

Annual Report

20
23



315-376-8202

8265 State Route 812

Lowville, New York 13367

lewiscountyopportunities.com

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Our vision & mission

Vision

A community where people are empowered to live safely and without economic barriers.

Mission

Working with people in need to promote a higher quality of life in our community

Lewis County Opportunities (LCOI) is a Community Action Agency formed in 1965. We provide many programs to help with unmet needs related to poverty or victimization, and other services which offer a long-term approach to the chronic impacts of poverty. The services we offer are carefully designed by first assessing local needs and then identifying priority areas based upon that data.

From the CEO

Poverty is a complex social issue. The prevalence of poverty in our community is influenced by the number and type of available jobs, availability and cost of childcare, natural resources and infrastructure in our region that can either foster business growth or hamper it, the cost of living relative to labor market, and individual personal accountability. Ultimately, poverty touches the entire community whether a person is identified as "low-income" or not.

At LCOI, we don't want to sit back and allow our community to degrade. We don't want to see our youth move away for jobs. We don't want to see our housing stock deteriorate or be abandoned. We don't want to see people struggle to get by in their working years only to face financial distress during retirement. LCOI is one of many agencies trying to make a positive impact on the people in our community. We want to be a helping hand for people struggling with challenges. The items briefly discussed above are just some of our many services.

-Scott Mathys

Board of Directors

Joseph Hall	Chairperson
Sheri Schulz	Vice-Chairperson
Jake Moser	Treasurer
Pamela Stanley	Secretary
Jennifer Jones	Elected Public Official
Loren Lyndaker	Elected Public Official
Marilyn Patterson	Elected Public Official
Daina Dicob	Private Sector
Genevieve Fidler	Private Sector
Judith Karelus	Target Sector
Jannet Seelman	Target Sector
Jeanne Wooding	Target Sector

Staff

LEWIS COUNTY

Scott Mathys	CEO
Leslie Cherry	Deputy Director
Kevin Buckingham	Special Projects Manager
Deanna Finster	Finance Director
Jessica Barney.....	Fiscal Coordinator
Michelle Widrick	Weatherization Manager
Carl Finster	Weatherization Auditor
Floyd Farr	Weatherization Crew Chief/Auditor
Anthony Fiorillo	Weatherization Crew
Lewis Bucy III	Weatherization Crew
Trevor Mead	Weatherization Crew
Judy LaBrake	Housing Manager
Courtney Terry.....	Housing Specialist
Eliza Rennie.....	Housing Specialist
Shauna Roggie.....	Family Service Manager
Jamie Aucter	Family Service/Rep Payee
Heather Kloster.....	Family Service Worker
Taylor Munger.....	Family Service/Front Desk Reception
Mary Interiano.....	Victim Service Manager
Calla Morrison.....	Victim Service Senior Advocate
Carole Hoch	Victim Service Advocate
Chelsea Greenwood.....	Victim Service Advocate
Kim Watkins	Victim Service Advocate
Melody Mercurio.....	Victim Service Advocate

Staff

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Jason McAvoy.....	Housing Manager
Kayla Struncius	Senior Housing Specialist
Alexandria Bellinger	Housing Specialist
Alisa Degen	Housing Specialist
Mark Gordon.....	Housing Specialist
Krystal LaPlante.....	Housing Specialist
Holley Maxwell	Housing Specialist
Amanda Palmer	Housing Specialist
Lisa Snyder.....	Housing Specialist
Sarah Sheridan	Administrative Assistant

Our “workforce” was comprised of 12 board members, 32 paid staff, and 78 volunteers. This mission-aligned workforce provided approximately 60,000 paid work hours and 13,000 volunteer hours toward our community services last year.

