

Community Action of Greene County, Inc.

2013 Annual Report

7856 Rt.9W, Catskill, NY 12414



www.cagcny.org

2013 Board of Directors

Private Sector:

**William Reich
Lela Bleau
Marrienne Decker**

Public Sector:

**Kate Farrell, Representing Michael Bulich, Catskill Board of Education
Robert Schrock, Vice President, Representing Legislator William Lawrence
Tracy Magee, Representing NYS Assemblyman Peter Lopez
Carol Pfister, Representing Athens Mayor Christian Pfister**

Low Income Sector:

**Reverend John Bowen
Charlene Holdridge
Carrie Multari
Mary Ann Scalera**

Staff

**Florence Ohle
Karen Van Valkenburgh
Barbara Palmateer
Jamie Linzey**

**Executive Director
Operations Officer
Director, Family, Community & Victim Services
Weatherization Director**

Community Action of Greene County, Inc.

- Goal 1 Low-Income People Become More Self-Sufficient**
- Goal 2 The Conditions In Which Low-Income People Live Are Improved**
- Goal 3 Low Income people own a stake in their communities**
- Goal 4 Partnerships Among Supporters and Providers Of Services To Low-Income People Are Achieved**
- Goal 5 Agencies Increase Their Capacity To Achieve Results**
- Goal 6 Low-Income People, Especially Vulnerable Populations, Achieve Their Potential By Strengthening Family And Other Supportive Systems**

In recent weeks, NYS Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli released a report on housing affordability trends in the state of New York. Renters and homeowners alike are struggling with housing costs, often paying more than 50% of their income towards rents and mortgages. As you are certainly aware, Greene County came in second to only the Bronx as the most expensive county, with 57% of our population paying more than 30% of their income on housing. "Regardless of where they live, more New Yorkers are feeling pinched by rising housing costs," DiNapoli said in a statement. "When half your income goes to pay for a place to live, you are going to be stretched thin on other every day purchases. This unfortunate trend has troubling implications for our economic growth and for New Yorkers' quality of life."

At Community Action we are certainly seeing the affects of this trend. We have averaged in 2013 130 families each month accessing our emergency food pantry in order to feed their families. We have been able to keep up with the demand, despite the extreme decrease in funding we have experienced in the past several years. The majority of our food purchases now are funded through donations from the public and food drives held on our behalf such as ClearChannel Radio's Stuff the Bus, or the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Movement/s Stuff the Trolley event.

Our STEHP (Solutions to Ending Homelessness Program) has seen an increase in the number of households seeking assistance as well. Households on the brink of eviction, due to their inability to pay rent, come to us in hopes of maintaining their housing. Due to the eligibility requirements set by the State, only those at 30% of the area median income or below are eligible to this assistance, resulting in many households being excluded from this service. It has occurred that we have had to turn households away when seeking rental arrears due to their being over income, and then be able to assist them in finding new housing once they have been evicted and become "literally homeless". It is incredibly frustrating to staff when the limitations placed on grants seem to make no sense, when people coming to us for assistance leave in tears knowing that there is no assistance for them. Wouldn't it make more sense to help these people remain in their current housing, than to have to become homeless first and have to start over?

CWEP (Community Work Experience Program) participants continue to be assigned to our Pay it Forward Thrift Store, learning valuable job skills while receiving one on one assistance with resume preparation, goal setting and preparation for the National Work Readiness Credentialing test. They are an important piece of the workforce that lends to the success of the store. With positive encouragement and hands on job coaching, we

have witnessed unwilling participants become valuable contributors to our workforce! Community support of our store is evident by the volume and quality of donations received, as well as via the sales! We continue to build on our customer base, and although several other thrift stores have opened up recently, we are proud to be the only one who can claim that all proceeds benefit Greene County residents!

Recognizing the need for extra assistance for our many of our seasonal programs, such as Here Comes Christmas, Say Yes to the Prom Dress, and others, and in order to serve more individuals than current staffing allows, this past year we dedicated a .5 FTE Volunteer Coordinator to reach out to the public to recruit volunteers. Although this is an ongoing effort we have been very successful to date, and have several core volunteers that are the backbone of our thrift store. We will continue to work in this area, providing opportunity for older citizens, youth and the general public to give back to their communities.

