brewing in Binghamton as the Greater Opportunities City of Binghamton Munsell Street Project gets underway. Led by Greater Opportunities for Broome and Chenango, Inc., this initiative is set to introduce much-needed affordable housing to the area.

Here's what's happening:

- Location: The project is centered around 29-31 and 32-34 Munsell Street, where two new six-unit buildings will be erected.
- Who Benefits: These buildings will offer safe and affordable housing primarily for individuals aged 62 and older, including those with documented disabilities, as well as low-income individuals and families.

Let's dive into the specifics:

29-31 Munsell Street: This 4,800 sq. ft. building will host six one-bedroom units. Three of these units are specially designated for seniors and those with disabilities, while the other three are for low-income individuals and families. Handicap-accessible features will be available on the first floor.

32-34 Munsell Street: Spanning 6,000 sq. ft., this building will feature six two-bedroom units. Similarly, half of these units will cater to seniors and those with disabilities, while the other half will serve low-income residents. Handicap-accessible units will also be provided on the first floor.

The project is notable for its lack of regulatory restrictions and its focus on being a supportive housing facility, managed entirely by Greater Opportunities. Services will include case management, financial counseling, and life skills training, all aimed at fostering healthy community engagement. Additionally, laundry facilities and ample storage space will be available in each unit. The total cost of this ambitious endeavor is \$3,284,889, with a substantial portion of \$2,500,000 funded through the City of Binghamton ARPA funds, and the remaining \$784,889 sourced from the NYS HCR Small Rental Development Initiative (SRDI).

But that's not all! In addition to the Munsell Street Project, Greater Opportunities is also turning its attention to renovating five buildings in New Berlin, NY. What is in store for these buildings? This effort will transform 26, 28, 30, and 34 Genesee Street, along with 8 Green Street, into 21 affordable housing units!! The total cost for this renovation project is estimated at \$5,737,544, with funding awarded from various sources including the NYS OTDA Homeless Housing Assistance Program and the NYS Homes and Community Renewal HOME-ARP Program. These new and renovated units will offer much-needed housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, thus supporting the community's most vulnerable members.

Both projects are in line with Greater Opportunities' mission to enhance the quality of life for low-income residents by providing stable and affordable housing options. These developments mark a significant stride toward addressing the housing crisis in Broome and Chenango County, ensuring that more residents have access to safe and affordable homes. With construction already underway, Greater Opportunities is paving the way for a brighter, more inclusive future for all.

Homes and Community Renewal



8 Green Street:

2 three-bedroom units and 2 one-bedroom units.



Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

26 Genesee Street

3 two-bedroom units, 1 one-bedroom unit, and 2 zero-bedroom units.



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Farm to Table Early Head Start Style

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Alexis Woodcock of Cornell Cooperative Extension will offer hands on training sessions for caregivers at the Early Head Start Family Center using the ingredients found within each box. Soon our toddlers will engage in growing and caring for vegetables and herbs in raised beds where later they will harvest and eat what they have grown. Our Early Head Start Family Center is a busy and exciting place for our program participants this summer. The Farm to Early Care and Education Program has proven to be a win for children, families, farmers and local communities. Our local economy has been bolstered by offering additional opportunities for New York farmers to grow their small businesses through the sale of local produce.



Here are a few other helpful resources

- [Unpacking Your Farm Share](#)
- [Care for Your Share](#)
- [Produce FUNdamentals](#)
- [Farm to School Recipes](#)



Blast from the Past

The following articles are highlighted to demonstrate our incredible history.



Meeting Will Discuss Youth League Oct. 16

By: The Whitney Point Reporter- October 11, 1972

There will be a meeting of all interested young people, parents, and other adults, to discuss a Youth Center in Whitney Point at the fire station next Monday. The meeting will be held at 8 p.m. upstairs in the fire station, October 16, and Willy Hubert, Youth Coordinator for Opportunities for Broome, will be there to discuss a Youth League and center. Mr. Hubert will have material on youth centers and activities to give to those attending. The Whitney Point Youth League was formed and incorporated through the agency of Police Chief Arnold Lee last year. It has, however, been largely inactive since then. The meeting Monday is to see whether an active youth group can be formed in the Point, whether it would like a teen center like that of Greene, whether such a center is practicable, and whether there is enough interest to get the project started. Other youth activities can also be discussed. All those interested in youth activities are asked to attend.

Broome County Health and Community Fair

By Amy Gagan

On May 2nd, the Endicott Head Start Center hosted a health and community fair. With over 30 local vendors from various agencies participating, families were able to meet with representatives and gain valuable information to support their families. Additional booths included food giveaways, interactive displays, and resources for child safety. Special activities were set up at various locations throughout the event to engage the children in fun and meaningful activities and raffle baskets helped to promote family fun to over 50 families.

[Click here to see a video of the event!](#)

A special thank you to all of the vendors who helped to make this event a huge success, please visit their websites to learn more about their programs:

- [Vision's Federal Credit Union](#)
- [Lourdes ACES Program](#)
- [American Civic Association](#)
- [RISE NY](#)
- [Broome County Early Intervention](#)
- [Child Passenger Safety](#)
- [Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier](#)
- [Broome County WIC](#)
- [Southern Tier Independence Center](#)
- [Family Planning of Central NY](#)
- [All Together ABA](#)
- [Catholic Charities of Broome County](#)
- [The Thrive Program \(BCDSS\)](#)
- [Good Neighbors](#)
- [South Family and Community Engagement](#)
- [Family Enrichment Network – CCRR](#)
- [Fidelus Care](#)
- [Healthy Families PACT](#)
- [Greater Opportunities Housing Programs](#)
- [Broome County Health Department – Lead Prevention](#)
- [Broome County Health Department – Overdose Prevention](#)
- [YWCA](#)
- [Cancer Services of the Southern Tier:](#)
- [ENCOREplus](#)
- [Broome County Sheriff's Department – Operation Safe Child](#)
- [Foster Grandparent Program:](#)
- [George F. Johnson Library](#)
- [Family Enrichment Network – Nutrition and Education Outreach Program](#)
- [Guthrie Dental](#)
- [Vision's Cares](#)



OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Community Resources



From Otsego to Fulton, Herkimer to Broome, we know our region and each unique community within it. From a person you trust, close to home, there are so many big reasons to go small with Southern Tier Connect.

