The Beacon



"Building a just and compassionate community one person at a time"

Fall/Winter Issue/November 2013

A Semi-annual Publication of Bethesda House Schenectady, Inc.

Help Hope Haven

"We make a Living by what we get,

But we make a life by what we give."

-Winston Churchill

Pictured below are Sharon Chaires, Lighthouse resident, Melinda B., and Danny Payne - working together to give residents a new sense of purpose and a better life.

Be sure to check out the stories on the Lighthouse staff inside!

Welcome to The Beacon's Fall/Winter issue!

A message from the Executive Director

With the end of each day I remain deeply aware of the tremendous need our community has in serving our homeless and working poor population. I am very grateful to our volunteers, donors, staff, and Board members who are part of our team for change. What strikes me most in the time I have been at Bethesda House is the profound impact our residents and guests have made on me. Each has a story and a dream for a better future. Not one of them has the desire to be in the place that they currently find themselves in - homeless and struggling. I am proud to live and work in a community where we work together to help those less fortunate. Our community finds value in sheltering and feeding those in need. It is evident that in our community, when push comes to shove, we pull together and find solutions to our challenges.

I am honored and humbled to have the opportunity to be a part of Bethesda House.

My sincere thanks go to our volunteers and donors

for their generosity and good will which helps to keep our doors open. Please consider a gift during this holiday season to help us continue on.

Many Blessings to you and your family,





Danny Payne, Director of Residential Services

Providing Non-judgmental Permanent Supportive Housing

The eleven full-time and part-time residential staff members are passionate about the work they do and the positive effect they each have in the lives of our residents. Our residential program is permanent supportive housing, which means that chronically homeless individuals (as defined by HUD), with one or more disabilities, can remain in our program permanently as long as they follow the fundamentals of our housing policy.

The Lighthouse program has been in operation for eleven years and is staffed around the clock by a Supervising Case Manager, Life Skills Counselors and Resident Assistants who guide and assist with meals, laundry and the other activities of daily living. Bethesda House staff work collaboratively with the Albany Veterans Administration to ensure availability of three beds at the Lighthouse. Ultimately the veterans obtain the initial services they need to stabilize their lives. Since the inception of our program, we have helped bring a sense of balance and conformity in the lives of 30 veterans.

"During the last eleven years, we have provided housing and financial stability to formerly homeless individuals," Director of Residential Services, Danny Payne, proudly states. "Two of our residents have been with us since we opened our doors. We are proud of their accomplishments and to be part of their growth toward independence. We help residents who have difficulties with basic life skills such as hygiene, food shopping, and cleaning. One of our residents is reminded daily to comb his hair and take a shower. He has overcome many obstacles that prohibited balance in his life. Now, he works with staff to accomplish the goals on his independent living plan."

.....

The Liberty House program is a fifteen-unit, sixteen-bed program. This program is also staffed around the clock by our Life Skills Counselor, Supervising Case Manager, Director of Residential Services, and the Front Desk/Security. The difference between the two programs is that to live in Liberty House, an individual must be able to function more independently than in the Lighthouse Program. For example, they must be able to manage their own medications, arrange their own transportation and keep appointments with minimum assistance.

The common thread woven into these programs is each resident develops a service plan, which includes goals that they will strive to attain. The goal could be as simple as getting a little exercise or, as with several residents, obtain their GED and further their education. One resident has already received his GED and is working on requirements to be accepted in a trade school.















Pictured above are: Lighthouse resident, Dave, beating Director of Residential Services, Danny Payne at Monopoly; Resident Assistant, Susan MacMurray taking inventory of resident medications; and Supervising Residential Case Manager, Sharon Chaires, hard at work.

Collaboration between the Residential and Case Management Departments

The collaboration between the Residential and Case Management Department is the key to the success of our housing program. Together, the departments ensure that chronically homeless/disabled individuals obtain and maintain permanent supportive housing, as well as, securing access to supportive services. Our Case Management Department acts as a bridge that assists homeless individuals from chronic homelessness to our permanent supportive housing.