Our Partners Catch A Ride program continued to be a valuable resource for low wage earners in 2013. Limited to one van by lack of resources, this program provided transportation to and from employment for 53 individuals in 2013. With a route that covered the entire county except for the mountaintop, the van brought workers to nursing and long term facilities, retail stores, and factories in Greene and Columbia County. The program, through the years, was reduced from four vans that included service to the mountain, to two vans limited to the valley and river towns, to one in recent years. The program was scheduled to end in September of 2013 due to lack of financial support, until one of our board members was able to obtain a \$15,000 donation from an anonymous donor to keep the program running through the end of the year. We had applied for a Workforce Development Discretionary grant from the NYS Department of State that would have funded transportation as a support to employment, and were hoping to have word by that time. Unfortunately, our application was not funded, and the program ended in early 2014. Not only did this van service provide rides to the employed, but it was also an important factor for those striving towards compliancy with DSS regulations regarding work and volunteer assignments. Unless one lives and works in the same town, the cards are stacked against them.

Greene County lacks employment opportunities for those with limited education and job skills. Those employers that do hire those with limited skills rarely, if ever, offer full time employment. There are not sufficient funds available in our community to assist these individuals in gaining the education and training necessary to earn a living wage. Housing costs far exceed the earnings of most citizens in our community. Much of the more “affordable” housing, a good proportion of which is sub standard, is outside of Catskill – one might have to commute 20 miles or more one way to work. Without owning one’s own vehicle, how is one expected to get there? There is no public transportation that one might rely on for the purpose of employment- what does exist is useful perhaps for medical appointments and/or shopping trips.

We, as a community, need to take a long hard look at the issues facing Greene County residents. We are setting people up to fail. We are making it increasingly difficult for the middle class to sustain financially, and making it impossible for those living in poverty to climb out. We expect people to work, yet the jobs are limited, and there is no assistance to gain necessary skills. We offer no transportation to help folks maintain their employment. We allow property owners to ask for rents far beyond the earning potential of so many of our citizens, and at any point in time have entire families living in one room motels units because they have nowhere else to go.

Some say that the economy is improving in Greene County- I would ask that person to spend a day or two in our offices and hear the stories of those who just cannot make ends meet. Among staff, “the stories” are a common topic of conversation. From the outside, looking in, it is easy to make judgments about people living in poverty; so many of us do. The stories, however, might change your mind. We often question here how a person gets out of bed each day, goes to a difficult job that doesn’t pay the bills, cares for their family, needing to access SNAP benefits (food stamps) only to get dirty looks and snide remarks at the grocery store! Others have mental health issues that prevent them from maintaining employment, or suffer from alcohol and drug addiction. Perhaps the native Americans said it best “one cannot judge a man until he has walked a mile in his

moccasins". We are born of privilege, in comparison to many- the privilege of supportive family, the privilege of education, the privilege of full time employment. We, as a community, need to support those who are striving for what we take for granted. Our community cannot flourish while we have so many economically disadvantaged.

2014 marks the 50th Anniversary of Community Action Agencies in this country, and we are proud to be a part of this movement that works so diligently to bring equality and opportunity to others. With our 1,000 plus sister agencies, we share *The Promise of Community Action*:

*Community Action changes people's lives,
Embodies the spirit of hope,
Improves communities,
And makes America a better place to live.
We care about the entire community,
And we are dedicated to
Helping people help themselves
And each other.*

We at Community Action of Greene County are committed to improving the conditions in which low income people live, to giving people the tools they need to become self sufficient, to providing opportunity to live and work in their communities with pride.

As always, we are most appreciative of the support we receive from our community partners, and look forward to continued partnerships in making Greene County a better place for all.

Florence Ohle
Executive Director

Family, Community, and Victim Services

Community Action of Greene County, Inc provides support to individuals and families throughout the year. Holidays, the beginning of the school year, Prom and the winter season are particularly challenging times for many families in our local community. Community Action of Greene County, Inc offers seasonal assistance to help families during these difficult periods. Seasonal resources offered through Community Action are:

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Monies received through a grant from Stewarts Ice Cream Shop, The Stewarts Holiday Match Grant, as well as 120 backpacks filled with school supplies provided by United Stationers in Coxsackie permitted Community Action to provide school supplies and backpacks to needy families who reside in Greene County. During 2013, 230 back packs full of school supplies were provided to **100** Greene County families.

