



LifeWorks

COMMUNITY ACTION

Help Starts Here.

Formerly Saratoga County Economic Opportunity Council



2020 Impact Report

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Introducing LifeWorks

We are a community of neighbors helping neighbors. For the past 55 years, we've worked with tens of thousands of families as Saratoga County Economic Opportunity Council (EOC).

In 2020, demand for our services increased four-fold due to the pandemic. People who never imagined themselves needing a food package delivery or a referral for rent assistance turned to us for help while our regular participants faced additional hardships. We never closed our doors or turned anyone away.

We are excited to continue that legacy in 2021 as LifeWorks Community Action. The LifeWorks name embodies our core value of working together to make our community a better place to live and mirrors our spirit of hope for all families.

Our new name was designed to reflect the experience that participants have when working with us, where they are treated with dignity and respect and can find someone to walk with them on their journey toward self-sufficiency.

There is no denying 2020 was hard, and 2021 probably will be too. But as LifeWorks Community Action, we are here to be a part of the solution and we will continue to work every day, neighbors helping neighbors, toward a brighter future for us all.

Sincerely,



Jo Anne Hume
Executive Director

LifeWorks' Vision

To create a community of neighbors helping neighbors, in which people in need are provided the methods and resources to achieve their goals for self-sufficiency.



Who We Are

LifeWorks Community Action has helped thousands of individuals through periods of economic hardship and toward more secure lives filled with opportunity.

LifeWorks is one of only 50 designated safety net community action agencies in New York and one in a network of 1,100 nationally.

We stand at the intersection of the economic equality and the social justice movements.

We recognize that structural race, gender and other inequities remain barriers that must be addressed.

As a community and as a nation, we must ensure that no one is forced to endure the hardships of poverty.

We believe that by working together, we can alleviate the symptoms of resource insufficiency and break the cycle of systemic disadvantage.

Our team of dedicated staff and volunteers take a whole-person and whole-family approach to service coordination. With a wide array of programs under our umbrella, we are uniquely situated as a one-stop shop for assistance.

Participants are not only connected with the resources here at LifeWorks but also throughout the community.

This comprehensive approach ensures that our neighbors have the skills, tools, resources and opportunities to make a meaningful change.



Learn more at lifeworksaction.org

Grassroots Programs

LifeWorks' grassroots programs rely on generous community partners, private grants and the Community Services Block Grant to provide critical services that support the whole person and the whole family. These services have a county-wide impact because we leverage the reach of our larger federally funded programs.

FOOD PROGRAMS

We believe that no one should go hungry. Our food programs helped turn that into a reality every day during the pandemic.

In 2020, we had the privilege and ability to drastically scale up our services to meet the needs of our community during the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of meals we provided increased from 135,000 in 2019 to over 300,000 in 2020.

Each program is tailored to help neighbors facing a variety of challenges. Traditionally, The Pantry sends participants home with a four-day supply of food during a visit. This changed to a delivery-only system during the COVID-19 pandemic to keep our neighbors safe as well as continue to serve those particularly vulnerable, like those with health risks or limited transportation.

The Kitchen continued to offer free lunches daily in Saratoga Springs, but transitioned to a to-go model only. This helped keep a sense of normalcy for neighbors who depend on us for their daily meal. Rural Food Delivery delivers food packages to homebound or disabled neighbors in need.

LifeWorks Food Programs are not just nutrition for the body - but food for the soul.



Sigh Of Relief

Ron's first call after losing his job was to us. Linda assured him that a food package could be delivered the very next day.

Linda also told him he could speak to a navigator who would connect him to resources to help with his other challenges too.

By the end of the call, it sounded like the weight of the world had been lifted from his shoulders.

Connections

One of the families who participates in Immigrant Services faced underemployment after the shutdown and their finances were even tighter than normal as they struggled with school closures.

Joan was able to serve as a bridge with the school to get them connected with their English as a New Language teacher and school meals. She also worked to secure food deliveries from The Pantry.

She also connected them to an attorney at Prisoners Legal Services, coordinated a visit to urgent care, secured financial assistance and provided reliable information about tenant rights and COVID-19 safety tips.

"I never thought I would have to ask for help. But I'm glad I did. No one made me feel embarrassed. They got me a food package right away and took the time to connect me with other programs."