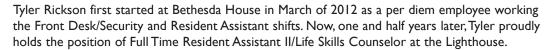
Recently, Schenectady Department of Social Services and the City Mission of Schenectady referred a chronically homeless individual who is blind and has a severe substance abuse issue to us. Residential and Case Management staff were able to stabilize his housing and enroll him in our Representative Payee Program, which stabilized his income. He was re-engaged with services for the blind, as well as, medical and other community resources. He tells us that Bethesda House saved him, that he has been sober since his arrival and will do anything to never to be homeless again. Mr. Payne comments, "He is a great resident and one who is social and helps others as much as he can."

Due to the collaboration of our Residential and Case Management Department, our supportive housing program is at full capacity. Bethesda House's Case Management Department on average assists 120 individuals a month which averages out to be approximately 1,500 individuals a year. Of that number, our Case Management Department has successfully housed 314 homeless/chronically homeless individuals. This has been made possible by relationships cultivated by our Case Management Department and Schenectady County landlords.

Pictured is Resident Assistant II/Life Skills Counselor, Tyler Rickson, showing off his culinary skills, busting moves on the porch and enjoying some quality time with a Lighthouse resident.

Bethesda House inspiring not only to our guests... but employees too!

Megan Bronsther, Administration Assistant



Bethesda House staff continuously works as a team, inspiring one another to achieve not only work related goals, but personal ones as well. This attribute is just one of the many traits that aids in the continued success of Bethesda House. It is this characteristic that has inspired Tyler to enroll in Schenectady County Community College in an effort to obtain his Associate's Degree in Human Services.

Working under Sharon Chaires, Supervising Residential Case Manager at the Lighthouse, Tyler has gained in-depth knowledge and experience. Tyler states, "She [Sharon] has really acted as a mentor for me." Sharon has not only functioned as Tyler's supervisor, but as his motivation and driving force to go to school. With the support of the Executive Director, Kimarie Sheppard, and all Bethesda House staff, Tyler started school this past September and while he finds it challenging to juggle a full time job with his studies, he knows the reward will be well worth the effort. When asked why he was willing to go through so much frustration right now with all the pressures of school and a job, he responded, "When you see a change in a resident, especially the success stories of the veterans, and knowing that you were part of that, it changes you. You come out knowing that it is all worth it in the end when you had something to do directly with that change or success." Tyler's direct work with the veterans at the Lighthouse is one of his chief motivations to attending school in an effort to obtain his degree.

Tyler's steady growth and development is inspiring. At a young age he has clear goals of what he is working towards. Bethesda House as an agency, in conjunction with Sharon Chaires as a mentor, has truly inspired Tyler. His long-term goal is to hopefully one day own his own Housing Agency where he can inspire change in staff and residents, just as Bethesda House has done for him.



The people of Eastern Parkway United Methodist Church

Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.



On a beautiful autumn Saturday in October, the people of Eastern Parkway United Methodist Church (EPUMC) were on the corner of Dean and Union, selling used books at the Upper Union Street Harvest Festival. Customers were asked to make a "free will" offering for their book selections, knowing that all of the proceeds would go to Bethesda House and SICM, the two Missions Focus groups supported by EPUMC.

This event is just the latest example of a partnership between the Schenectady congregation, located at the corner of Eastern Parkway and Palmer Avenue, and Bethesda House that dates back almost to the latter's beginning. For over two decades, clergy and members of EPUMC have served on the Board of Directors. A former Program Director and Director of Case Management at Bethesda House called EPUMC their church home. The congregation has provided countless hours volunteering with the women's group, preparing meals, sorting clothing, and assisting in

the hospitality center. On the first Sunday of each month, worshippers donate to the Sock Project, which raises over \$1,000 a year to buy clean, dry socks for the guests of Bethesda House. And every fourth Sunday following worship, members of all ages mobilize to make over 200 sandwiches to feed the hungry who come to the House of Mercy. In addition to the Harvest Festival, EPUMC puts on a rummage sale every May to raise funds for the Missions Focus groups. Likewise, a skilled craftsman in the congregation works all year making beautiful wooden toys, which he sells in December, again to benefit those groups. When the State Street facility opened, EPUMC granted funds for the purchase of kitchen equipment and held a ziti dinner that raised \$7,200 to furnish two of the new apartments for the chronically homeless.