Our network of exceptional providers and care managers is vital for anyone managing a diagnosis of an intellectual and/or developmental disability. STC provides comprehensive care management by referring and connecting our members to appropriate healthcare providers, social programs, and community-based organizations, including support and faith-based groups by request.

They work with the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities and partner provider organizations to navigate the best services for you or your loved one.

For more information, please visit their website <https://southerntierconnect.org/>

Broome County Clothing Banks

- Apalachin Clothing Closet
 - 607-625-2733-
 - Mon-Thu 10am-2pm
- Katies Clothing Closet
 - 607-722-2308
 - Only open the last two weeks of the month
 - Monday and Friday- 12:30pm-1:30 pm
 - Last Saturday of the month 10am-2pm
- Hope's Closet- Voices Recovery Center
 - 607-821-7811
 - Call ahead for an appointment
- Food Pantry and Clothing Assistance- The Landmark Church
 - 607-723-1127
 - 4th Saturday of the month from 8am-10:30am
- Free Clothing and More- Main Street Baptist
 - 607-723-0031
 - 3rd Saturday 10am-noon
- Food Bank of the Southern Tier
 - Click the above link to see their schedule
- Samaritan House
 - 607-724-3969
 - Tuesday-Thursday 9:00 am -2:00 pm
 - closed 11am-noon)
- George's Garments
 - 607-724-1372
 - Monday, Wednesday 10:00 am-2:00 pm
- Temple Concord Monthly Rummage Sale
 - 607-723-7355
 - First Sunday 10:00 am- 2:00 pm

[Click here for a complete list of Broome Clothing and Food Banks](#)

Safe Digging- Home Projects

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- Utility responses will be provided to you from UDig NY's Automated Positive Response (APR) system. This system is a consolidated response from all notified utility companies. This response will be emailed to you but can also be checked in real time using Exactix.
- It is your responsibility to check for the status of responses using the email provided to you by UDig NY. All notified utilities must respond to your Location Request before you can begin your work.

Step 3: Confirm Status

- The colors of the markings on the ground represent the type of utility.
- You want to verify that the responses from the member utilities match what you see on your job site. For example, if the electric company has responded that they have marked your location, you should see red paint and/or flags in your area to designate the location of the underground line.
- UDig NY member utility companies do not locate and mark private facilities on your property. Click here for more information on private facilities.

Step 4: Respect

- Identify the Tolerance Zone. The Tolerance Zone is the diameter of the buried facility, plus two feet on either side of the designated center line. If the diameter is unknown, the Tolerance Zone is just two feet on each side of the designated center line.
- Hand expose lines within the Tolerance Zone and cross section using hand tools.

Step 5: Dig with Caution

- Before you use mechanized equipment within the tolerance zone you must:
 - Verify the location, type, size, direction of run and depth of the facility.
- For gas and liquid petroleum lines, verification must be by means of hand-dug test holes.
- The location of other utilities must also be verified by means of hand-dug test holes unless otherwise agreed upon with the facility operator.
- If you suspect that you have damaged an underground facility, stop digging and contact UDig NY by calling 811 as well as the utility company.
- If you suspect the release of any gas or liquid as a result of the damage, evacuate the job site and call 911.

Happy Birthday to the following Staff Members!

Join us as we celebrate our summer birthdays!

June

Mary Bateman
Briana Miller
Jahaira Liz
Christina Dyman
Melissa Grant
Amber Parks

July

Christine Williams
Kelsey Carmean
Danelle Nolan
Gina Cruz
Ella Peck
Michael Mackay
Crystal Dugan
Monica Stephen
Amanda Beeman
Kim Pickard
Laura Veruto
Ashley Franklin-Shaw

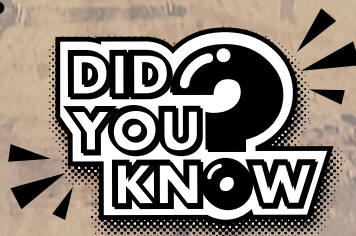
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Did you know that you can easily find important agency documents on Payco?

These documents include:

- Office phone lists
- 2024 holiday schedule
- Employee handbook
- Nationwide forms
- Labor law posters, and much more!

To access these documents, simply click on the "My Info" tab, select My Company, and then choose the Documents option. It's that easy!



OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

IT Corner

By Brian Presto

Here's a simple step-by-step process for updating Windows 11 or Windows 10:

Using Windows Update:

- Click on the Start button.
- Go to Settings.
- Select Update & Security.
- Click on Windows Update.
- Hit Check for updates.
- If updates are available, you can choose to install them.
- After installation, your computer may need to restart.



WINDOWS UPDATE

If there are driver updates under advanced tabs:

Occasionally, driver updates appear as Optional Updates in Windows Update. These are typically for specific known issues with devices.

- To check for Optional Updates:
- Select Advanced Options.
- Scroll down and click on Optional Updates.
- Expand the Driver Updates section.
- Check the box next to any driver you'd like to update.
- Click Download & Install.
- If needed, your PC will prompt you to reboot after installation.

If you have any additional questions about this or any other IT related issue, please contact Brian Presto.

5 reasons to update software

- Patch security flaws
- Get new features
- Protect data
- Improve performance
- Ensure compatibility



Attention 10 month Staff Members: Additional Personal Day is Coming your Way!

By Robin Tuttle

We are thrilled to announce a significant update to our personal days policy that reflects our ongoing commitment to your well-being and work-life balance. Starting next year 2025, we are increasing the number of personal days available to our 10-month staff members from two to three days.

This change is more than just an additional day off; it's a recognition of the hard work and dedication you bring to our organization every day. We understand that personal time is essential for relaxation, rejuvenation, and attending to personal matters that are important to you and your families.

We believe that by investing in your personal time, we are fostering a happier, healthier, and more productive workplace. We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to enjoy an extra day for yourself, whether it's for rest, adventure, or personal growth.

Thank you for your continued contributions to our success. We look forward to supporting you as you enjoy this well-deserved additional personal day.

Annual Training Day and Wellness Day

Wow! The Annual Training Day and Wellness Day this year were incredibly fun! As someone closely involved with senior management, I've gained insight into the extensive behind-the-scenes work required to organize such events. Tasks like securing a venue, planning the agenda, finding speakers, and brainstorming ways to make these days engaging for all staff are essential.

