



# ANNUAL REPORT



2021

BUILDING A **STRONGER COMMUNITY**  
NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE

# Message from the Executive Director

*The Neighborhood Center continues to serve as a cornerstone of the Mohawk Valley, working to build stronger communities...*

**SANDRA SOROKA** NC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**SANDRA SOROKA**  
NC Executive Director



**W**e were all hoping to start 2022 knowing the pandemic was ending and to put it behind us. While we have had gains, it is clear we must continue to stay vigilant to ensure the safety of all. Getting back to “normal” will not be what we had hoped, however, we have and will continue to make adjustments allowing us all to get back to the activities that we have missed so much. As we work towards regaining a “normalcy” in our lives we also keep in our thoughts and prayers all who have been touched by tragedy, lost love ones, suffered from the angst of the pandemic and those who have and continue to experience social injustice and discrimination.

During the past two years our staff never faulted, they continued to provide much needed services albeit at times in a creative way. They never faltered the mission of the Center and strived to do all they could to provide necessary help, hope and to ensure the dignity of all who received services.

The pandemic did not stop us from forging new and enhancing already existing partnerships. 2021 saw the creation of the Crisis Response Team (CRT) with the Utica Police Department. This team approach responds to individuals with mental illness as a means to reduce judicial interventions where treatment is what is needed. We also partnered with FEMA to provide a local federal program, NY Project Hope to assist individuals understand the emotional impact of COVID.

We also continued our management of the North Utica Senior Community Center and continue to enhance daily offerings of programs and community space for events. In April we hosted the first Spring Craft Fair which was a great success with over 36 vendors and a full-house of attendees all day. Everyone is looking forward to the Fall event!

The past two years have hampered our fundraising events, reducing the much needed support for our child care programs. While we have kept child care open, the program has suffered financially even more than usual. We know how critical this service is, but periodically we have been faced with temporarily having to close classrooms due to exposures from COVID. This of course means no revenue while still having to pay costs. Thus, we are looking forward to our first in-person Child Care fund raising event in two years on June 18, 2022 – Gala Di Mistero presents Cirque De Rev. We hope you will join us for a magical night!

As we have for over 117 years, the Neighborhood Center continues to serve communities throughout our region to help children grow, strengthen families and address mental health needs to build stronger communities. Thank you for your support in carrying out this legacy.

# MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to enrich the lives of individuals and families through cooperative opportunities, resources, and advocacy which embrace diversity, promote empowerment, and foster responsible citizenship.

[www.neighborhoodctr.org](http://www.neighborhoodctr.org)

## Areas of Service



### CHILD CARE & FAMILY SERVICES

Information about our Licensed Care for children 6 weeks to 12 years; Universal Pre-K; Daycare Registration and CACFP; Outreach & Prevention; Community Health Worker Services; and many other services.

# 4,195

People Served

### BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES

The Neighborhood Center, Inc. provides professional, state-of-the-art mental health **clinical and crisis services** for children, youth, adults and their families as well as **psycho-social and care management** services for adults.

# 13,068

People Served

### MOBILE CRISIS ASSESSMENT SERVICES

MCAT is available to anyone seeking crisis intervention services in Oneida, Herkimer, Schoharie, Otsego, Delaware and Chenango Counties.

# 21,840

Calls!