COAT AND BLANKET DISTRUBTION

During fall of 2013, Community Action launched our annual coat and blanket drive, Thanks to generous donations from community members of new or gently used coats and blankets, **46** clients from **18** families were able to select winter coats and blankets free of charge. As budget cuts and hard economic times continue, and the rising heating costs, bringing warmth to families in need continues to be even more essential.

HOLIDAY

During the holiday season many find themselves in a difficult place financially and may need a little help around Christmas to provide for their children. Thanks to generous donations received by community members, businesses and houses of worship, Community Action coordinates a Here Comes Christmas Program which consists of either an Adopt a Family program or toy distribution event. New clothes, toys and at times food are provided to program recipients. **461** children from **197** families in Greene County were able participate in 2013. It is also important to acknowledge that this program allows many compassionate community members an opportunity to share in the holiday spirit through their giving; many supporters look forward to participating in this event year after year.

PROM

Community Action of Greene County, Inc hosted its first "Say Yes to the Dress" Prom Event in April of 2013. This program made it possible for **19** Greene County teens to attend their high school prom, regardless of their family's financial difficulties. Students were provided free prom dresses, accessories and were entered into a contest to win several donated prizes from local hair and nail salons. The Prom program receives no actual funding and relies on community donations for these provisions.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA): Each year, IRS trained and certified volunteers and staff prepare income taxes for free for low and moderate income wage earners. In 2013, **181** returns were prepared at no cost to the taxpayers, resulting in over **\$249,000** in refunds to Greene County residents!

In addition to seasonal programs and services, during 2013 Community Action of Greene County, Inc continued to provide a broad spectrum of resources to assist low and moderate income individuals and families with the intent of them gaining self-sufficiency and economic independence over the long term. The resources the agency offers currently are:

Partners Catch A Ride: Transportation to and from the job sites for low income Greene County residents lacking personal transportation; **53** individuals were able to maintain employment during 2013 with this assistance. Unfortunately funding for this program has been eliminated and this program was terminated in February 2014.

Wheels For Work: A low interest car loan program for income eligible individuals who have been working steadily for at least three months and have a child in the household or are paying child support. This program is offered to both Greene and Columbia Counties residents. During 2013, **2** loans were approved and processed. Unfortunately, many of those who might qualify for this program are now enticed by predatory lenders and choose the "buy here, pay here" loans that actually cost them a great deal more in the long run. We continue to promote this program however, as financial literacy and budgeting are important pieces offered in addition to the loans.

Healthy Homes: A program provided through a contract with the Department of Social Services, Healthy Homes provides participants with six months of case management, including hands on education and supplies in order to establish and maintain a healthy living environment for their family. These clients have been identified

by various agencies including but not limited to the Department of Social Services, Early Childhood Learning Center, and WIC. To be eligible for this program the client must be at risk of Child Protective Services intervention due to unhealthy conditions in their home, and must have a household income no greater than 200% of the Federal Poverty Income Standard, or is TANF eligible. During 2013 17 families actively participated in this program. Unhealthy conditions identified through this program have included head lice infestations, bed bug infestations, lack of organization or storage, or simply lack of knowledge and resources necessary to maintain a cleanly home.

Food Pantry Our Emergency Food Pantry serves low income individuals and families from Greene County who have difficulty meeting their regular expenses for food and who are unable to provide for themselves or their families. With the continuing rising prices for fuel, gasoline and rent, in addition to the lack of public transportation, limited employment and the rural nature of the county, many families continue to struggle to make ends meet and must access our food pantry more than ever. During 2013 1545 families/ 4005 individuals have accessed our food pantry; this number is inclusive of families and individuals that have accessed the pantry multiple times over the year. This represents our pantry providing 36,045 meals!! Now consider that there are at least 7, if not more pantries in Greene County providing this service as well. This alone is an illustration of the needs of our community.