The people of Eastern Parkway have an abiding love for Bethesda House and are grateful for the opportunity to support its dedicated staff, deserving guests, and vital mission in so many ways.



A Gift of Solar Power

"Many thanks for flipping the free sun power electricity switch for Bethesda House."

-- Greg Cleveland, Senior Project Manager, GE Power & Water

October 24, 2013 was chilly at best. A cold wind blew across the roof of Bethesda House, making the air up high feel very wintry. Nevertheless, 24 skilled and highly motivated workers from General Electric, IBEW 236, and Empire Solar climbed on top of the building and began work to install a long planned structural solar system. The work took all day, but despite the wind and cold on the roof, the volunteers brought laughter and camaraderie that is still felt at Bethesda House today.

It started with the need and desire at Bethesda House to reduce energy costs and to use the allocated funds to enhance the human services already offered to those in need. In October of 2012, exactly one year earlier, the Solar Project Team, comprised of: GE Power & Water's Greg Cleveland, Brian Baxter and Brian Smith, Empire Solar's Rodney Wiltshire, and IBEW 236's Ed Knott began installation conversations with Butch Fogg and Kimarie Sheppard, both of Bethesda House. Shortly thereafter, the team put the project details together. With the specifics in place and the gift for the project received from the COINS Foundation, it became a matter of waiting time for the installation of the solar system. Excitement was high for everyone on October 24th this year when the project was officially completed and Bethesda House became Solar Live!

We are deeply grateful to GE Power & Water who provided the solar panels and guidance to ensure all essential equipment was ready and on-site. We are equally indebted to the skilled and proficient volunteers without whom this gift would not have been possible. Thank You, GE volunteers Greg Cleveland, Bruce Norman, Steve Burke, Bob Reynolds, Carla Snyder, Steve Dufort, Rich Colucciello, Brian Smith, and Chris Stroud. Thank You, Empire Solar volunteers Rodney Wiltshire, Matt Fluty, and Dean Fagan.

Thank You, IBEW 236 volunteers Ed Knott, Mike Torres, Jason Hayden, Dennis O'Brien, David James, Charles Rickson, Skip Goyette, Richard Cataldo, Garrett McCluskey, Sal Genovesi, and James Ruggiero.

Bethesda House remains grateful for your wonderful generosity and contributions which helped make this critical energy-saving project a success! In gifting solar energy to Bethesda House, the agency can continue to share bounty in the form of sustenance and services to the many individuals and families who find themselves in need in our community.

Kimarie Sheppard, Executive Director



A Lovely Afternoon with the Burnt Hills/Ballston Lake Women's Group

Michele Bergeron, our Day Program Coordinator, arrived at the Burnt Hills United Methodist Church where she was invited to speak at their Women's Group. The event began just after noon for a forum of 50 women. Michele's support team, Crystal Thomas, Case Manager, and Tina Wachsmuth, Front Desk/Case Manager Assistant, handed out Bethesda House materials and contributed to the question and answer session immediately following the presentation. Michele talked about our Day Program and how critical our services are to the homeless and working poor in our community. Our day program is a point of access to all service areas at Bethesda House. She explained that our Case Management Department provides housing, emergency and financial case management to members in our community, as well as, providing significant support services to our permanent housing beds. The message Michele conveyed was how Bethesda House lives our mission and vision and that our programs are essential to the community because we target an unduplicated population of individuals that may find it hard to receive services. In addition, Bethesda House recognizes the diversity that exists within our community. We develop trust and mutual understanding of the guests we serve which in turn helps all to become agents of change. Bethesda House is committed to treating all who enter our doors with kindness, respect, and dignity so that their needs are addressed and met.

