



Volunteers
of America®
UPSTATE NEW YORK

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA UPSTATE NEW YORK NEWSLETTER - SUMMER 2026

VOA receives grants for programs in Broome County



VOA recently received multiple grants from The Home Depot Foundation and United Way of Broome County to strengthen services for individuals and families in the Binghamton area.

United Way of Broome County awarded \$44,000 to support operations at the VOA men's emergency shelter, including supportive services and a path towards stability.

The Home Depot Foundation awarded VOA \$84,500 for a new program called "Operation Home", which will help veterans access permanent housing through security and utility deposits, short term rental assistance, and landlord incentives.

VOA also received \$26,000 to continue providing improved access to mental health services through its partnership with Cornerstone Health. The funding will provide on-site mental health services ensuring VOA clients can receive timely care and support.



HIKE TO END HOMELESSNESS

This September, VOA is lacing up their shoes for the first Hike to End Homelessness, a one-mile community walk that unites individuals, businesses, and organizations in support of safe housing and hope for those experiencing homelessness.

Along the way, walkers will learn about the impact VOA programs have on the journey from homelessness to stability.

Join us and bring the whole family. Children 12 and under are free, and as a thank-you for early registration, all adult participants who sign up by August 13 are guaranteed a free t-shirt in their size. Virtual participation is welcome for those who can't attend in person. Sponsorships are also available.

Together, we can turn awareness into action and help ensure our neighbors have the support, stability, and opportunities they need to move forward.



SEPTEMBER 13, 2026, 10 A.M.
ST. JOHN FISHER UNIVERSITY

Adults: \$20
Students: \$15
Children (12 & under): Free

Register today at
voaupny.org/walk





STEAM filled summer fun for students

This summer, school-aged children 5-12 are taking part in hands-on STEAM activities at the VOA Children's Center. STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) can help shape how students think creatively, problem solve, and engage with the world around them. Activities include robotics, coding, dance and theater, swimming, and field trips to local museums.

Summer programs like this one also play an important role in keeping children engaged and learning during months when academic skills can otherwise slide.

The enrichment program is made possible by funding through a grant from the Farash Foundation.

For families looking to keep the momentum going, VOACC's after-school program offers ongoing learning throughout the school year.

Simone's Story

Not long ago, Simone was doing what she loved: teaching yoga at a local university. When her job was suddenly cut, everything changed. Without her regular income to pay the bills it was difficult to keep up with rent. Before she knew it, Simone and her teenage son were facing homelessness.



*Name changed and stock photo used to protect client privacy

It's not something she ever thought would happen to her. She has multiple degrees, and worked hard her whole life. But she didn't let her current situation stop her. Simone turned to VOA where she was welcomed with compassion and dignity.

Simone and her son were given a private room to stay, a case manager who helped them get access to mental health services, and resources to assist them towards regaining stable housing.

While staying at the shelter, Simone even led yoga classes for other residents, helping to create moments of peace and community for those going through similar challenges.

Today, Simone is working again, and she and her son live in their own apartment where she is one step closer to full independence as they rebuild their lives.



Children's Center PreK graduates are school ready!

Preschool education is more than just play. The learning that occurs in these early years supports cognitive, social, and emotional development, building the skills that prepare children for long-term academic success.

With proud families by their side to mark this exciting milestone, 54 preschool students celebrated their graduation at the VOA Children's Center. The ceremony recognized their growth, achievements, and readiness to take the next step into kindergarten. Our teachers couldn't be prouder of all they've accomplished.

"Past, Present & Possibilities": VOA 6th Annual Gala

Volunteers of America held its sixth annual gala, presented by Bank of America, on April 16, 2026 at the Harro East Ballroom as part of its continued 130 anniversary celebration, bringing together community leaders, supporters, and partners to highlight the organization's impact and the growing need for services across the region. The event, themed "Past, Present, and Possibilities," raised \$100,000 in support of VOA programs serving individuals and families throughout Upstate New York.

News10NBC's Deanna Dewberry emceed the evening that included remarks from local officials, including Rochester Mayor Malik Evans and New York State Senator Jeremy Cooney, along with client stories and a look at VOA's ongoing work addressing housing instability, early childhood education, and mental health support.

Community partners were also recognized during the evening. Honorees included Van Bortel Automotive Group for its Subaru Loves to Help and Operation Warm initiatives providing winter coats to children in need; Regional Health Reach for ensuring families and residents in VOA shelters and housing programs have access to on-site health care; and VOA staff member Phyllis Robinson, who received a Hearts & Hands Award for her outstanding service and lasting impact at VOA's Children's Center.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

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Operation Backpack® provides backpacks and school supplies to children in VOA programs across Upstate New York who are experiencing homelessness or financial hardship.

Every student deserves the chance to succeed, and that starts with having the right tools on the first day of school.



Purchase a prefilled backpack from our online drive or learn more at

voaupny.org/operation-backpack



Volunteers
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OF WESTERN NEW YORK

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Remembering Mama

Now in its 36th year, I Remember Mama is a long-standing VOA tradition that honors women across generations from older mothers and grandmothers who may be separated from loved ones to young mothers working to rebuild stability for themselves and their children. While every woman's experience is different, the impact of feeling remembered and appreciated on Mother's Day can be deeply meaningful.

VOA delivered more than 200 gift bags filled with flowers, cards, and treats. Distribution included residents at Cobblestone Place Apartments, mothers staying in VOA's emergency family shelters, and women served through community partners including Jordan Health, Catholic Charities' STAR Program, and SWAN Inc. at Montgomery Neighborhood Center.

VOA also hosted a Mother's Day tea at our Cobblestone Place Apartments, bringing together residents for an afternoon of conversation and celebration. This year's campaign was made possible through the generosity of sponsors Ursula Burns, IDEX, GMR Associates, and The Garden Factory; community partners New Vision Pioneers - Genesee Chapter; and many individual donors who helped make Mother's Day brighter for women throughout the community.

