



Volunteers
of America®
UPSTATE NEW YORK

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA UPSTATE NEW YORK NEWSLETTER - SUMMER 2025

VOA selected for cohort to develop affordable housing

It's no secret that rising costs and limited availability leave many people struggling to find safe and affordable places to call home. In response to this growing crisis, Volunteers of America Upstate New York has been selected to join the 2025 cohort of the New York Land Opportunity Program (NYLOP), a LISC-NY initiative that supports faith-based and mission-driven organizations in exploring new opportunities and navigating the complexities of affordable housing development.

"We have a three-acre site in Rochester that is very suitable for housing," said Pat Drake, Senior Vice President of Agency Advancement. "We're excited for the opportunity to explore how it can be transformed to create affordable housing, and help us build on our commitment to meet the needs of our community,"

VOA is working to assess feasibility and plan next steps. Through NYLOP, VOA is receiving customized technical assistance, legal support, and financial resources to help bring our vision to life.



Children's Center UPK celebrates little graduates



VOA celebrated 65 students last month as they completed their Universal Pre-Kindergarten program at our Children's Center. Families attended moving-up ceremonies to share this milestone with their children as they embark on their next academic journey in kindergarten.

VOA offers free UPK for 3 and 4-years-olds to prepare them for success in school. The curriculum is aligned with NYS Pre-Kindergarten standards and ensures continuity with elementary grades. Activities promote a child's growth and development through play-based learning.



“I Remember Mama” delivers smiles for Mother’s Day

For more than 35 years, *I Remember Mama* has been a cherished tradition at Volunteers of America, honoring older women with a heartfelt card, flowers, and gift bag of treats on Mother’s Day to remind them they are seen, appreciated, and not alone.

“Many of these women have spent their lives caring for others,” said Dr. Junior Dillion, President and CEO of Volunteers of America Upstate New York. “This is our opportunity to care for them.”

VOA delivered more than 200 gift bags to residents at VOA’s Cobblestone Place Apartments and other community partner programs around Rochester. In addition to reaching older women in senior housing, VOA also distributed another 75 gift bags to mothers staying in our emergency family shelters, to uplift and remind them that they are valued and also not forgotten on this meaningful day.

I Remember Mama is more than a moment of celebration. This effort embodies VOA’s mission to restore hope, dignity, and a sense of belonging for those facing challenges.

This celebration is supported by generous donors and the following sponsors:

Ursula Burns

IDEX
HEALTH & SCIENCE

GMR
ASSOCIATES

**the Garden
FACTORY**



VOA brings community together for film and discussion



Community members gathered at The Little Theatre on April 30 to view the documentary “Americans with No Address” and engage in a panel discussion sharing insights into the root causes of homelessness in the Rochester region, from gaps in

mental health services and affordable housing to the impacts of incarceration and poverty.

The panel consisted of Dr. Junior Dillion (VOA), Tree Clemonds (Continuum of Care), Dr. Mike Hudson (Regional Health Reach), and Melanie Murphy (Delphi Rise). It was moderated by Evan Dawson (WXXI Public Broadcasting Council). They highlighted innovative efforts already underway and the critical role of collaboration in creating lasting solutions.



Strike Out Poverty

Strike Out Poverty returns for the 2025 baseball season! Every time a Rochester Red Wings pitcher strikes out a hitter, a donation is made to support VOA's programs and services.

Text the word STRIKE to 366283 to donate.

Sponsored by **Citizens**

Volunteers in action

Volunteers from MMB+CO rolled up their sleeves to spruce up the grounds around our emergency family shelters, tackling landscaping projects with a smile and teamwork to bring new life and a more welcoming environment to our outdoor spaces for to the families we serve.

At the VOA Children's Center, teams from Brothers International Food Holdings, LLC and LSI Solutions also pitched in, transforming our outdoor areas as part of United Way's Day of Caring. Their hard work made a visible difference and showed just how much a few helping hands can accomplish.



Board member awarded Women of Excellence Honor

VOA congratulates board of directors member, Colleen Rose of Rochester Regional Health, for being named a Rochester Business Journal's 2025 Women of Excellence Honoree. This award is given to recognize accomplishments in professional achievements, leadership and involvement in the community.



PRSA PRism Award



VOA received a 2025 PRism Award from the PRSA Rochester Chapter in the Direct Mail (Nonprofit) category for our Caring Gifts brochure, which is designed to inspire action and give with purpose. Thanks to our generous community, it's making a real impact.

The return of Operation Backpack®

One in five school children in the U.S. live below the federally defined poverty line. On average, school supplies cost families about \$80-\$120 per child, depending on the grade level and specific school requirements. For some parents working hard just to provide shelter and stability, that can mean making difficult choices between purchasing school supplies or groceries.

With the opening of VOA's Moving Forward Family Shelter last year, which provides temporary housing for up to 58 families a day, the demand for school supplies has grown significantly. This fall, dozens more children from our emergency shelters will be heading back to school in need of essential supplies.

That's why VOA Upstate New York is relaunching the Operation Backpack® program, ensuring every child we serve can return to the classroom with the tools they need to succeed both academically and beyond. We are trying to provide more than 300 children with new backpacks and school supplies.

We welcome and encourage support from community members, corporate partners, churches, and other local organizations. Host a supply drive or participating in VOA's online drive, where pre-filled backpacks can be purchased directly from our wish list and shipped straight to VOA for distribution before school starts. To learn more, visit voaupny.org/operation-backpack.



Tee off for a good cause at the VOA Golf Tournament

September 8, 2025
Locust Hill Country Club

Get ready to hit the green for a day of fun and philanthropy at the 23rd Annual Volunteers of America Golf Tournament. Proceeds from the event help restore hope, dignity, and a sense of belonging across our region.

Gather your foursome and come out and enjoy:

- Championship 18-hole course
- BBQ lunch
- Post-golf celebration with appetizers on the patio
- On-course beverages
- On-course contests

Businesses and organizations can support the tournament through sponsorship and be recognized for their commitment to helping VOA serve children, families, and individuals facing challenges.



Don't miss your chance to be part of this longstanding tradition that combines the joy of golf with the power of giving back.

Register at voaupny.org/golf.



214 Lake Avenue
Rochester, NY 14608

Early literacy starts with new books to build readers

Thanks to a generous grant from The Molina Foundation, Volunteers of America received a full pallet of books to share with the children and families we serve. The Molina Foundation is a national nonprofit organization focused on reducing disparities in access to education and health.

These books will be distributed to children at our VOA Children's Center and in our emergency family shelters, helping to grow their personal home libraries. By increasing access to age-appropriate books, we're supporting early literacy and nurturing a love of reading.

We are deeply grateful to The Molina Foundation for this meaningful donation and proud to put these books into the hands of children who need them.