The effort put into coordinating this successful event is truly impressive. Every detail, from the initial planning to the final execution, is carefully considered to ensure a memorable experience for all participants. This year, the team surpassed expectations with an exceptional lineup of speakers who delivered inspiring and thought-provoking sessions. The wellness activities were well-received, offering everyone a chance to relax and focus on their well-being.

The venue was beautifully adorned, creating a welcoming ambiance that encouraged staff to unwind and connect. Interactive sessions and team-building activities promoted camaraderie and collaboration, emphasizing the significance of teamwork within the organization.

A standout moment was Brian Miller, our keynote speaker, whose presentation left everyone feeling energized, enthused, and inspired. "Feedback quote here." Attendees have provided overwhelmingly positive feedback, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to step away from their daily routines and invest in personal and professional growth.

In conclusion, this year's Annual Training and Wellness Day was not just an event but an impactful experience for all participants. The dedication and hard work of everyone involved truly paid off, creating a memorable day for the entire team.

We will be putting out a short survey looking for feedback for next year's event. Pictures will be available on the G drive in the upcoming weeks.

Happy Work-a-versary- June, July and August

We value your dedication and hard work each day. Your efforts are highly appreciated and have a meaningful impact on our organization. Please continue your outstanding work, and rest assured that your commitment is recognized. Thank you for your valuable contributions!

June

Taylor Miner- 3 years
Jahaira Liz- 6 years
Mark Silvanic- 15 years
Johnathan Villanueva- 1 year
Christine Monsen- 14 years
Brian Presto- 3 years
Danelle Nolan 6 years
Joseph Palmere- 23 years

July

Laura Veruto- 1 year
Maureen Babcock- 6 years

August

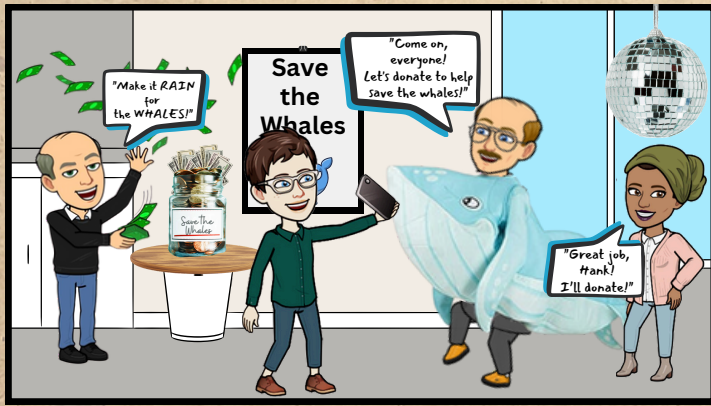
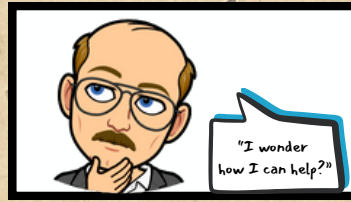
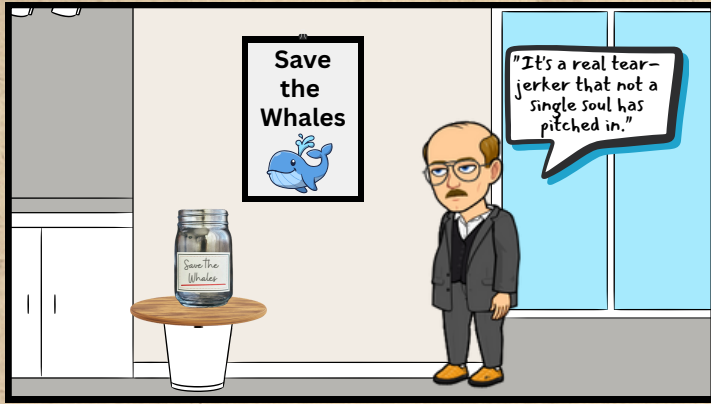
Rhoda Kinne- 36 years
Abby Gardepe- 5 years
Joan O'Donnell- 5 years
Jennifer Bunzy- 10 years
Corey Young- 2 years
Holly Carpenter- 1 year
Crystal Dugan- 2 years
Tiffany Tallett- 3 years
Tiffany Brewer- 12 years
Skyler Keller- 6 years
Kelly Robertson- 15 years
Ashley Huggans- 4 years
Sarah Thomas- 1 year
Christine Douglas- 8 years



Cameron Walulek- 4 years
Matt Johnson- 1 year
Virginia Osborne- 25 years
Kristi Perez- 1 year
Ludwine Auguste- 2 years
Leta Atwood- 6 years

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

"Hank- The Office Comic Makes a Splash"



