

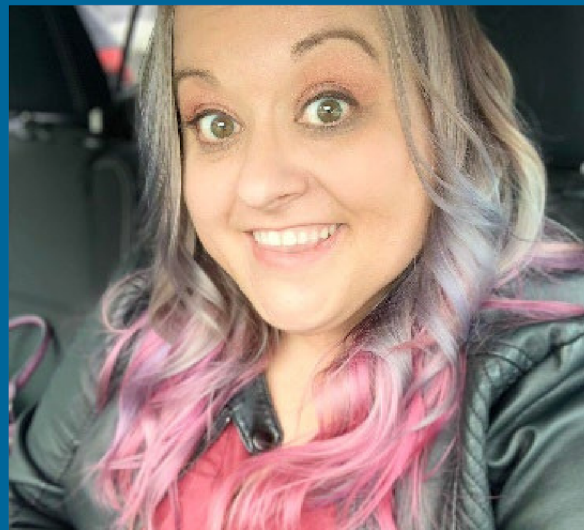


# Shine the Light Campaign

As part of Community Action Month, NYSCAA created the "**Shine the Light**" campaign, to highlight the fantastic CAA staff from all over New York and their stories about the work they do in Community Action! We are honored to be able to share these amazing stories!

**BREANNE ABBOT**  
CONNECTING  
COMMUNITIES IN ACTION

I started at CCA as a therapist in our county clinic but moved to our Victim Services department. The move was like coming home as a social worker. Our agency provides supports in so many ways to both our community and our employees with such a focus on trauma informed care. I love working for CCA.



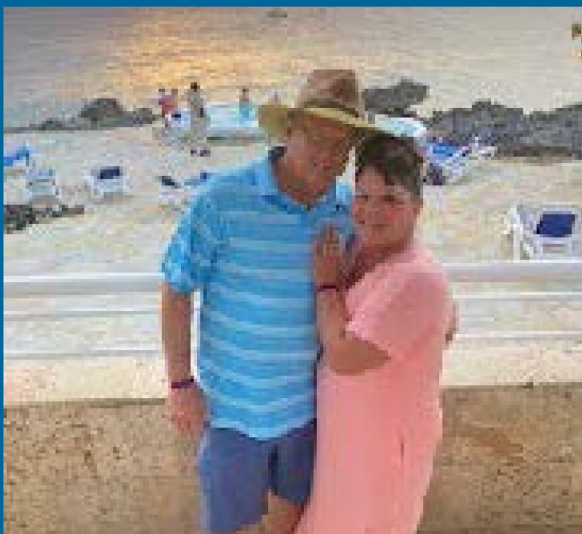
**BECKY BENNET-TEARS**  
PRO ACTION OF STEUBEN  
AND YATES, INC.

I started working with Pro Action of Steuben and Yates, Inc. in June 2015. I came from a human service background working with individuals with DD/ID for over 20 years. It was a smooth transition from that work into the Pro Action environment as both offer support and services

to individuals. I currently work in the Yates Office for the Aging and absolutely love my job! Pro Action's services and programs are beneficial and have a significant impact on an individual's quality of life. My favorite part is that I feel working in a Community Action Agency helps make a difference every single day. Some days make big differences, other days make small differences. Overall, you know the work you do is changing people's lives for the better. Also, I feel that Pro Action is an ever-evolving agency that challenges itself to improve and enhance services. It is well-respected within the community and seen as a resource for a wide array of needs. I enjoy being part of an agency that is known for this. Pro Action has a set of values that I fully believe in and support: Hope & Resilience, Innovation, Excellence, & Accountability, Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity, & Belonging. These values are embedded in all the work we do and all the interactions we have. I am proud to say I am part of the Pro Action family, and that we are helping people, changing lives!

**CASSANDRA CUMMINGS**  
**PRO ACTION OF STEUBEN AND**  
**YATES, INC.**

I got my start by applying for the position and interviewing with MK. MK and LS hired me immediately after interviewing. I have done well in my position, even being on my own for a couple of months. My favorite part about what I do is helping the providers stay in compliance so they can provide that top quality childcare service for their community. Parents are able to go to work knowing their child is in good hands.