# 2021 Accomplishments

## MCAT and UPD Partner up for Mental Health

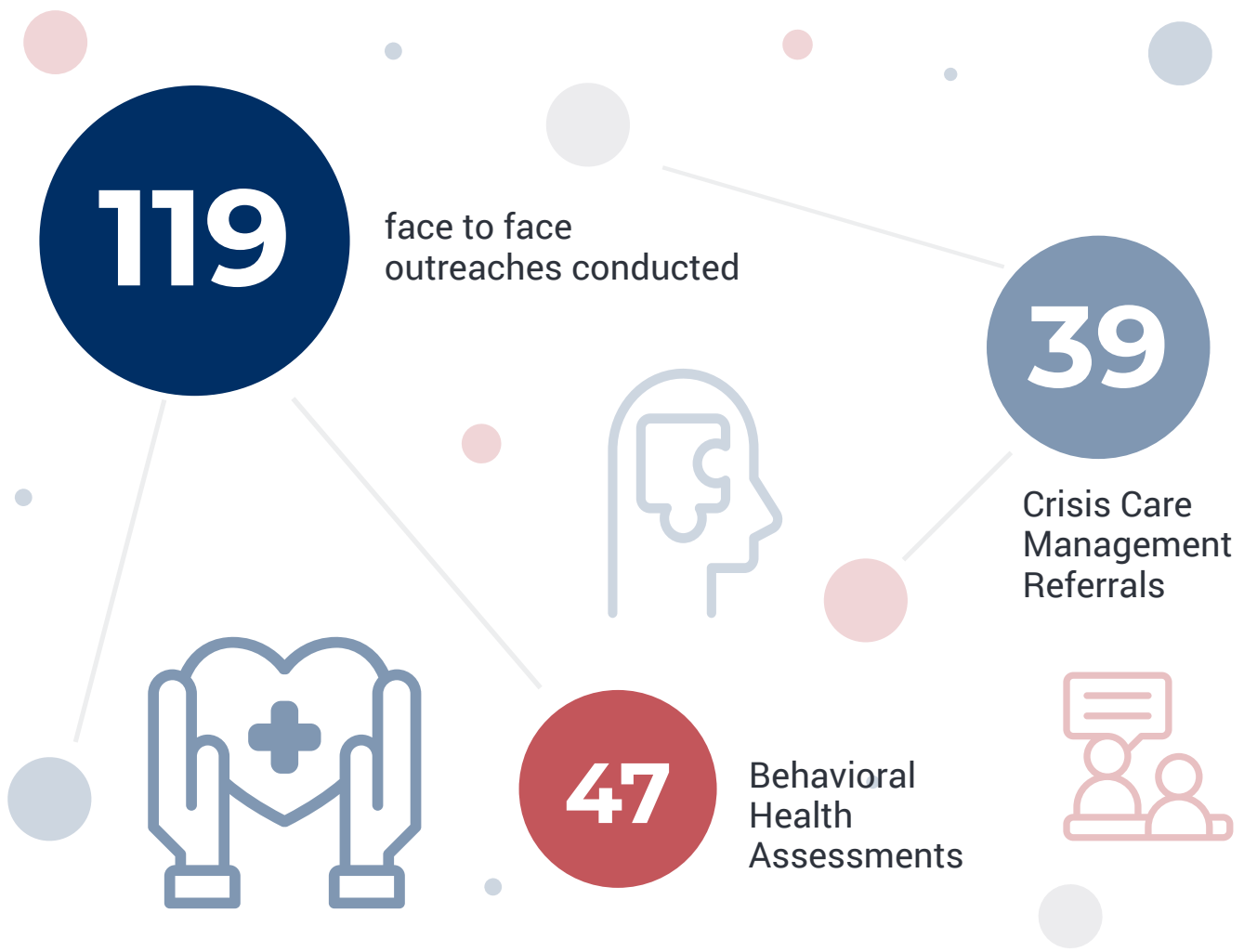


**M**ental health is a concern in our communities today. At times these crises manifest to the level in which an individual loses control of their life and may even put their own life or the lives of others in danger. At the Neighborhood Center, we recognize this community crisis.

County, the team is developed based on the theoretical approach of a Crisis Intervention Team model and consists of a designated police officer and a designated Crisis Counselor that responds to UPD or MCAT requests for crisis response.