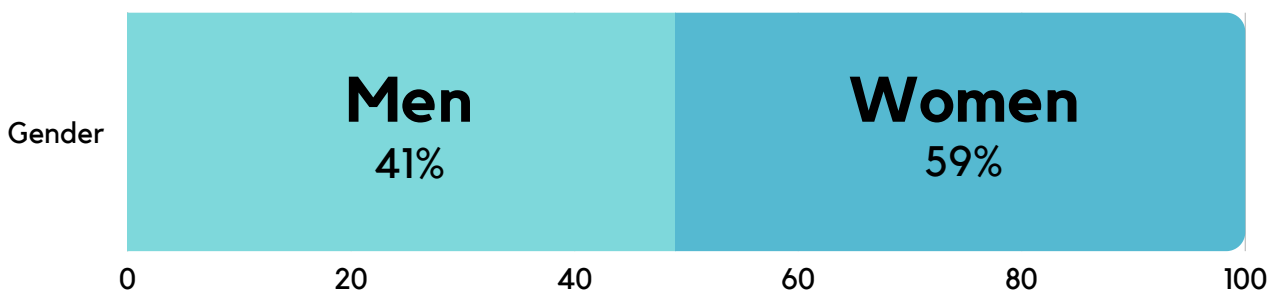
We are blessed by our committed staff and volunteers, our partner agencies, and our funders.

During this past year, our overall turnover rate was 12%, which is very low for the current labor market. We said goodbye to a few of our coworkers who retired or transferred their skills into other employment pursuits. We will miss them and their dedication. Those departures brought in new faces to help fulfil our mission.

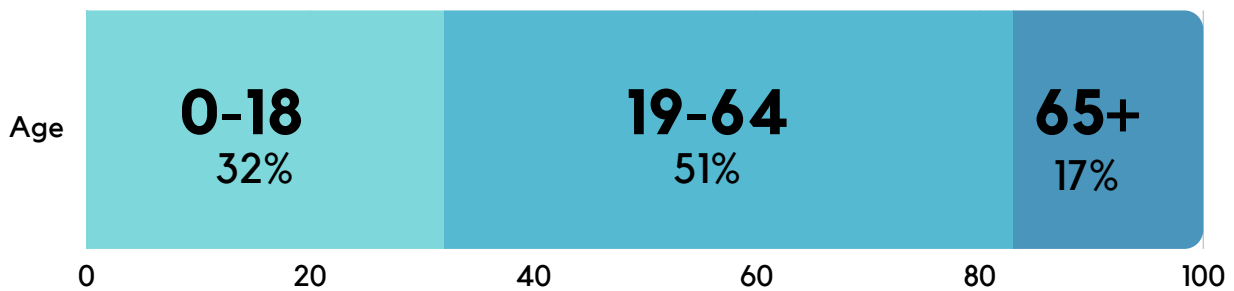
Statistics

The charts below show raw statistics from our services last year. In 2023 we helped provide community programs to over 3,100 people. Please look beyond the numbers as each number is a face in our community.

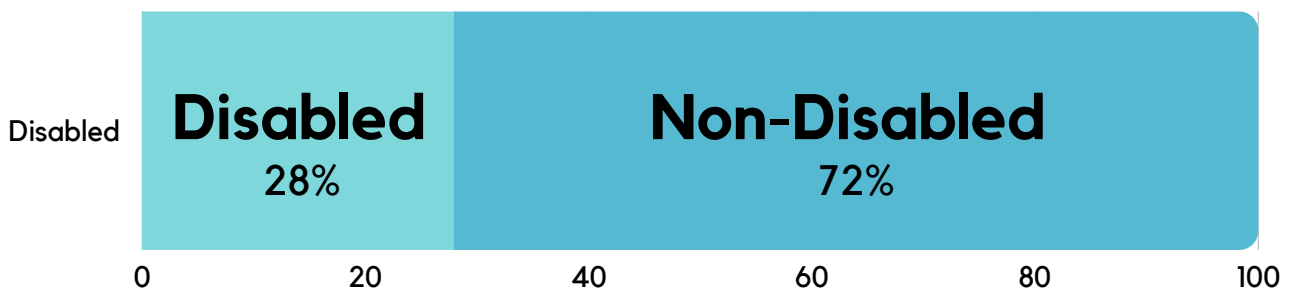
Poverty is not gender specific, but trending does tend to show an impact on females more than males.



Poverty does not discriminate by age and is felt throughout the entire age spectrum.



In addition, 28% of our consumer base reported some level of disability.



Food Security

In 2023, food pantries located in New Bremen, Harrisville, Port Leyden, and Copenhagen provided the equivalent of 38,286 meals. This is over 40% more than the previous year.

