

Spirit

Our Mission: We empower people in our community to rise out of poverty, move toward self-reliance, and reach their full potential.



Volunteers
of America®
UPSTATE NEW YORK

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA UPSTATE NEW YORK NEWSLETTER - SUMMER 2024

VOA Opens New Family Shelter in Monroe County



Volunteers of America is proud to announce the recent opening of our newest family shelter, “Moving Forward.” VOA has partnered with Monroe County to create a new shelter with 58 private units to address the growing number of unhoused families in the Rochester area as a way to keep families together during a time of crisis. This shelter will serve families of any composition, a model VOA introduced with our first shelter, The Guest House, which opened in 2008 with 14 private units. In addition to safe shelter, Moving Forward will provide families with meals, transportation, and on-site support services that will assist them with finding permanent housing, connecting with health care, and securing income. These services are currently unavailable to the many families placed in hotels with nowhere else to go.

“Moving Forward” will be the largest family shelter in Monroe County, with the ability to serve 58 families at any given time.

“The affordable housing crisis impacts too many Monroe County families,” said County Executive Adam Bello. “Thank you to DHS Commissioner Thalia Wright and her team, our county legislature for their support, and our partners at Volunteers of America for their dedicated work to ensure our families have a safe place to stay and to access the resources families need.”

VOA’s Moving Forward family shelter will significantly expand assistance to those families like Monica’s, who came to VOA’s Guest House shelter when the house they were renting for years was sold and they were forced out by the new owners. Suddenly homeless and struggling to find affordable housing for their family of five, Monica was referred to VOA. The VOA team was able to get Monica and her family moved into our Guest House shelter, where our staff provided temporary housing and assistance in finding a new place to live. Within a few weeks, VOA identified an available apartment and assisted the family in transitioning... *(continue on page 4)*



Annual Gala Helps Raise Essential Funds

In a powerful community gathering on April 18, Volunteers of America hosted its 4th Annual Gala at The Arbor Loft, raising \$115,000 for our programs that address the issue of homelessness, enhance childhood education, and combat poverty in the Rochester area.

Dr. Junior Dillion, President and CEO of VOA Upstate New York, shared the stage with notable speakers including, Mayor Malik Evans and presenting sponsor Bank of America's Rochester President Colleen Matteson. Dr. Dillion emphasized the collective effort needed to advance VOA's mission, highlighting the organization's success in serving more than 5,000 individuals annually.

"Here at VOA, we are more than just a service provider; we're a community built on compassion," said Dillion. "We create environments where children thrive, where parents find peace of mind, and where individuals find the courage to ask for help without fear of judgment."

Tiffany, a current staff member who previously benefited from the VOA Children's Center as a parent, also shared her personal story highlighting the comprehensive support she received when she was struggling to find housing and employment, seeking a new start for herself and her children.

"If you had asked me 7 years ago what my plans for the future were, it most definitely wouldn't have included a night like tonight," Tiffany reflected. "My response might have been just to survive my day. I have been able to achieve some of the greatest accomplishments in my life thanks to people who support organizations like Volunteers of America. I went from being a WEP worker, dependent on the social services system, staying in a homeless shelter, jobless, hopeless, on the brink of giving up to working for an organization that has remained true to their mission — a hand-up, not a handout."



THE FARM

powered by  Volunteers of America®

The Farm is VOA's urban hydroponic garden, housed in repurposed shipping containers in the heart of Downtown Rochester. When you purchase our fresh produce, your support provides produce to people facing food insecurity in our community. Now you can purchase produce at the Rochester Public Market and the Pittsford Farmers' Market!

Find us around town



Pittsford Farmers' Market
Schottland YMCA
(2300 West Jefferson Road)

August 10 & 24
9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

or shop online at

VOAFARM.ORG

United Way Day of Caring



On May 23, the community came together for an incredible United Way Day of Caring. Our friends at Thermo Fisher Scientific rolled up their sleeves and painted a room at our Guest House emergency family shelter. The fantastic group from Person Centered Services spent the day spring cleaning and organizing the storage space at the Children's Center. Thank you!

Two Staff Members Ordained at VOA National Conference

As VOA serves our communities, we do so with compassion, love, and faith. At the VOA National Conference held in the DC Metro area from May 4-7, Upstate New York's President and CEO, Dr. Junior Dillion, and Assistant Facilities Manager Tiffany Bundy were officially ordained as VOA ministers. Our ministers offer optional spiritual care and emotional support in ways that respect each individual's culture, religious beliefs, practices, and privacy.

Congratulations Junior and Tiffany!



UPK Students Celebrated in Graduation Ceremony

The VOA Children's Center celebrated students completing their Universal Pre-K programs in June with a moving-up ceremony attended by families as our little graduates prepare to thrive at kindergarten in the fall.



Championing Change Through Corporate Compassion

Community partnerships are essential to advancing the mission of Volunteers of America Upstate New York (VOA). These collaborations enable VOA to provide critical support and services to individuals and families in need. Among these valued partners, Bank of America stands out for its unwavering support and significant contributions in Rochester. Bank of America's commitment to supporting local communities aligns seamlessly with VOA's mission; the bank supports nonprofit organizations that focus on economic mobility in low- and moderate-income communities. Since 2019, Bank of America has invested \$3.6 million in Rochester nonprofits to help support programs and resources for working families, youth, seniors, individuals living with disabilities, veterans, and those affected by the criminal justice system. These groups mirror the diverse groups VOA serves.