**Continued on page 5**

Utica Police Department (UPD), in partnership with The Neighborhood Center Mobile Crisis Assessment Team initiated a pilot Crisis Response Team (CRT) unit in April 2021. Thanks to a Grant provided by the Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida



One MCAT Crisis Counselor/Program Coordinator and one Utica Police Department Officer will be on duty and available Monday through Friday from 10am-6pm. They respond to law enforcement calls relating to mental health issues coming into UPD. The team collaborates closely with Utica Police Officers, Oneida County Mental Health, agency partners and community members to provide ongoing support and mental health care in the community. In “off-shift hours”, the Utica Police Department will continue to utilize the MCAT Crisis Line (315-732-MCAT) as necessary to maintain consistent mental health support for clients in the community and to provide a crisis response.

The overall goal of this innovative program is to reduce unnecessary engagement with hospital emergency departments and law enforcement, and to provide linkage and support in obtaining mental health, substance use, and social services.



# 2021 Accomplishments *(cont.)*

**The Neighborhood Center Offers residents of Oneida County emotional support helplines, educational materials, and trusted referrals all dedicated to helping you manage and cope with changes brought on by COVID-19.**



**T**he Neighborhood Center Inc. has been chosen to be a local program provider for NY Project Hope, the statewide crisis counseling response to COVID-19. Our crisis counseling team members are trained to help people understand and cope with their reactions and emotions to challenges of COVID-19. Through an emotional support helpline, educational materials, in-person supports, virtual and in-person support groups, tabling events, and trusted referrals, NY Project Hope crisis counselors help people do their best to manage the stress, isolation, grief, and the many other challenging emotions stemming from the pandemic.

The Neighborhood Centers Project Hope Team has reached and served individuals in Oneida County through our Helpline, in-person and virtual events and groups, collaboration with other agencies and organizations, and we are still here to help the rest of the County. Call us, and together we can overcome this difficult time!

Our trained crisis counselors answer the Emotional Support Helpline from 8:30am to 4:30pm Monday-Friday, and collaboration and event opportunities are welcomed 7 days a week. They understand the emotions that arise from being unsettled and fatigued by COVID-19. The crisis counselors are supportive, careful listeners who are knowledgeable about accessible local resources. They also help by offering coping strategies and self-care guidance. Oneida County residents can call 315-272-6248 8:30am to 4:30pm Monday-Friday and be assured the call is confidential, anonymous, free.

NY Project Hope also has a website featuring coping tips, resources, and relaxation tips. Whether it's trying to balance the challenges of uncertainty or simply wanting to learn about organizations with resources that can assist with everything from finances to help with an older family member, visit [NYProjectHope.org](http://NYProjectHope.org)

4970

Oneida County in-person residents served

2278

Oneida County residents virtually served

**NY Project Hope**  
**Coping with COVID**

109

Oneida County residents anonymously served through Project Hope Helpline



49

Support/Wellness groups hosted for Oneida County Residents



# Celebrating Successes

The Neighborhood Center has been an integral part of the greater Mohawk Valley community, assisting and supporting more than 40,000 individuals and families annually. During the trying times of the Coronavirus pandemic, our staff have worked even harder to ensure that the people we serve are taken care of. We know that every family, every child, and indeed every individual measures their own success differently. Success for someone might be their ability to find a job using job placement services that we offer, recovering from a crisis due to their accessing our Mobile Crisis Assessment Team or Care Management program, or being a better parent or guardian as a result of their involvement in our Kinship Care Management, SOHO Permanency Resource Center, or any of the dozens of programs we provide to the community.

We are proud to offer a diverse array of services that in combination help make our community and the families that live here stronger. For more information on our programs please visit our website at [www.neighborhoodctr.org](http://www.neighborhoodctr.org)

## PROJECT AIM— Achieve, Inspire, Motivate



68

68 youth participated in Project AIM last year

A young woman who has a history of struggling with relationships with both peers adults in her life joined Project AIM. After her initial assessment, group meetings and interactions, she recognized the need for mental health services as well as an adult mentor. At first she was resistant, however, within a few months, she developed a trust with the mentor.