**MELINDA DANIELS**  
**COMMUNITY ACTION OF**  
**ORLEANS AND GENESEE, INC.**

I had not expected to leave my current place of employment at the time, after 20 years. However, my husband came across the job posting for Community Action and brought it to my attention and said, "Melinda this is you!"

Without a second thought I applied and was called for an

interview. I knew I would feel fulfilled in my heart by working for this agency and I really loved the mission. My start was not easy as my role severely intensified as the Executive Director became ill. I was tasked and challenged every day for the first three years. During that time, I did not sway from my commitment to the agency, it just made me a stronger and better person and employee. Today my role is very different, and I have gone from the Administrative Assistant to Executive Assistant and agency Compliance Officer (for now). I love what we do, I stand by our mission, and I whole heartedly love our communities and the people we serve!

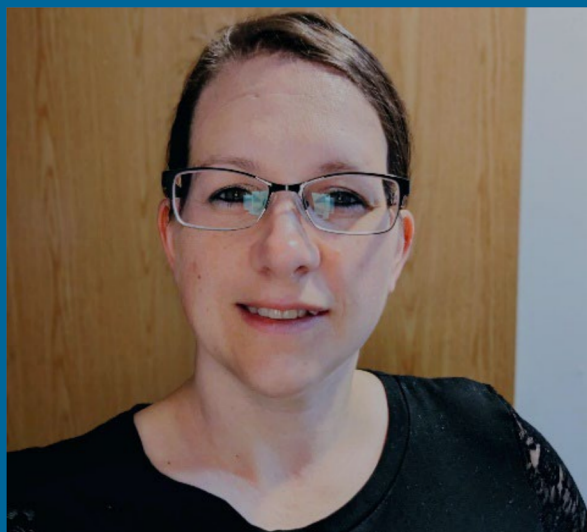
**DANIEL HOGG**  
**CHAUTAUQUA OPPORTUNITIES,**  
**INC.**

I like working for an organization that is so dedicated to helping the community and those that are part of it. We are stronger together, and I feel like COI is strengthening the whole of the community.



---

**MICHELLE KEENEY**  
**PRO ACTION OF STEUBEN**  
**AND YATES, INC.**



Many years ago, when I was a single mom of 2 and a full-time online college student, with 2 months left to complete my Bachelors, I decided it was time to start looking for employment. I stumbled on a Registrar position with our local CAA. I applied and was offered an interview quickly..

had no idea what a CAA was! But I knew that this "building" offered programs like Head Start, WIC, and job search. I was lucky to be offered the position the same day and as I accepted, I had no idea my life would be changing in so many ways. For 8 years I worked with our CCRR helping child care providers become successful and then 2 years as the manager of Registration. During that time I learned exactly what this agency could do for everyone, including myself. I started in poverty with no idea how I'd survive with 2 kids on my own. I quickly learned that my coworkers were not just coworkers, but they were my biggest supporters, that the leadership was there to help you succeed, not in just your job but in your personal life as well. They cared about me just as much as they cared about the people we served. I've learned how to become a better listener, ally, motivator, leader and friend through my years here. That's my favorite part of working here, being someone that people know they can come to for support and comfort. Knowing that with the support I have to do my job, I can help make a difference in someone else's life.

**JAMIE KENNEDY**

**PRO ACTION OF STEUBEN AND YATES, INC.**

I got my start working with the community when I joined the support staff at Steuben County Mental Health and Substance Abuse. I, honestly, did not know what to expect when I took the position. During my time, I have met so many amazing people-clients and co-workers alike! I've had the pleasure of watching our clients grow and transform their lives and daily habits to ensure the brightest futures possible. I've enjoyed it so much, I enrolled in the CASAC program at Alfred State so I can become a drug and alcohol counselor myself. Everyone deserves to be heard and validated. I'm glad I get to be a part of that!