FAMILY SERVICES

The safety net system can be hard to navigate. LifeWorks navigators learn about each participant's challenges, identify solutions and accompany them on their journey.

In 2020, we expanded the family services department by adding a family services manager specializing in trauma-informed care and a family services specialist to directly support neighbors in need.

These positions are critical, particularly as our communities and neighbors work their way through COVID-19 economic recovery.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

We support immigrant neighbors as they navigate life in a new community and build strong ties.

Our bilingual staff break down barriers by offering ESL classes, translation and interpretation, as well as assistance accessing health, legal, educational and financial services.

During COVID-19, much attention was focused on facilitating communication between immigrant families and their teachers as well as securing laptops and internet for remote learning. Immigrant children had an especially difficult time accessing school lessons online and support was provided so that they would not fall disproportionately behind.

In 2021, our Immigrant Services team has grown again and is ready to assist even more families through economic recovery.

300,000+

Meals provided in 2020, a 150% increase from 2019

10,000+

Hours of donated time from dedicated volunteers

3,600

Referrals for assistance provided to food pantry customers

3,545

Summer lunches for children

2,300

legal, medical, transportation services, among others, provided to immigrant families

30

Saratoga County towns, cities and villages where support was provided to neighbors.

Learn more at lifeworksaction.org



Federal Programs

LifeWorks' federal and grassroots programs work together to form a strong network, allowing customers to access comprehensive assistance.

HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START

Head Start and Early Head Start supported 453 families and helped 534 children get ready for kindergarten both academically and socially in 2020.

Due to the pandemic, we added virtual delivery of childhood development, health and well-being services. This was a critical lifeline for many families who faced additional hardships due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Six percent of children were homeless and 76 percent of families had an income below the federal poverty guidelines.

Part of our mission is to work with parents and help families improve their quality of life. We helped 96 percent of enrolled families meet a goal from securing a job to finding a place to live to developing English skills.

Whether it's helping families coordinate doctor's appointments for vaccinations or locating resources for affordable housing, all of our Early Head Start and Head Start staff go above and beyond for those we serve.



Strong Network

In addition to the need for early childhood learning support, one of our Head Start families was facing housing and hunger challenges.

The family's health advocate was able to work internally with The Pantry to secure food package deliveries.

She also reached out to a local church to secure the donation and delivery of a mattress and frame for the child who did not have a bed.

Referral Help

We got a call from a family in crisis. The adults were laid off or facing reduced hours due to the pandemic, while the young child was without health insurance. They needed food and turned to us.

The family advocate was able to refer them to SAIL for disability assistance, Fidelis Care for health insurance and signed them up for a food package from The Pantry.

The advocate brought them their food delivery herself and watched as the young 3-year-old granddaughter came to the window and blew her a kiss.

Every dollar invested in LifeWorks Community Action is returned to our economy by creating jobs, supporting local businesses and reducing costs to our community associated with poverty. But, most importantly, it's an investment in our future.



WIC (WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN)

The WIC program provides food and nutritional support for pregnant and postpartum women, infants and children up to age 5. The WIC team helps moms become confident caregivers and provides personalized food packages, seasonal farmers market coupons, physical activity ideas and more.

During COVID, the WIC team transitioned to serving participants remotely. Participants said that they appreciated how well staff explained everything from EBT benefits to breastfeeding over the phone.

Each month, the WIC staff served approximately 1,450 people and increased as the year went on. On average, \$89,000 of WIC benefits were redeemed each month, about \$61.38 per participant.

WEATHERIZATION

Energy Services helps make homes safe and warm, lowering both utility and medical costs. Technicians conduct a comprehensive home energy audit and use the results to develop and execute a plan to weatherize a home.

This year, 175 dwellings were weatherized helping a total of 469 people. There was an average household energy-related investment of \$7,700 and the Department of Energy may increase that investment to \$10,000 in 2021.

By helping make homes safe, healthy and affordable, families are able to stay in their homes longer, keeping more affordable housing in stock.

95%

of Head Start children are up-to-date on immunizations

96%

of Head Start families met a goal with help

1,121

breastfeeding moms were assisted by WIC

\$89,000

Average monthly WIC benefit redemption

175

dwellings were weatherized

\$7,700

average investment in each weatherized dwelling.



Learn more at lifeworksaction.org



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CONTACT US

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