Staff Birthdays continued

August

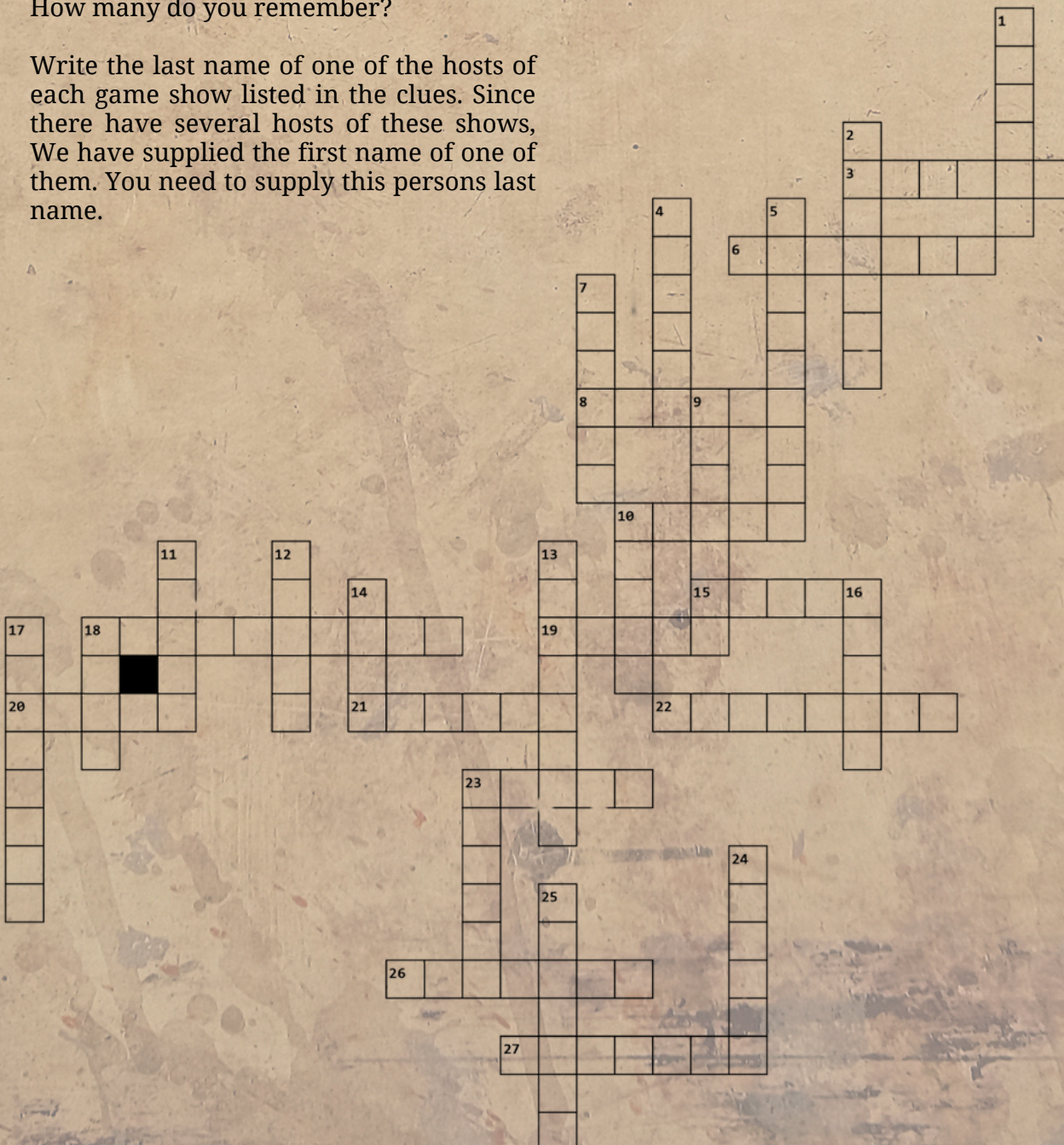
- Lisa Brown
- Melissa Ross
- Cameron Walulek
- Holly Carpenter
- Melissa Goodwin
- Tammy Cunningham
- Airyana Wright
- Taylor Miner
- Christopher
- McSweeney
- Brenda Van Abs
- Dennis Eaton
- Grace Mohrien



Opportunity Knocks- Crossword Game Show Hosts

Game shows have been popular for a very long time.
How many do you remember?

Write the last name of one of the hosts of each game show listed in the clues. Since there are several hosts of these shows, we have supplied the first name of one of them. You need to supply this person's last name.



Down

1. The \$25,000 Pyramid, Bill _____
2. Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? Regis _____
4. What's My Line? Wally _____
5. Are you Smarter than a 5th Grader? Jeff _____
7. Jeopardy! Alex _____
9. Name That Tune, Tom _____
10. The \$10,000 Pyramid, Dick _____
11. Who's Line Is It Anyway, Drew _____
12. The Dating Game, Jim _____
13. The Weakest Link, Anne _____
14. Let's Make a Deal, Monty _____
16. Wheel of Fortune, Pat _____
17. Supermarket Sweep- David _____
18. You Bet Your Life- Groucho _____
23. Deal or No Deal, Howie _____
24. The Gong Show, Chuck _____
25. The Match Game, Gene _____

Across

3. Family Feud, Steve _____
6. Love Connection, Chuck _____
8. The Price is Right, Bob _____
10. Win, Lose, Draw, Brett _____
15. Concentration, Hugh _____
18. Tic Tac Dough, Wink _____
19. The Joker's Wild, Jack _____
20. Sale of the Century, Jim _____
21. Password, Allen _____
22. Hollywood Squares, Peter _____
23. I've Got a Secret, Garry _____
26. To Tell the Truth, Bud _____
27. The Newlywed Game, Bob _____

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

HS Class Reviews

By Amy Gagan and Karen Randall

During the previous school year, both the Chenango County Head Start and the Broome County Head Start programs participated in a Federal CLASS observation. The CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) is a research-based assessment tool that quantifies the relationship and interactions between the students and teachers. The purpose of the observation tool is to inform program improvements and provide insights, skills, and strategies to teachers to expand the learning, communication, and relationships within their classrooms.



Congratulations to the amazing teaching teams that put in all of the additional time to prepare for these observations and did so well, we are proud of you!

Over a several week period, each program completed video-taped classroom observations that were then submitted to the Office of Head Start for analysis. Upon receiving the results, all classrooms scored exceptionally well, with scores falling well above both the competitive and quality thresholds established for program improvement.

See below for additional information on the CLASS assessment tool and how it is utilized in the Head Start programs:

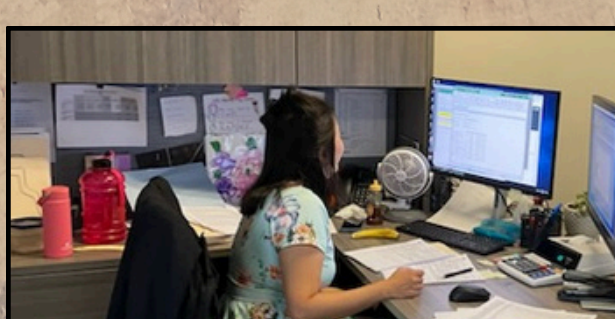
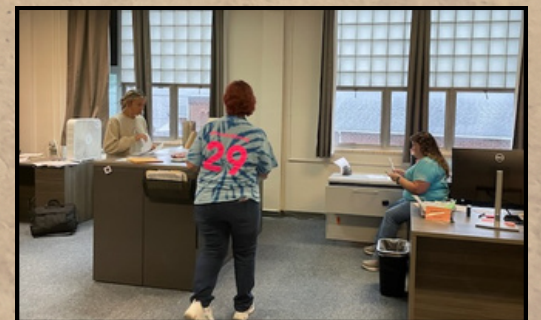
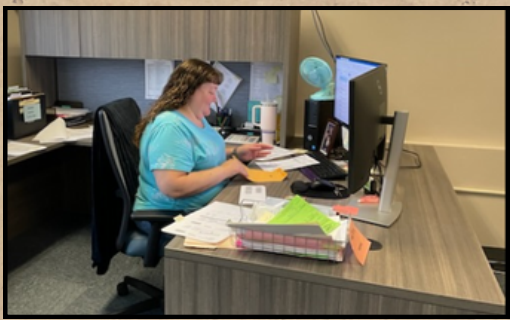
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/designation-renewal-system/article/use-classroom-assessment-scoring-system-class-head-start>

2023 Greater Ops Audit

By Christine Monsen

Greater Opportunities every year has an annual financial and compliance audit to evaluate a company's internal controls, including its corporate governance and accounting processes. The process aims to ensure the accuracy, completeness, and compliance of financial statements and operations with applicable standards and regulations. EFPR Group, which has over 60 years of experience serving various entities, has completed the Greater Opportunities audit for 2023. The audit process spanned several months, testing internal controls, procedures, transactions, and other items to verify the accuracy of the financial statements.