**MARLENE LAMBERTSEN**  
**COMMISSION ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

I've worked for CEO for 24 and a half years, 18 years in this exact classroom on the first floor of the Lansingburgh Family Resource Center. I started out in the Early Head Start infant room, and then realized toddlers would be a better fit. I feel like I've made a difference with people in the community through this work. I live just down the street, and I still have parents that I run into at the market that recognize me and say they appreciate what I did for their children, which means a lot to me. Seeing the kids grow from the beginning of the year to the end of the year has been special for me. I have some former students that I'm still in contact with that are married now

**JOSIAH LAMP**  
**CHAUTAUQUA OPPORTUNITIES,**  
**INC.**

Community Action inspires me to treat everyone with dignity and respect. Working for a Community Action Agency gives me the opportunity to meet people with diverse backgrounds and life experiences. By listening, we broaden each other's horizons!



---

**LUZ LUETGEN**  
**PRO ACTION OF STEUBEN**  
**AND YATES, INC.**

When you say Community Action, you say, people. People that need assistance, help, understanding, compassion. That's how I started my journey serving people in need. I do love to work at my place because is a daily learning experience of compassion and understanding. Waking up to a new hope in well-being and resilience. Helping others to live instead of surviving. Be that difference that can make our society a beter place to live. That's why I love to work as a community resource for all of those that need a voice. Giving my hand to make them feel safe and secure. And of course, to give them a reason to smile. That's why I love to work for Pro Action/Community Action.



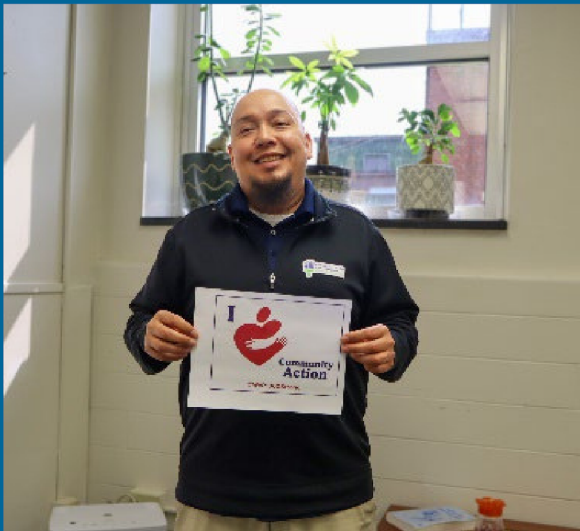
**SAMANTHA SALZLER**  
**CHAUTAUQUA OPPORTUNITIES,**  
**INC.**

I enjoy working for a Community Action Agency because it allows me to make a difference in other people's lives. By working for COI/CODI, I can help businesses get started or grow; and I can help individuals get loans for new appliances they otherwise would not be able to afford.



**GABRIEL SHIELDS**  
**CHAUTAUQUA**  
**OPPORTUNITIES, INC.**

Working for a Community Action Agency has given me the opportunity to have a positive impact on the lives of many individuals and families. It's a great feeling, getting up every day knowing that I'm about to do something good for my community.



**ROBERT SMITH**  
**CHAUTAUQUA OPPORTUNITIES,**  
**INC.**

My favorite part of working for a Community Action Agency is being able to help people who feel like they have no one else in the world that cares about them and wants to help them, and I am able to make a small difference in their lives.



**ANDREW STUDLEY**  
**CONNECTING COMMUNITIES**  
**IN ACTION**

I started with CCA almost 18 years ago straight out of college. I began as a part-time employee working with youth and their families in placement prevention programming. My favorite part about working in Community Action is the dedicated staff who strive to meet the needs of our communities every day. The passion and commitment that we have to make measurable change through innovative approaches is both exciting and inspiring.



**RACHEL TENPAS**  
**PRO ACTION OF STEUBEN**  
**AND YATES, INC.**

As a nurse, I enjoy working with a Community Acton Agency because I enjoy helping others and making a difference in the community around me. I am also a mom of 4 and I want the community my kids are going up in and around to feel safe and welcoming and working with a Community Acton Agency feels like a good step in that direction.