Michele continued that our volunteers are the collective heartbeat that supports our staff and helps to successfully provide the wide range of services we offer. Currently, we have a call for volunteers to help with our educational programs such as literacy and nutrition.

The Burnt Hills United Methodist Church Women's Group will be touring Bethesda House and meeting with staff to discuss how this wonderful group can assist in helping us continue to provide our services to our brothers and sisters who are in need.

Kimarie Sheppard, Exeutive Director and Michele Bergeron, Day Program Coordinator

Providing Warmth, Instilling Self-esteem, Embracing a Critical Need





Clothing keeps us warm, makes us feel secure, and is symbolic of our culture and the roles we accept. On many levels clothing defines us because we are judged by what we wear, the condition of our clothing, and the cleanliness of our garments. For the homeless and impoverished, good clean clothing promotes self-esteem and helps to reduce the stigma of being poor.

For over 18 years, Bethesda House's free clothing room has provided wardrobes to people who became gainfully employed again, instilling in them a level of professionalism, confidence, and pride. We have provided outfits for weddings and special occasions as well. Our clothing room is a great resource for our community.

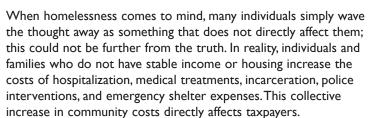
Emily was incarcerated for eight months. She came to Bethesda House because she had a job interview and nothing to wear. She had limited funds and was in desperate need of dress clothes. She commented, "I enjoyed the ladies in the clothing room, they helped me pick out an outfit and when they waited on me, I felt like I was shopping at Sears!"

Jay accesses our clothing room on a regular basis. "The clothing room staff is very helpful and treats me with respect - I feel like I am being helped, not begging for help."

With your generosity of clothing donations, you help to instill a sense of pride and self-worth. Together we are changing lives.

Megan Bronsther, Administration Assistant

Homelessness: The Importance of Housing Stability



The majority of people struggling with homelessness lack health insurance, public assistance, or a primary care physician. Homelessness can both cause and result in severe health issues, such as addiction, psychological disorders, HIV/AIDS, and many other serious health issues. Housing instability makes it difficult to maintain long-term access to treatment and recuperation. The longer an individual goes without attention, the more severe and more costly the problems become. Studies have shown that nearly one-third of all emergency room visits are made by homeless individuals. Of that one-third, 80% were treated for an illness that could have been prevented. The National Alliance to End Homelessness writes "people experiencing homelessness are more likely to access the more costly health care services than individuals who are not homeless." This fact has a substantial impact on the health care system. According to the New England Journal of Medicine, homeless people spend four days longer per hospital visit when compared to non-homeless people. These added four days roughly cost \$2,414 per hospitalization and when unable to pay these costs, they are bounced to the State. One solution to this dilemma and to reduce the health care costs that are passed to the State is by preventing the need for emergency room treatment through housing stability.

Though medical and hospitalization costs are one of the major expenses incurred by the State and affect taxpayers, it is not the only cost associated with homelessness. Incarceration costs taxpayers thousands of dollars each year. Generally, people who are homeless spend more time in jail, or in prison, often time resulting from laws that directly target the homeless population, such as laws against loitering, sleeping in cars, and begging. A recent study of the Capital District found that for each person jailed

overnight, it costs taxpayers \$14,480 per year, while the typical cost of a bed in state or federal prison is \$20,000 per year.

So with all these costs incurred to taxpayers the question remains, "what do we do to solve this ever growing concern?"

The solution that comes to many peoples' minds when solving chronic homelessness is to simply place everyone in shelters. Emergency shelter is a costly alternative and while it is sometimes necessary for short-term crises, too often it serves as long-term housing. The only real solution to chronic homelessness is a step by step systematic approach where Case Managers work with individuals and families to identify the circumstances that resulted in their homeless situation. This Supportive Housing Model is the method we have chosen to employ here at Bethesda House.

Studies have proven time and time again that providing the homeless with permanent supportive housing saves taxpayers money and relieves a great burden from the State. In areas that have fully adopted the supportive housing model and are supported by their State and local governments have shown health care costs are reduced by 59%.