Her mentor taught her the importance of self-care and the need to find the right fit for counseling services. With the help of her caregiver and clinical staff, Project AIM was able to connect her with a counselor that suits her needs. This was the first time in years she was able to take steps to address her mental health – a huge and courageous step for her!



# Celebrating Successes

## COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS



**A** referral came to our program through the MVHS Women's Health Center – A woman who was 36 weeks pregnant and in need of food, baby items and education. She and her husband wanted to know what to expect as this was their first child.

Her husband was providing for the family as a farm hand. As they are Spanish-speaking, they were assigned to Angela who is a bilingual **Community Health Worker**.

The woman and her husband were both very involved in the process and asked important questions. The couple was unaware of the services they were able to receive until Angela referred them to a number of local resources – The Center, WIC, MVP Health, Johnson Park Center and The Neighborhood Center. They completed all referrals in order to receive what they needed to care for their baby.

Angela also provided training on labor & delivery, nutrition, safe sleep, breastfeeding, depression, shaken baby syndrome, newborn care, immunizations, postpartum care and birth control.

Mom delivered a healthy baby boy in September! The family was extremely grateful for all the help they received through our program.

### 2021 COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER PROGRAM STATS

254

Women/Families served

115

Infants born to clients in 2021



# Celebrating Successes

## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLINICS

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**A**fter an unfortunate incident, a woman lost custody of her two children and was required to attend therapy in effort to regain custody. She reached out to our Behavioral Health Clinics inquiring about services.

She began seeing one of our therapists and remained consistent and steady with her treatments; she attended appointments regularly, fully engaged and talked about the wide range of emotions accompanying losing custody of her children.

After completing all of her requirements, she was granted custody of her children. During her last appointment, she and her therapist reflected back on what she had accomplished. She is now employed, purchase a vehicle and began a new job. She is a proud mother of two children who are happy to be back in her loving care.

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### 2021 UTICA & ROME CLINIC STATS

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Adults who received care served



Children who received services in 2021

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# Celebrating Successes

## CARE MANAGEMENT



**A** Care Manager was assigned a client three years ago and they are still working together today. The client's primary goal was to terminate her heroin usage and maintain her sobriety. She has worked diligently alongside her Care Manager to achieve her goals and is proud to be in recovery for more than two years now!

She continues to attend outpatient treatment to maintain her recovery. She has worked hard to obtain multiple certifications to further advance her role as a peer support advocate in order to help others struggling with addiction.

She has made great strides in her recovery and with long-term assistance, support and guidance provided by her Care Manager, has increased her happiness and improved her quality of life.

### 2021 CARE MANAGEMENT STATS

908

Adults who received care

63

Children who received care

# Donors



*Our donors support us in our mission of building a stronger community.*

The generous support of our donors has allowed us to fund our Child Care program, which, due to a variety of reasons, does not receive enough support from public subsidies and parent fees to fully sustain this vital community program. A combination of donor gifts and the proceeds from our two annual events - our Gala and our Dinner and Auction go directly to support Child Care. Thanks to the generous support of our donors, we continue to sustain and grow this important program.



## Events

### 19th Annual Auction- Virtual

The Marie A. Russo Neighborhood Center Institute Board hosted its 19th Annual Auction virtually this year again due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. The event was held virtually in November for guests to bid on 89 different types of themed baskets. The event had a total net profit of \$23,724.49 from sponsorships, monetary donations and basket proceeds.

*Thank You to our Sponsors:*

- |                                      |                        |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| NBT Bank                             | Ascent Wealth Partners |
| H.J. Brandeles Corp.                 | Lincoln Davies         |
| Baird                                | Paradigm Consulting    |
| Lupini Construction                  | Bank Of Utica          |
| C. Lewis Tomaselli Architect         | Poncell Construction   |
| Fitzgerald, DePietro & Wonjnas, CPAs | C & D Advertising      |



### Gala Di Mistero... Once Upon A Night

The Neighborhood Center, Inc. hosted its fourth Gala Di Mistero virtually this year. Guests were able to purchase specially created mystery boxes in which guests were given five different smaller packages inside with riddles and clues. Guests then had to figure out what classic fairytale each package was themed and submit their answers to be included into the grand prize drawing. These mystery boxes were hand delivered by agency staff along with appetizers and drinks for guests as they attended the virtual component of the event. Guests were able to log into our virtual Gala in which we had two live comedians as well as other giveaways that guests could participate in as they enjoyed their appetizers and drinks. The event had a total net profit of \$29,662.24 from sponsorships, monetary donations and mystery boxes that were purchased.