The audit was completed in June, resulting with EFPR issuing an unmodified opinion. There were no material weaknesses found and accounting estimates were reasonable and supported. A material weakness in internal controls could potentially lead to misstatements in financial statements, impacting the reliability of a company's financial data and its overall financial health. This clean audit result is a testament to the diligence and efficiency of Greater Opportunities' financial team and their commitment to maintaining robust internal controls. In the wake of the successful audit, Greater Opportunities remains dedicated to continuous improvement.



The positive outcome, not only reinforces the organization's credibility but also enhances trust among stakeholders, donors, and partners. With a solid financial foundation confirmed by the recent audit, the organization is better equipped to expand its programs, reach more beneficiaries, and make a lasting impact on the lives of those they serve. The leadership team extends their gratitude to all staff members who contributed to the successful audit process. Their hard work and dedication are the cornerstone of Greater Opportunities' continued success and growth. As the organization moves forward, it remains committed to transparency, accountability, and excellence in all its endeavors, ensuring that it can continue to serve the community with integrity and compassion for years to come.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Meet our Board Members

By Danelle Nolan

The Greater Opportunities Board of Directors is required to have a minimum of one-third of its members elected from the low-income community. Alongside representatives from the low-income sector, one-third of the Board must consist of public sector officials or their appointees, with the rest being from the private sector. In the upcoming edition of Opportunity Knocks, we are excited to introduce our two newest Board Members, Mrs. Lauren Conrad and Mr. James Gregory Esq.



Lauren Conrad is a dedicated professional with a rich background in both banking and operations management. Her commitment to community engagement, especially in promoting financial literacy and supporting initiatives like the breast cancer walk, is commendable. Lauren started with NBT Bank back in 2011 through 2015, and had realized she wasn't where she was supposed to be, so she was welcomed back in 2021 as Assistant Manager. Her recent promotion to branch manager at NBT Bank reflects her hard work and leadership skills, and also was a big part in helping with the presentation and opening of the HSA accounts for the Broome portion of Greater Opportunities.

"I joined the board so I could have a more hands on approach with all of the great services that Greater Opportunities provides to the community."



A board of directors for a nonprofit in New York State (NYS) is responsible for overseeing and managing the organization's operations. Board members are elected fiduciaries who must fulfill legal duties to the organization and the public it serves. These duties include:

Setting the organization's mission, strategy, and goals. Ensuring the organization operates in compliance with legal and ethical standards. Ensuring the organization's financial stability and sustainability. Making decisions crucial to the organization's life and direction. Meeting the duty of care, the duty of loyalty, and the duty of obedience



James A. Gregory, a partner at Ferrara Fiorenza, has been practicing education law, labor law, municipal law, and public sector employment law for more than 20 years. He assists clients on a wide array of matters, including:

Advice and representation regarding constitutional law and other complex legal matters confronting school districts. Representation and counsel on employment, termination, discipline, and counseling individual employees as well as collective bargaining matters including negotiations, grievance and arbitration, and improper practices.

Assisting school districts with practical advice regarding business, public works, and procurement. When Mr. Gregory was asked why he wanted to join our board of directors, he stated, "I joined because I believe that education and a stable home are 2 keys to building a stable life, and Greater Opportunities for Broome and Chenango, Inc. works hard to make sure the neediest people in our community gain access to both."

Transforming Lives Through Permanent Supportive Housing: Greater Opportunities for Broome and Chenango, Inc.

In the battle against homelessness and housing instability, Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) has emerged as a beacon of hope, offering not just a roof over one's head, but also the supportive services necessary for long-term stability. We, Greater Opportunities for Broome and Chenango, Inc. (GOBC), an organization dedicated to empowering individuals and families by providing safe, affordable housing coupled with comprehensive support are at the forefront of this initiative in upstate New York.

What is Permanent Supportive Housing? Permanent Supportive Housing is a holistic approach designed to address the needs of the

chronically homeless and other vulnerable populations. PSH combines affordable housing with essential supportive services, such as but not limited to mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, job training, life skills, and health care. This model aims to address the root causes of homelessness, ensuring that individuals not only secure housing but also have the resources and support needed to maintain it for the long-term.

The Role of Greater Opportunities for Broome and Chenango, Inc. Permanent Supportive Housing is a holistic approach designed to address the needs of the chronically homeless and other vulnerable populations PSH combines affordable housing with essential supportive services, such as but not limited to mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, job training, life skills, and health care

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The Role of Greater Opportunities for Broome and Chenango, Inc. Key Components of GOBC's PSH Program

1. Affordable Housing: GOBC offers affordable, permanent housing solutions tailored to the needs of our clients. By securing safe, stable housing, individuals can begin to rebuild their lives without the constant stress of housing insecurity.

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OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Staff Spotlight

This time around, say hello to the soon to be retired Tim Sherman from Maintenance and the amazing Cathy Berger from Chenango Housing featured in the latest Opportunity Knocks edition.