The supportive services we offer, in conjunction with the Housing First Model, allow the continued success of Bethesda House and its residents. Our Case Management team has developed strong working relationships with area landlords and our Department of Social Services. It is a fact that there is simply not enough affordable housing for low income individuals. In an effort to meet the needs of the homeless population, our Case Management Department creates innovative ways to market and encourage landlords to rent to low-income single individuals. We have been successful with our commitment to house the homeless and prevent evictions. However, the fight to end homelessness is a never ending battle.

We need your help! By supporting Bethesda House you are directly participating in the solution.



Bethesda House's Food Program, Making a Difference

In the United States there are many opportunities for success, but even with our abundances, our ability to end hunger presents a challenge. Many people believe the problems associated with hunger are confined to small populations of a big society, certain areas of the country, or just certain neighborhoods, but the reality is much different. Today, millions of Americans are struggling with hunger. These are often hard-working adults, children and seniors who cannot make ends meet and are forced to go without food for several meals, or even days. In 2012, 5.1 % of all U.S. households (6.2 million households) accessed emergency food one or more times.

Bethesda House's food program has many components, including our emergency food pantry (accessed with a referral, Monday - Friday), our client choice food pantry (the 2nd and 3rd Tuesdays of each month), daily meal (served 3-4pm, Monday through Friday), and our 6-week nutritional education program. During our 2012-13 funding year, 23,018 meals were provided from our food pantry and 31,163 attended our daily meal. During September and October 2013, our average daily meal attendance dramatically jumped from 130 to over 200. We now serve about 210 meals per day-19% are children.

Our Food and Nutrition Coordinator Jake R. collaborates with Cornell Cooperative Extension to teach nutrition classes where participants are taught how to stretch food stamp dollars and supplement food with visits to local food pantries. Our nutrition education program has been in place for two years and with the support of BJ's Wholesale, the Golub Corporation, and the



Bethesda House interns organize and restock the food pantry.

Wal-Mart Foundation grants, we have helped many to change their views on nutrition.

Bella has utilized Bethesda House's essential and emergency services on numerous occasions. "I love the way that we are treated like humans, not just numbers. When there are issues such as lapse in recertification for food stamps, job loss or other unforeseen issues, it is nice to have a place to go where you are treated well."

Nancy's monthly food stamp funds do not last the entire month. "Bethesda House's Food Pantry is important to the community. Many times when people do not have food stamps or money to last them the entire month, Bethesda House's food pantry can help. Without being able to use Bethesda House's Food Pantry many families would not be able to provide food for their families."

Together we can make a difference. Please consider having a food drive and donating to our food program.

HOLIDAY WISH APPEAL



It's time for Bethesda House's Holiday Wish Appeal!

Each year we compile a list of gifts for friends and supporters in the community who wish to donate for the holidays. Bethesda House gratefully acknowledges the generous gifts we receive that help us support the needs of so many. The items on our Wish List reflect our day-to-day needs as well as seasonal items. Bethesda House will hold its annual Holiday Party for guests and residents in December. At that time, each guest and resident will receive a gift. Donations are accepted between 9:30 am - 4:30 pm. Please call 518-374-7873 for details.

Food

- Non-perishable items
- Clothing
- Gently used items for men/women
- Practical shoes and boots
- Warm Winter clothing; coats, hats, gloves, sweaters and long johns
- New underwear and socks (all sizes)

Hygiene Products

- Regular and hotel size shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, soap, razors and toothbrushes
- Linens
- Sheets, towels, wash cloths
- Seasonal
- Home Depot/Lowes Gift Cards

Adopt Our Food Pantry

A \$50 donation gives us \$200 in food products from the Regional Food Bank. A \$100 donation give us \$500 in food products from the Regional Food Bank.