HUD Supportive Housing Program: A supportive housing program for two individuals who have been determined to have been chronically homeless (homeless for a 1 year period, or 4 bouts of homelessness in the past 3 years) and have a disabling condition. Rental assistance, advocacy, education, and case management are provided to program recipients. During 2013 one of the program recipients continued to thrive, remaining permanently housed for over a year, obtaining part time employment, reestablishing relationship with family members and connecting with other resource in our community. The second participant, due to their severe mental illness, left the program during the year. We are actively looking to fill this bed. Through the same funding stream, we have 2 beds for victims of domestic violence leaving our shelters, and 2 two bedroom and 1 three bedroom units for women and children leaving our shelters. These grants are possible through our active membership in the local HUD Continuum of Care (CoC).

The National Work Readiness Credentialing Course: The course consists of four modules, Situational Judgment, Active Listening, Reading Comprehension and Mathematics and is ideal for individuals entering the workforce for the first time, returning to the workforce, or transitioning from one industry to another. This material is offered to those referred to us by the Department of Social services for their CWEP assignments, or others who lack work experience. The course's objectives are:

- To enable adults and older youth to demonstrate to prospective employers that they have knowledge and skills needed for successful performance as entry level workers.
- To streamline the hiring process for businesses, by identifying a work ready pool of entry-level job applicants.
- To improve the ability of local, regional, and state workforce development systems to reliably identify and consistently refer work-ready applications to their business customers.
- To improve the ability of adult basic education and workforce development systems to help individuals develop the knowledge and skills required to be fully competent entry-level workers in the 21st century workplace.

Solutions to End Homelessness Program (STEHP): Community Action of Greene County, Inc

administers the Solutions to End Homelessness Program (STEHP). The goal of STEHP is to assist individuals and families in remaining in or obtaining permanent housing, and assists them with supportive services during their experience of homelessness, the eviction process and housing stabilization. While a small portion of the homeless population requires sustained assistance and more intensive services, a large number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness can be assisted through the provision of rent assistance and some housing stabilization services, such as help with employment, connecting with resources like TANF and SSI/SSDI, and budget counseling. These services are provided through the Rapid Re-housing sector of STEHP. Another group of individuals and families can be prevented from becoming homeless in the first place through the rental assistance such as first month's rent and security deposit or paying back rent owed to the landlords and limited services. These services would be provided through the Prevention sector of STEHP. During 2013 Community Action of Greene County, Inc was able to assist 137 individuals in obtaining or remaining in permanent housing.

Columbia Greene Domestic Violence Program

A woman may often be frightened of a stranger, but it's her spouse, a fiancé, a boyfriend, or someone she knows who is most likely to hurt her. According to a U.S. Justice Department study, two-thirds of violent attacks against women are committed by someone the woman knows. In the United States, one of the most dangerous places for a woman is her own home. Approximately 1,500 women are killed each year by husbands or boyfriends. *Because women represent a vast majority of victims, we refer to abusers as males and victims as female.*

There is no excuse for abuse.

On March 7, 2013 President Obama was able to sign a bill after it made it through both houses that both strengthened and reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act. The signing and reauthorization of this bill was vital to the continuation of services provided by the Columbia Greene Domestic Violence Program. This particular enhanced bill meant that women and men who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking will still be able to continue to access resources they need in their own community, to help them heal from the trauma they have experienced. During 2013 in the rural counties of Greene and Columbia **230 clients** accessed the Columbia Greene Domestic Violence Non-Residential office for assistance in obtaining a total of **155 orders of protection**, as well as support group or individual support counseling. In addition the program provided residential services to **163 women and children** as well as responded to over **1156 hotline calls**. Additionally we provided over **10 presentations and 18 outreach activities** providing information and awareness regarding the impact that domestic violence has on its victims as well as the community.

Weatherization Assistance Program

The Energy Program received \$250,000 in Weatherization grant funds for the 2013 contract year, a significant decrease from previous. Fortunately, an additional allocation of \$50,000 came soon after. The grant was issued through the Division of Housing and Community Renewal, Energy Services, U.S. Department of Energy, and the Home Energy Assistance Program. In calendar year 2013, we provided 56 households with energy saving improvements that may have included insulation, weather stripping, replacement of windows and doors, and repair or replacement of heating units. Unfortunately, we often find ourselves in situations where we must defer the work until other repairs are made in the home, such as roof repair or replacement, removal of mold or asbestos.

The Energy Program also provides Empower New York services to qualified Greene County residents. The focus of Empower New York is on cost-effective electric reduction measures, particularly lighting and refrigerator replacements, as well as other cost-effective energy measures. We completed 36 of these jobs in 2013.