Meet Tim Sherman

- **How long have you been with the company?** 15 years
- **What does your job entail?** Keep all facilities in working order, including repairs, plumbing, electrical, heating, air conditioning, etc.
- **Who inspired you to pursue the career you have today?** Probably my grandfather and father. I spent a lot of time doing hands-on work with both and worked for my grandfather for many years. I have always enjoyed working with my hands.
- **Where do you see yourself in 5 years?** Retired and hopefully able to do more relaxing.
- **What's the best advice you can give to someone who just started their career?** Learn all that they can, ask questions, think before doing, be respectful to everyone, and always be safe.
- **What are the toughest challenges you've had at work?** Every day is something different and you never know what may come up.
- **What's your secret talent no one knows about?** My creativity when designing automotive models and casting to make multiples. I get a vision in my head and am able to use my creativity to create a finished product.
- **When you are at work, how do you motivate yourself?** I get to work early and just plug away to get needed work done.
- **Describe some of the challenges you have faced at this company. How did you overcome them?** The biggest challenge overall is trying to manage the overall workload. Working closely and communicating with other departments to prioritize work items has helped to lessen this challenge. Regular communication has been the biggest key.
- **In terms of successes, which accomplishments are you most proud of?** I would say helping to build a maintenance team. When I started, we did not have a team of maintenance guys and very few tools and equipment.
- **Who are some of your biggest inspirations within the company?** The CEO, Mark Silvanic, has supported me and help me grow as a manager.
- **How have you grown professionally while on our team?** I have become more patient with dealing with other people, especially when working on something and having to stop what I am doing to take multiple phone calls.
- **Tell me something about you that most people don't know.** I am actually a musician. I played guitar in different bands for many years.



Meet Cathy Berger!

- **How long have you been with the company?** Since November 2006
- **What does your job entail?** Housing Counseling, which includes assisting clients with budgeting, goal setting, credit review as well as referrals to other resources within the community. Administration of the FTHB Grant program for Broome and Chenango Counties, and assisting with the administration of the Home Rehab Grants & Manufactured Home Replacement Grant for Broome and Chenango Counties. USDA Loan Packaging for Home Purchase Clients looking to obtain a USDA Direct Mortgage and USDA Repair Grant/Loan. Data entry, vouchering, and Quarterly/Annual reporting for the housing grant programs, along our fiscal department.
- **Who inspired you to pursue the career you have today?** I sort of grew into the position I have today. I started with the Agency in 2006 doing EITC Income Tax prep, assisting clients with income taxes. Then I transitioned to the Weatherization/Energy Services Dept. with Sue Bard, where I worked as her Admin. Asst. for 9 years. I then became the Housing Accountant, processing data, payables, and receivables for our housing programs for fiscal. I worked with members of the fiscal department as well as the housing departments; also assisting with Weatherization, Home Rehab, FTHB, and the Revolving Loan Program. Then we merged with OFB!"
- **Where do you see yourself in 5 years?** Hopefully still here! I would like to incorporate more education classes, to include online segments we can share on our website for financial capabilities, budgeting, credit, etc. I am hopeful we will have additional staff complete the HUD Housing Counseling Certification so we can offer more education and one on one counseling services for our clients as well. I also love the idea of developing more housing for rent or sale.
- **In terms of successes, which accomplishments are you most proud of?** Becoming HUD Housing Counseling Certified was a big challenge and I am most proud that I have that under my belt. A Not For Profit Housing Agency needs a HUD Certified Housing Counselor on staff in order to obtain certain HUD Grants. My Certification helps me stay marketable.
- **What's the best advice you can give to someone who just started their career?** Take advantage of all training opportunities and learn from your peers/supervisors. Change is happening all the time, you never know when someone may leave and you may be needed to help. Cross-training was something I learned young in my banking career, learn as much as you can from those around you. Not only does this help with better understanding your job duties, but it's helpful to "see the whole picture". If you understand why you do the things you do, you can better appreciate the needs of your coworkers and other departments, and their responsibilities. Stick to the same processes for tasks, that way if you are interrupted, it's easier to remember where you left off if you do the same process each time, you are also less likely to miss something. Also, if you do not know the answer, it is OK! Let them know, "I am not sure, let me find out and I will get back to you." Also, Follow Through, keep your word, stick to your timelines so you don't miss important deadlines. I use my calendar and reminders to help :)
- **When you are at work, how do you motivate yourself?** Keeping timelines, deadlines & reminders to stay on track. I love music, so I will listen on my way to work to get motivated and sometimes I play the radio low in my office as I am doing certain tasks. Sharing a joke and laughing with the TEAM helps. When feeling stressed, taking a mindful meditation break to just breathe, relax, and get focused for 5 minutes is helpful too!
- **Who are some of your biggest inspirations within the company?** There are several over the years, but I would say Kelly Robertson inspires me the most. I am impressed with how she keeps all the "balls in the air" sort of speak!
- **How have you grown professionally while on our team?** Continuing education, keeping relevant with the changes in housing, and working with my team to continue to assist our clients with the housing challenges they are facing.
- **Tell me something about you that most people don't know?** I took Real Estate and Banking in college, worked as an admin in the RE Offices P/T on weekends, I was 17 and couldn't take the license exam - also needed the paycheck to pay rent, my father passed away young and my mother moved to Cincinnati NY. Also working F/T as a teller for North Fork Bank in Hampton Bays. Worked there for 15+ years and was the Assistant Branch Manager and Mortgage Originator. We moved to Norwich in 2003. We have 3 children and 2 grandchildren now. I worked for NBT Bank in Direct Lending/Underwriting in the back offices until 2006. I love trees, plants, and gardening, spending time with my family, granddaughter, and grandson. Hopefully one day when I retire I can grow flowers for sale and my husband can continue to manage his honeybees, or better yet...Win The Lottery and Buy A Beach House...I really miss the ocean!!!



OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Transforming Lives Through Permanent Supportive Housing: Greater Opportunities for Broome and Chenango, Inc.

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2. Comprehensive Support Services:

Beyond housing, GOBC provides a wide array of supportive services. These include case management, mental health services, addiction counseling, employment support, and life skills training. These services are crucial in helping residents achieve and maintain stability.

3. Community Integration:

PSH at GOBC is not just about providing services; it's about fostering a sense of community and belonging. Residents are encouraged to engage with their neighbors and participate in community activities, which helps to combat the isolation that many formerly homeless individuals experience.

4. Individualized Goal Planning:

Understanding that each individual's journey is unique, GOBC creates personalized goal plans. These plans are developed in collaboration with residents, ensuring that the support provided aligns with their specific needs and desired achievements.