*Thank You to our Sponsors:*

- |                                |                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Lincoln Davies Building Supply | The Hartford                      |
| Baird                          | Cusworth Overhead Door Co.        |
| Bond, Schoeneck & King         | Estate Planning Law Center        |
| Delmonio's Steakhouse          | Arlott Office Product             |
| Scalzo, Zogby & Wittig         | CLT Architects                    |
| Ascent Wealth Managements      | Strategic Development Specialists |
| Strategic Financial Services   |                                   |



## ALUMNI IMPACT



“In the 25+ years since I’ve been a mom needing to utilize childcare services, one thing sadly hasn’t changed.....the availability of affordable and safe childcare is limited.

As a conscientious professional, I was able to perform the demanding work as Director of Rape & Domestic Violence Services for the YWCA only because I knew my children were well cared for, nurtured and safe while under the care of the Neighborhood Center’s childcare program from the infant room all the way to the “big school” for toddlers.

Even once my husband and I relocated our living and office setting to the Valley, we continued to commute our toddler children from Herkimer to Utica because the Neighborhood Center offered the care and values we sought; our children were provided exposure to diverse and cultural experiences, celebrations and daily activities that we treasured and have fondly recalled well into their adult years.

Fast-forward to this present time where I am an employer and witness first-hand the passion our staff deploy when seeking childcare options; our family considers ourselves blessed that we were part of the Neighborhood Center during our children’s formative years.

Andria Heath,  
Executive Director, The Utica Zoo



# Fiscal Management

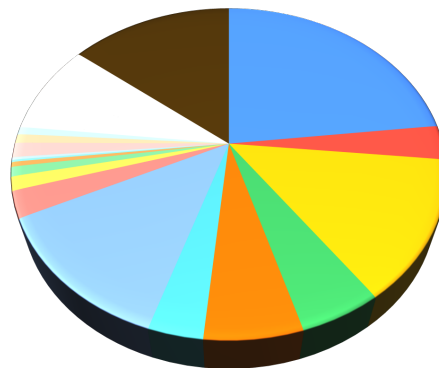
The year 2021 continued to bring much anxiety and uncertainty as the COVID-19 pandemic continued.

The pandemic caused the temporary closure of childcare rooms at times due to illness of staff and children. The agency was fortunate enough to receive the following grants:

Office of Children and Family Services Childcare Stabilization Grant for Infant/Toddler, Pre-k and School Age programs in the amount of \$175,500 as well as a CARES 3 grant through Welfare Research Inc. in the amount of \$44,460.

\*\*The financial information detailed in the 2021 annual report is unaudited financial data.\*\*