In summer of 2013, our Weatherization Director retired, leaving a void in the agency. Jamie Linzey came in soon after, and has proven to be an asset to our Weatherization Department and agency. She is currently working towards achieving her BPI (Building Performance Institute) certification.

We have recently been informed that our funding level has been restored for the coming contract year, and we look forward to serving Greene County homeowners and renters through this service.

Pay it Forward Community Thrift Store

In our first full year of operation, the store has generated \$62,000 in gross receipts, and has accepted donations from the community of goods and services valued at over \$190,000. In addition, the store serves as a job training site for those identified by the Department of Social Services CWEP (Community Work Experience Program), and an opportunity for other community members to volunteer.

Community Action of Greene County, Inc
2013 Statistics

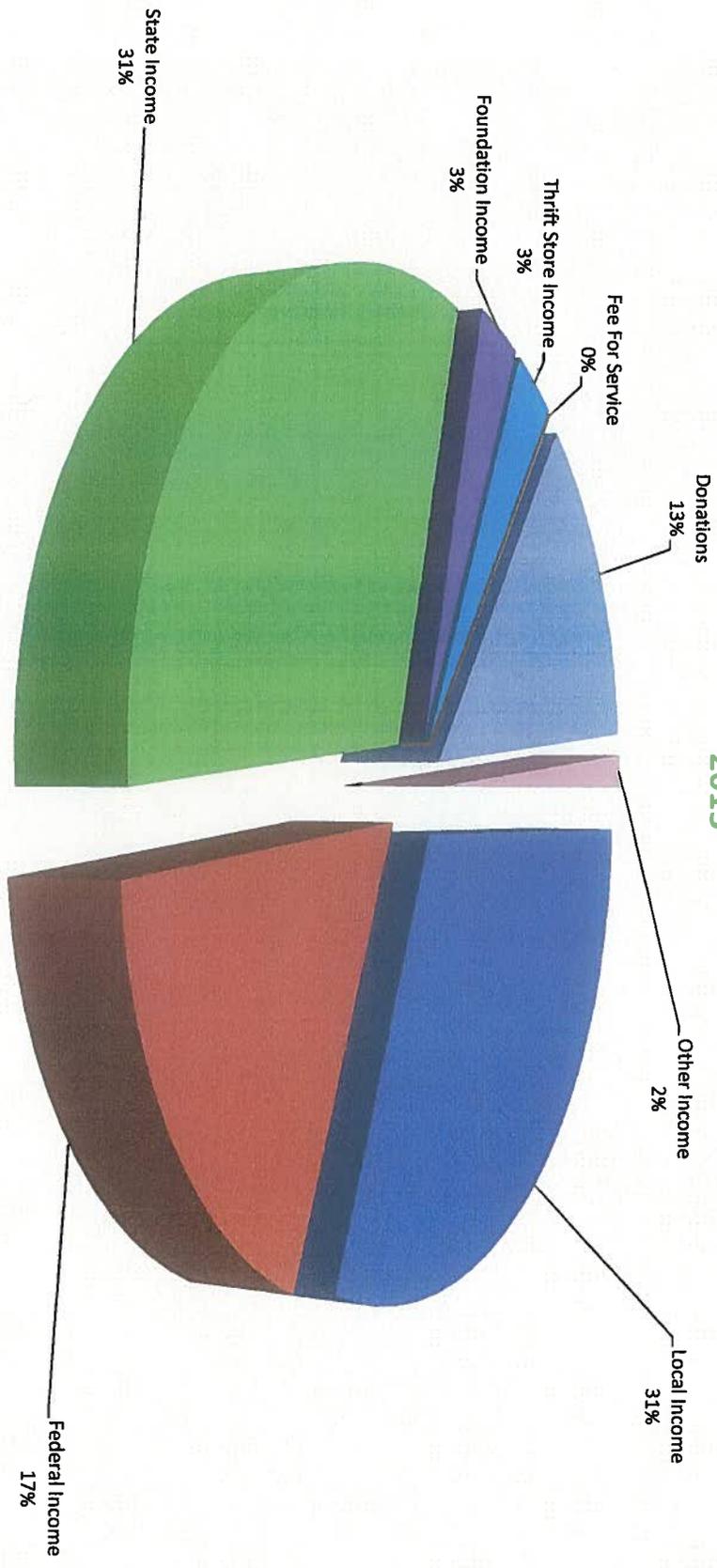
- Assisted **2 individuals** in accessing **reliable transportation** through a used car loan
- Provided transportation for **53 individuals** to and from **employment, job trainings**
- Provided **21 adults** with **GED** instruction
- Provided **56 low income households** with **Weatherization** services
- Provided **33 low income households** with **EmPowerNY Services**
- Provided **1545 (households, 4005 individuals (emergency food packages (36,045 individual meals!))**
- Provided **221 households** with **clothing**
- Provided **230 children** with **backpacks and school supplies**
- Provided **230 women** with **protection from violence** through **non residential** services
- Assisted in obtaining **155 Orders of Protection**
- Provided **163 women and children, effected by Domestic Violence, with temporary shelter**
- Responded to **1156 Domestic Violence Hotline** calls
- Assisted **137 families** in finding or maintaining permanent **housing through providing security deposits or rental assistance, assistance with utilities.**
- Provided **rental subsidies for permanent supportive housing for 3 chronically homeless individuals and 5 victims of domestic violence**
- Assisted **181 households** by preparing **income tax returns resulting in refunds in excess of \$249,000**
- Provided **461 Greene County children** from low income households with **Christmas gifts**
- Provided **volunteer opportunities for 12 senior citizens and other community members**
- Recorded **536 Hours of volunteer service from the community, and an additional 353 hours from CWEP, or DSS recipients**