Success Stories

GOBC's impact is best illustrated through the stories of those we have helped. When Sharell came into our program she was homeless, her life was filled with barriers to achieving her goals, and she lacked a positive support system. Although her journey was long and filled with obstacles to overcome, she left our program with a degree, a career, and a home of her own. That's right, she is now a HOME OWNER!!! Please click the link to hear her view of the program, the agency, and the support she received.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QGg-viwi58>

The Broader Impact of what we do in PSH

The benefits of PSH extend beyond the individuals directly served. By reducing homelessness, these programs alleviate pressure on emergency services, hospitals, and the criminal justice system, leading to cost savings for the community. Moreover, stable housing contributes to better public health outcomes and a more vibrant, inclusive community. Permanent Supportive Housing is more than just a solution to homelessness; it's a pathway to a better life for those we serve. We at Greater Opportunities for Broome and Chenango, Inc. strive to exemplify this approach by transforming lives through compassionate care and unwavering support.

For more information about our Permanent Supportive Housing Program, please visit our website: <https://www.greaterops.org/family-individual-social-programs/permanent-supportive-housing>

Who is the Director of Learning and Development?

Many of you may know her, but for those who don't, please meet Tina Gilmore, our new Director of Learning and Development. We are thrilled to introduce Tina Gilmore as our new Director of Learning and Development. Many of you may know Tina from her previous role in the Chenango office, where she served as the Director of the WIC Program. Others might recognize her from the Broome office, where she spent the past year as the Endicott Head Start Director. Tina has been with our agency for 3.5 years and is eagerly looking forward to collaborating with everyone in this new capacity. In her role as Director of Learning and Development, you might see Tina planning and facilitating trainings for your program area. She will also be leading team-building activities and working closely with program directors and coordinators to identify areas of celebration and opportunities for growth and learning. Additionally, Tina will be spearheading new wellness initiatives across the agency throughout the year, aiming to enhance the well-being of our entire team. Please join us in welcoming Tina Gilmore to her new role and supporting her as she helps drive our mission forward. Her extensive experience and passion for fostering growth make her an invaluable addition to our leadership team.

Tina is known for her innovative approach and her ability to inspire and motivate those around her. She is committed to creating an inclusive and dynamic learning environment where every team member feels valued and empowered to reach their full potential. Tina's dedication to professional development is matched by her enthusiasm for personal wellness. She firmly believes that a healthy and happy workforce is the cornerstone of a successful organization. With her at the helm of our Learning and Development initiatives, we anticipate a wave of positive changes that will benefit us all. We encourage everyone to take advantage of the opportunities Tina will be providing, whether it's through new training programs, wellness activities, or team-building events. Her door is always open for suggestions and feedback, and she is excited to hear from all of you. Once again, let's give a warm welcome to Tina Gilmore. Together, let's make this a transformative journey for our agency, filled with growth, innovation, and well-being.



Join Pickleball League!

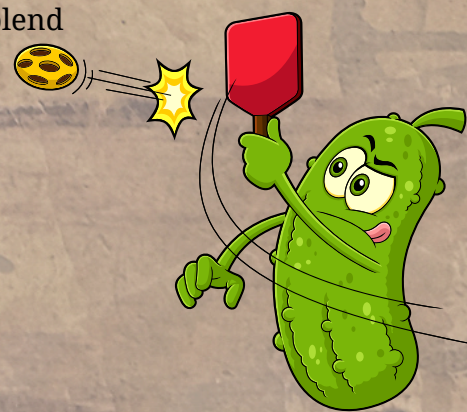
After taking a little bit of a break, we are ready to resume our Pickle Ball League! The League plays a few times a week at our CV Gym, that recently got a facelift that included pickleball courts!

Pickleball is frequently described as a blend of tennis, badminton, and ping pong.

Played on a court similar to badminton with a net, it requires less running compared to tennis.

Whether played in doubles (two players per team) or singles, this sport involves using a solid paddle and perforated plastic balls.

For more information, please contact Max Ginty!



OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Wellness Corner

By. Tina Gilmore

Smartphones, gaming systems and screens are everywhere. They are in our homes, bedrooms, offices, vehicles, pockets and purses. Have you ever considered how much time you or your family members spend on a screen? While these electronics can be helpful and entertaining, the amount of time we spend on them also can become a problem.

Many people feel like something is missing in life. Perhaps it's an unidentified desire to live life more fully. Reducing screen time frees up more time to connect with family and friends. Feeling connections with others can help ward off symptoms of stress, depression and anxiety. We often miss out on the fun and beauty happening around us because of screens. By being present and in the moment — perhaps by setting aside a device — you may find what you need to fill that void.

There are many wellness benefits to cutting down on screen time, including these five:

1. Improve your physical health.

You know that physical activity is good for your health, but devices use could reduce your exercise time. Maintaining healthy habits can be hard when you spend lots of time using screens.

Benefits include:

- Preventing obesity and conditions related to excess weight.

Such conditions include Type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Children who watch more TV have a greater risk of becoming overweight.

- Freeing more time for exercise and play.

You can add physical activity to fill the new gaps in your schedule.

- Increasing your amount of sleep.

Children who watch more TV tend to have more difficulty falling or staying asleep. They can feel tired and snack more often to make up for lost hours of sleep.

- Reducing mindless snacking which can lead to weight gain.

Snacking or eating meals in front of the TV can lead to mindless eating, which can result in consuming larger portions. Eliminating distractions allows you to pay more attention to your body and its signals when you're full.

2. Free up time to have fun playing and exploring.

Exploring and learning about the world is an integral part of life. Children are naturally curious, but adults can explore, too. Instead of spending time on devices, you and your family can try new activities. Go for a bike ride, take a walk, visit a park, check out the museum or explore a local nature trail. Activities that don't involve screens can be as exciting as what is on them. Try coloring, reading, crafting or other activities that use your imagination. Decreasing screen time allows more time for play and creative activities.

3. Make social connections.

Connecting with others is crucial for us to feel cared for. Children look to their caregivers for this sense of belonging; adults may find it within their families and friends. Devices can damage these relationships.

When parents engage with a screen, children may feel they need to compete for attention. When you set down your device, you are more emotionally available and can help strengthen the family bond.

One study found that children who went without electronic devices for five days were better at recognizing facial emotions and reading nonverbal cues than those who lived life as usual. Less screen time can result in better face-to-face social skills. Having a TV on, even as background noise, will direct your focus to it rather than what is happening around you.