The buying power of the Food Bank of Central New York was essential in this effort. Likewise, the Northern New York Community Foundation was vital to the process by providing substantial donations to food pantries and administering additional contributions from the WinDenmark Advised Fund during the year. Many other groups in our community helped the pantries with food drives as well. We appreciate all of these efforts!

Copenhagen Food Pantry:

9371 NY-12, Copenhagen, NY
13626

Basement of St. Mary's Church

Open Hours: Third Wednesday
4-6PM

Harrisville Food Pantry:

14206 South Creek Road
Harrisville NY 13648

Open Hours: First Tuesday
7-8PM

3rd Tuesday 10-11AM

New Bremen Food Pantry:

8255 State Route 812,
Lowville, NY 13367

Open Hours: Monday-Friday
8:30AM-3PM

Port Leyden Food Pantry:

7108 North Street, Port
Leyden, NY 13433

St. Martin's Rectory
Open Hours: Monday-Friday
9AM-1PM

Shelter

Safe and affordable housing can be a challenge for families in poverty. In 2023, LCOI helped over 1,300 families in Jefferson and Lewis Counties with rental assistance through Housing Choice Vouchers which totaled more than \$10 million in landlord subsidies between both counties. Even if a family has a place to stay, the housing costs don't end there. Heat bills can erode the monthly budget drastically. Because of this, Opportunities provides weatherization services to help make homes more energy efficient.



Shelter Continued

In 2023, we increased energy efficiency to over 40 homes; this included replacing windows, furnace cleaning and tuning, and adding insulation in walls, attics, and crawl spaces. Funds for these services were administered by NYS Homes and Community Renewal, with supplemental services funded through the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). Some of our seniors need accessibility improvements to their home in order to remain there; things such as access ramps, widening doors, and modifying bathrooms allow this to happen. In 2023 we improved the homes of senior citizens through an OFA Home Modification Grant, funded by Lewis County Office for the Aging. There are some members of our community who need extra one-time help paying their rent/mortgage or emergency utility assistance due to unforeseen circumstances. Through Emergency Food and Shelter, administered by United Way Worldwide, and a Global Partners LP donation, the agency assisted many families with these acute needs.



Safety

People should not have to live in fear of physical, mental, financial, or sexual abuse. Unfortunately, such problems do exist in Lewis County despite its reputation as a safe place to live and raise a family. To address victimization, LCOI has a Victim Services program which served 331 people in 2023. Unfortunately, this is a 10% increase over the prior year. Under this program, the agency operates a safe dwelling where families can begin the next chapter in their lives. That safe dwelling provided 390 protected nights during the year, and even 66 nights for pets through our Pet Safe program. Other services include operating a 24/7 crisis hotline, providing many counseling services, completing orders of protection, assisting victims with restitution claims, and serving youth who have been sexually exploited.



Safety Continued

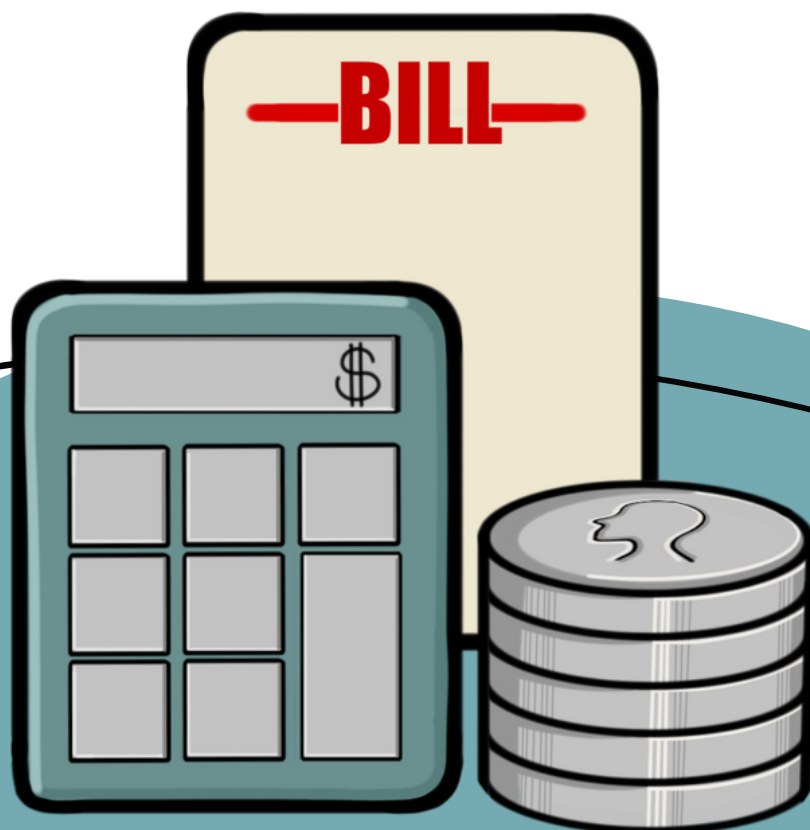
The Victim Services Program also assists with a joint satellite Child Advocacy Center project spearheaded by our neighboring cohort-agency, the Victims Assistance Center of Jefferson County. Our Victim Services program is funded through the NYS Office of Victim Services, Office of Children and Family Services, Division of Criminal Justice Services, the County of Lewis through the Department of Social Services, and private foundations.