Community Action
of Greene County, Inc.

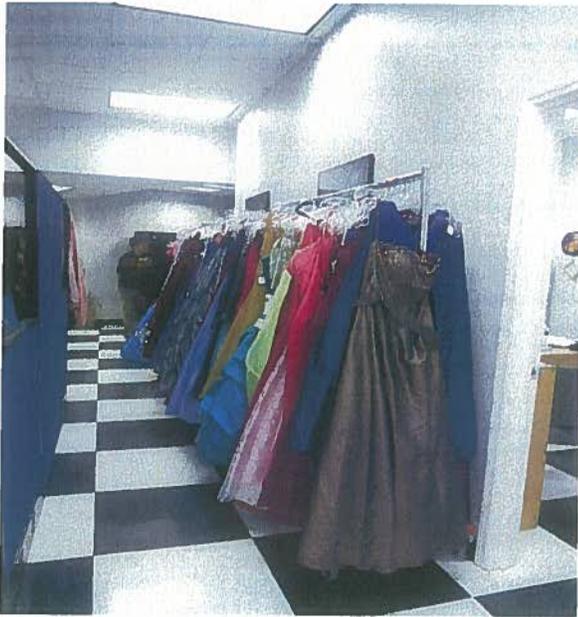
Annual Report, January, 2013 through December, 2013

Funding Source	STATE	FEDERAL	LOCAL	PRIVATE
NYS Dept of State - Community Services Block Grant		\$259,984.00		
Greene County Dept. of Social Services			\$83,087.55	
Regional Food Bank of Northeast New York				\$4,377.00
Columbia County Dept of Social Services			\$37,602.19	
Foundation Grants				\$62,500.00
NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services	\$18,449.75			
NYS Office of Victims Services	\$149,650.50			
Emergency Shelter Grant	\$43,256.00			
Fee for Service & Program Income				\$20,470.96
Federal Family Violence Prevention		\$34,858.74		
LDSS (Domestic Violence Per Diems)			\$459,637.24	
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development		\$52,301.79		
Greene County Legislature			\$36,765.00	
Donations				\$45,042.47
Emergency Food & Shelter		\$5,958.00		
United Way of Columbia and Greene Counties			\$220.00	
NYS Office of Temp/Disab Assist (STEPH)	\$78,758.91			
Transitional Housing Income			\$10,764.94	
NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal	\$333,328.75			
NYS Empower	\$18,345.59			
Interest Income				\$1,317.55
Legal Aid Society				\$2,424.60
Pay it Forward Thrift Store Income				\$62,641.51
IN KIND Services, Non Monetary Donations and Services				\$228,036.75
Totals	\$641,789.50	\$353,102.53	\$628,076.92	\$426,810.84
TOTAL AGENCY INCOME:	\$2,049,779.79			