4. Boost your mood.

Putting down your phone and going outside or doing an enjoyable activity can be a mood booster. It can make you feel more accomplished and improve your well-being. Depression and anxiety can cause a person to withdraw and isolate themselves from others. Engaging in social activities helps you connect with others and reduce symptoms of these conditions. Children who spend more time looking at a screen are more likely to have behavioral problems and divided attention; decreasing screen time can improve their focus. Violence in media may cause kids to feel anxious and depressed and lead them to think that violence is an acceptable way to deal with problems.

5. Build community.

Being part of the community around you and feeling connected to others benefits your overall health.

Consider these ways to get connected:

- Families who eat meals together tend to be healthier. Turning off electronics during meals or family time eliminates distractions. Children from families who eat together also show better academic scores.

- Find events in your community. Use time previously spent on devices for volunteering, joining a sports team or connecting with a spiritual group.

- Feeling a sense of belonging and being social is an excellent way to manage stress. Having support and feeling that you are not alone can help you cope with difficult times.

While technology is a great tool, it also can hinder your wellness and make you feel disconnected from those around you. Taking a break from devices frees up more time to be active and enjoy time with loved ones.

Sure, I'd love to come over and hang out with you while you talk and text with other people on your phone the entire time.



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Performance Corner

Are you proud of the work you do every day?

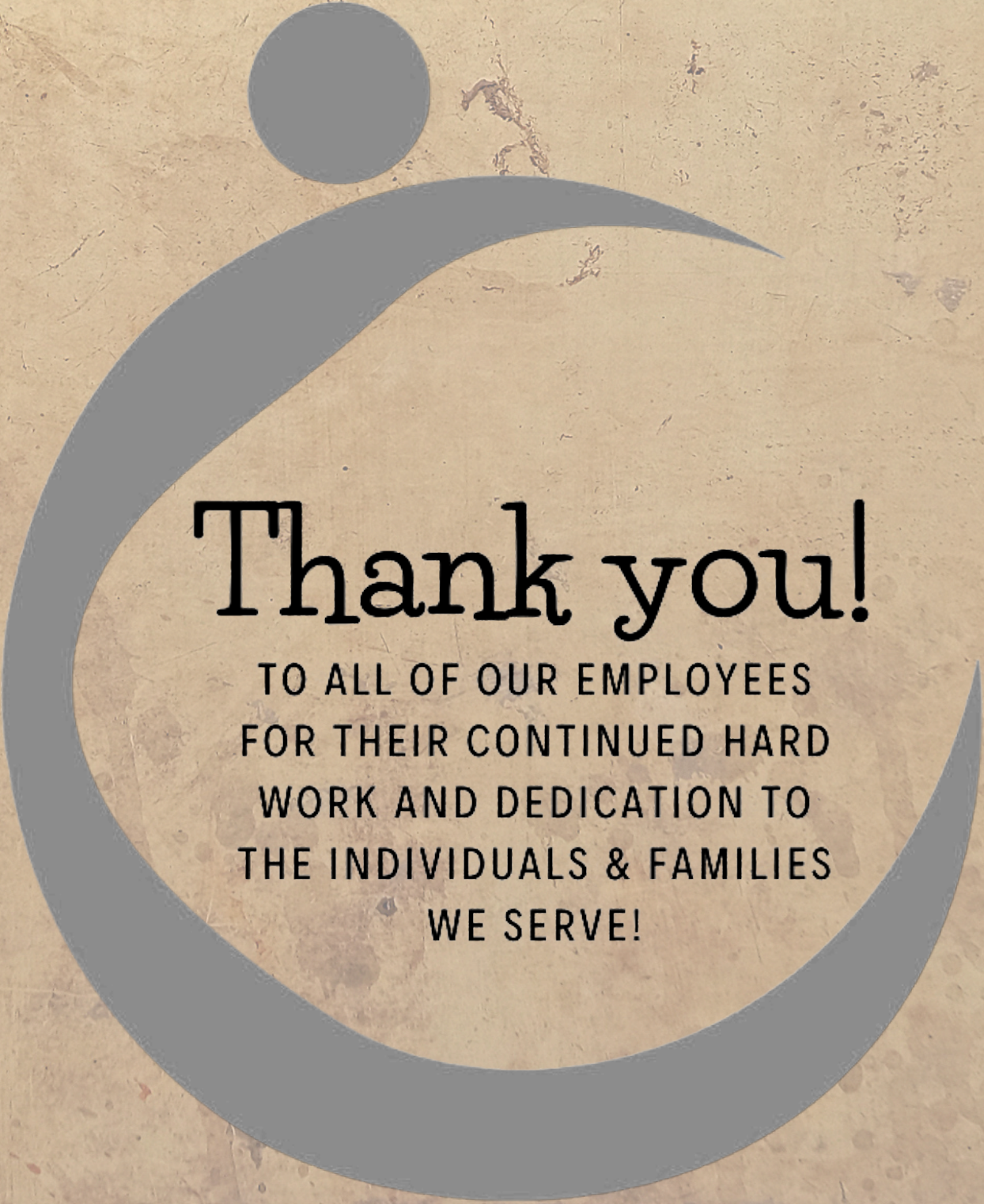
We should always be looking for ways to improve our performance. At the end of the day, the way each of us does that is different. However, there are some simple guideline's we all should follow to remember that part of being a good employee is remembering that we are professionals.

Being punctual, respectful, and dedicated to our tasks are just the beginning. Striving for continuous learning and growth not only benefits us individually but also enhances the collective strength of our team. Open communication, empathy, and collaboration are vital in creating a supportive and productive work environment. Finally, taking pride in our work and celebrating our achievements, no matter how small, fosters a sense of accomplishment and motivation. Let's keep pushing ourselves to be the best we can be, and in doing so, inspire others around us to do the same.

MAY YOU
Be Proud
OF THE WORK YOU DO.
THE PERSON YOU ARE,
AND THE DIFFERENCE
YOU MAKE.

Our Mission Is To Create **Opportunities.**

The Mission Of Greater Opportunities Is To Educate, Advocate, And Empower Individuals And Families To Improve The Quality Of Their Lives Through The Development Of Self-Reliance, While Promoting A Culture Of People Working Together To Help Themselves, One Another, And Their Community.



Thank you!

TO ALL OF OUR EMPLOYEES
FOR THEIR CONTINUED HARD
WORK AND DEDICATION TO
THE INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES
WE SERVE!