If you or someone you know has been a victim and needs help, please contact us at our crisis hotline number, **315-376-HELP**, which is available 24 hours a day.



Financial Security

Many people in poverty are eager to take control of their money instead of being controlled by financial pressures. We offer money management tips and face-to-face meetings with people to help provide tools for them to build a better relationship with their money. Funded by CSBG grants, these resources help people build budgets, learn to live within their means, and develop essential money management skills. The agency also provided Representative Payee services for 20 people.



Critical Needs

Unmet critical needs come in many forms: vehicle repairs, monthly car or insurance payments, beds for a child, or other household needs like furniture, appliances, clothing, gas cards, car seats, hygiene products, medical devices, and many more. In 2023 we helped 76 individuals with \$17,300 in critical needs assistance. This was made possible by funding from Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) administered by the NYS Department of State, the United Way of Northern New York ALICE initiative, Stewart's Holiday Match, private donations, and our own unrestricted revenues from the proceeds of the Opportunity Knocks Thrift Store.



Car Seats

In addition to the critical needs above, having safe and properly fitting car seats should not be something reserved only to families able to afford them. Because of this, LCOI has 4 certified Car Seat Technicians who, in 2023, provided 54 car seats to help keep our littlest county residents safe. This program was supported by Child Passenger Safety, administered by the NYS Governor's Traffic Safety Committee and CSBG.



Our Car Seat Technicians:

Shauna Roggie

Melody Mercurio

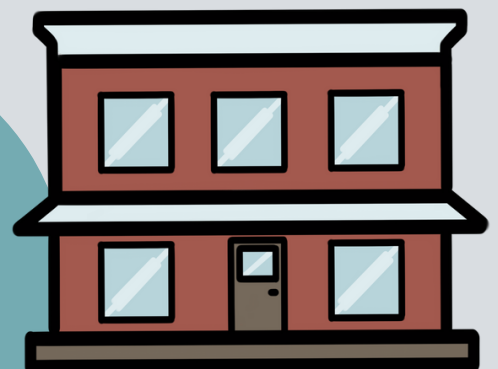
Judy LaBrake

Heather Kloster



Thrift Store

Our thrift store, "Opportunity Knocks," is a great resource for volunteerism and a place to buy lightly used items at a great price to stretch your own budget. The proceeds from sales at the thrift store also generate funds for services that grants don't cover.



Contact

If you or someone you know could benefit from our assistance or want to know more about our other services....

LIKE US ON 

Lewis County Opportunities

FOLLOW US ON 

@lewiscountyopps

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE

www.lewiscountyopportunities.com



Lewis County
315-376-8202



Jeff. County
315-788-0193



315-376-8421



315-782-3813



8265 State Rte. 812
Lowville, NY 13367



749 LeRay Street
Watertown, NY 13601

We thank our employees, board members, volunteers, and the community for helping with our mission. Without the combined efforts of everyone, Opportunities wouldn't be able to make such an impact within our community. Thank you!