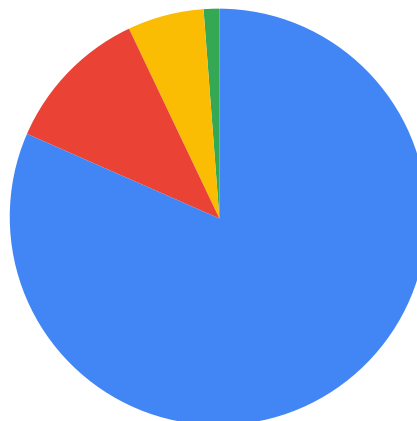
Office of Mental Health	\$3,446,649
Medicaid/Medicare	\$498,064
Medicaid/Medicare Managed Care	\$2,013,545
Department of Social Services	\$781,017
Department of Health	\$924,480
Office of Children and Family Services	\$516,909
Central New York Health Homes	\$1,917,358
MVBHCC/Fidelis Care	\$380,152
Child and Adult Care Food Programs	\$199,239
Utica City School District	\$137,301
Waterville Central School District	\$68,660
NYS Division of Youth	\$30,345
Unified Court System	\$37,263
Other Grants	\$209,854
(Operation Sunshine/Gorman/CARES3	\$128,191
Stewarts/Childcare Stabilization)	
Donations Including Fundraisers	
Bequest	\$109,393
United Way	\$34,701
United Methodist Appropriation	\$15,000
United Methodist Women/Church	\$13,815
Parent Fees	\$428,808
Clinic/MCAT (Third Party)	\$727,328
Rental Income	\$116,191
Other	\$2,126,296
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>\$14,863,559</b>



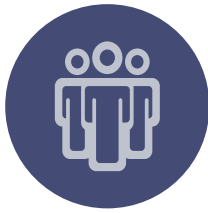
- Office of Mental Health
- Medicaid/Medicare
- Medicaid/Medicare Managed Care
- Department of Social Services
- Department of Health
- Office of Children and Family Services
- Central New York Health Homes
- MVBHCC/Fidelis Care
- Child and Adult Care Food Programs
- Utica City School District
- Waterville Central School District
- NYS Division of Youth
- Unified Court System
- Other Grants
- (Operation Sunshine/Gorman/CARES3
- Stewarts/Childcare Stabilization)
- Donations Including Fundraisers
- Bequest
- United Way
- United Methodist Appropriation
- United Methodist Women/Church
- Parent Fees
- Clinic/MCAT (Third Party)
- Rental Income
- Other

**EXPENDITURES:**

Program Expenditures	\$12,081,350
Administration	\$1,677,166
Personal Service Contracts	\$869,186
Independent Contractors	\$178,405
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$14,806,107</b>



- Program Expenditures
- Administration and Overhead
- Personal Service Contracts
- Independent Contractors



We cannot express our gratitude enough to the dedicated & committed volunteers that serve on the Center's Board of Directors and our Foundation Board, The Marie A. Russo Neighborhood Center Institute.

### The Neighborhood Center, Inc. 2021 Board of Directors

Frank Donato, President  
Albert Casab, Vice President  
Norman Crabtree, Treasurer  
Betty Youmans, Secretary  
Erica Jalonack

Jeffery Lottermoser, Jr.  
Jaqueline Nelson  
Terry Plizga  
Rev. Abel Roy  
Linda Tuggey

### The Marie A. Russo Neighborhood Center Institute 2021 Board of Directors

Tricia Bushee, President  
Amy Mielnicki, Vice President  
Robert Hilton  
Anne D'Amico

Kristine Putrelo  
Frank Donato, President, NC  
Sandra Soroka, NC Executive Director  
Marie A. Russo, Executive Director Emeritus

### Senior Management

Sandra Soroka, Executive Director  
Laura Eannace, Assistant Executive Director  
Patrice VanNortwick,  
Division Director of Child Care & Family Services

Kimmerle Booth, Human Resources Director  
Kellie Kohler,  
Division Director of Behavioral Healthcare  
Karole Loucks Blumberg, Controller



## WHAT WE VALUE

**W**e celebrate the diversity of our community and seek to foster understanding, acceptance and cooperation; We advocate for human needs at the federal, state and local levels; We work in cooperation with other service agencies and refer clients with special concerns to agencies that can best meet their needs; We encourage independence and self-help; We affirm our heritage as an agency related to the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. As the statistics in this report illustrate, we continue to have a lasting impact on those that we serve. As we close out 2021, we look forward to our continued growth as a cornerstone of our community.



## CONTACT US

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Utica, NY 13501



(315) 272-2600



[neighborhoodctr.org](http://neighborhoodctr.org)