BANK OF AMERICA 

and CEO of Volunteers of America Upstate New York, said, "Our partnership with Bank of America exemplifies the power of corporate responsibility. Their ongoing commitment enables us to innovate and continue our services, ensuring that we can meet the evolving needs of our community."

In addition to being the presenting sponsor of VOA's annual gala for the last four years, Bank of America grants have been pivotal in supporting various programs and initiatives that address the needs of vulnerable populations. In recognition of their contributions, two rooms at the Guest House emergency family shelter feature a plaque outside the door with Bank of America's logo. In 2022, VOA was honored to present Bank of America with the Maud Booth Award, which celebrates the bank's outstanding commitment and impact.

Bank of America's commitment extends beyond financial investment and includes a comprehensive, hands-on approach. Bank of America employees have volunteered their time at the Guest House reading to children, cleaning up the playroom, and replacing broken toys with new ones donated by their staff. In addition to these efforts, Bank of America has engaged VOA staff with their Better Money Habits® program, which provides practical resources and information to improve financial literacy.

"Our nonprofit partners who address economic mobility and social progress are vital to driving positive change in Rochester, said Colleen Matteson, president, Bank of America Rochester. "We look forward to our continued partnership with Volunteers of America Upstate New York (VOA) to help make a difference in the lives of local individuals and families and create long-term solutions."

Through such partnerships, VOA is empowered to continue its vital work, offering services that foster self-sufficiency and improve the quality of life for those in need. The collaboration with Bank of America exemplifies how corporate support can drive meaningful change, enabling VOA to make a lasting difference in the community. By working together, we ensure that essential services reach those who need them most, fostering a brighter future for all one step at a time.

Echoing this sentiment, Dr. Junior Dillion, President

Moving Forward *(continued from page 1)*

... to their new home. This support helped Monica and her family maintain their self-sufficiency and become stabilized in housing.



This story is just one example that exemplifies how VOA's shelters and comprehensive support programs provide critical assistance to families in need, helping them regain stability and build a brighter future.

The new 'Moving Forward' shelter will extend this vital support to even more families, offering them a safe haven and the resources they need to overcome homelessness, achieve self-sufficiency, and move forward with dignity.



“I Remember Mama” Makes Mother’s Day Special

For more than 35 years, VOA has worked with local senior living communities to identify older women who have outlived their families or are separated from them and recognize these women with gifts of appreciation for Mother’s Day. This year, VOA distributed more than 200 gift baskets filled with flowers, treats, and other gifts for the residents and clients at Catholic Charities, Cobblestone Place, Danforth Towers Apartments, Hudson Ridge, Jonathan Child Apartments, Jordan Health, and Montgomery Neighborhood Center.

According to the Administration on Aging, approximately 27% of older adults in the United States live alone, and older women are often at a higher risk of social isolation, which leaves them vulnerable to increased mental and physical health problems. On Mother’s Day, the feeling of loneliness can be heightened for those women who find themselves forgotten on this special day.

Berta hasn’t seen family in three years. “I miss them, and it would be good to see them. They know that if I could get there, I would,” she says of her three daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who live in Texas. Berta says having VOA deliver gift bags to women on Mother’s Day is amazing, “maybe your kids are a thousand miles away, but someone always remembers you. That’s a blessing.”

“I Remember Mama” is made possible by individual contributions and our sponsors: Ursula Burns, IDEX, and GMR Associates. Special thanks to The Garden Factory, Rochester Women’s Network, and Frontier Pioneers for their support.

Openings Available Now at the Children’s Center



The Children’s Center at VOA has recently opened new child care rooms to address the pressing need for child care in the Rochester area. We now have full-time spots available for infants, toddlers,

and children aged 3 and 4, as well as after-school programs for children aged 5-12.

According to the NYS Office of Children and Family Services, more than 60% of New York State is classified as a child care desert, meaning there are not enough licensed child care spots to accommodate the number of children in those areas. This shortage places a heavy burden on working families.

Limited access to child care can hinder a child’s school readiness and overall development. The Children’s Center is committed to bridging this gap. Quality early childhood education is essential for fostering social, emotional, and cognitive skills.

To learn more about the Children’s Center, families can call (585) 402-7220 or visit voaupny.org.



Volunteers
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Rochester, NY 14608

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PAID

Rochester, NY
Permit No. 1268

We are more than a nonprofit

We are a ministry of service with dedicated, paid, professional employees committed to helping those in need rebuild their lives and reach their potential.

Are you passionate about making a difference? Come join our team!

voaupny.org/careers

VOA's 22ND ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT September 9, 2024

We hope you will join us on Monday, September 9, 2024, at Locust Hill Country Club for our 22nd annual charity golf tournament! This event includes lunch prior to a 12:30 p.m. shotgun start with dinner to follow. Enjoy 18 holes of golf with a cart, an open driving range and putting green, on-course beverages, fun contests, silent auction, and more.

Funds raised will help to support VOA's important work in the community and the more than 5,000 people we serve annually.



Secure your spot!

To sign up your foursome, go to voaupny.org/golf

Interested in sponsoring? Contact us at 585-736-2487.