Community Action of Greene County, Inc. Annual Income 2013



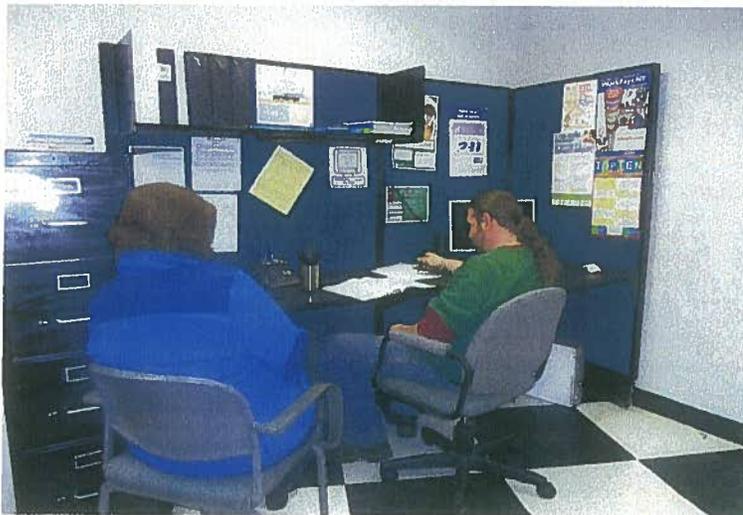
Community Action at Work – A Year in Pictures



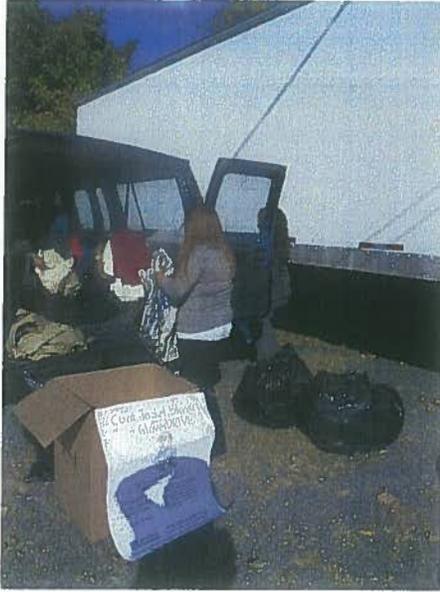
Donated prom gowns are available to Greene County students in need



Store coordinator, Alison Vandenburg provides instruction to a volunteer in the storage area of the thrift store.



Resource Specialist Nancy Meyer assists a consumer with preparing for the National Work Readiness Credentialing exam in our Resource Room. The room provides a computer and work area for job readiness and search purposes, as well as apartment searches.



To the left, Resource Specialist/Volunteer Coordinator Bethany Becker sorts donations for the annual coat and blanket drive. Below, she and Diane McNeny prepare for the Here Comes Christmas gift distribution.



Executive Director Florence Ohle, Operations Officer Karen VanValkenburgh, Weatherization Director Jamie Linzey, Family, Community and Victim Services Director Barbara Palmateer, and Board of Directors member Carol Pfister draw the winning ticket for the Lottery Tree Food Pantry fundraiser held in December.



Resource Specialist Diane McNeny sorts through produce in the food pantry. Produce is received from the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York throughout the year, and in season from several local farms.

Staff attended the Hunter Mountain Country Music Festival to educate the public on issues affecting our community, such as food insecurity. We invited the concert goers to help "stomp out hunger" in Greene County!





May is Community Action Month, and volunteers assisted at our May Family Fun Day at the cupcake booth!

Community Action of Greene County, Inc.
cordially invites you to our

9th Annual
Silent Auction ~ Dinner
Friday ~ May 3, 2013

**SPECIAL
MUSICAL
GUEST**

Founding member of
The Manhattan Transfer



Time: 5:30 - Cocktail
6:00 - Dinner
6:30 - Entertainment & Auction

Where: 7856 Route 9W
Catskill, NY 12414

TICKETS
\$40 PER PERSON

For Tickets / Info call 943-9205

CATERING BY 

RSVP by April 27, 2013

Certainly a highlight of our year, we were privileged to have Ms. Laurel Masse of the Manhattan Transfer perform at our fundraiser in May.