Adopt an Apartment

Visit bethesdahouseschenectady.org for details

Gifts That Keep On Giving:

Deferred gifts to Bethesda House can have a lasting effect on our future strength and sustainability. Please give serious consideration to:

- A bequest to Bethesda House
- · A donation of a life insurance policy
- A gift of appreciated asset (stock, property)

Bethesda	House of	Schenectady	, Inc
Friends of Re	thesda House	Profile Indate Giff	

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Name			
Organization			
Address			
Daytime Phone			
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Enclosed is my contribution of \$			
(Please make checks payable to Bethesda House)			
Are you a GE Employee/Retiree? Yes No			

You can also make donations at www.bethesdahouseschenectady.org using PayPal.

Enclosed is my gift of \$ ___

(Bethesda House is a GE Match Recipient)

Would you like to learn more about volunteer

opportunities at Bethesda House? Yes No

May 2013 - October 2013

Patron Up to \$499

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Lacoss, James and Carolyn

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Ladies Of Rotterdam Elks 2157

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Lisha's Kill Reformed Church

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Central Park International Magnet School

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Schultz, Ellen

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MacNeal, Ellen

Malone & Tate Builders Inc. Melo Dears Of Schenectady

The Links Foundation, Inc. Werner, Richard and Eunice

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Burnt Hills United Methodist Church Christoffel, Robert

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Tower Automotive

Eastern Parkway United Methodist Church

First Reformed Church of Schenectady Kahn, Genghis and Nahla

Union College - Kenney Center

Visionary Up to \$50,000 Blackwood, Ralph and Nicholas, Nancy The COINS Foundation

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- Empire Solar
- Friendship Baptist Church
- GE Power and Water
- Grace Luthern
- IBEW 236
- Immanuel Lutheran
- · Ladies of Charity Schenectady Vicarate
- · Lane Press of Albany
- Our Lady of Fatima
- Our Redeemer Lutheran
- Peter Harris
- Price Chopper Shop Rite
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- St. George Episcopal Church
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- St. Kateri Tekakwitha
- St. Josephs of Scotia
- Subway
- Temple Gates of Heaven • The Ladies Philotochos Society of
- St. George Greek Orthodox Church • Union College

Bethesda House is grateful to these individuals and organizations who donated from \$1 to \$50,000. Your generosity allows us to continue our mission this fall and winter with helping others by provding for basic needs in an environment that encourages and

supports positive life changes. We thank you and look forward

to another successful year. Every donor is important to us. Our goal is to list each person or organization as the donor

If your name does not appear as you would like it, please call Bethesda House (518) 374-7873 and ask for Megan Bronsther so

Thank you for your continued support.

we may correct our records.



wishes.

Bethesda House

is an Interfaith ministry to the homeless, disabled and economically disadvantaged citizens of Schenectady County, building a just hospitable and inclusive community one person at a time by affirming the dignity and addressing the needs of each guest entering this House of Mercy.



Bethesda House Board of Directors

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- Alex Hallenstein
- Genghis Khan
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Bethesda House

Kimarie Sheppard **Executive Director**

- Danny Payne
- Director of Residential Services
- Anne McGhee
- **Program Director**
- Harold "Butch" Fogg

Director Property/Facility Operations

Fundraising:

A Necessity for Non-Profits

"Give and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." - Luke 6:38

Most charitable nonprofits rely upon the generosity of donors for some of their funding. Fundraising is an activity of major importance to the nonprofit world. One of the principal strengths of Bethesda House is the support we receive from our community and donors. Your gifts have helped us enhance the level of service we offer. During our 2012-13 fiscal year, your donation dollars helped to serve thousands of individuals and families in need of case management, housing, food, clothing, and financial stability.

October 24th, 2013 was no ordinary day for Bethesda House we held our 3rd Annual Event: TRIVIA at The Stockade Inn. It was an evening of fun, testing our knowledge of useful and useless information. We shared smiles, stories, and laughter with old and new friends and supporters of our agency. We are fortunate to have realized our fundraising goal for this event, but more needs to be done. Fundraising cannot happen without you. With your continued support we are partners in our fight to end homelessness. Thank you for your generosity.

A special Thank You to our event sponsors; the Golub Foundation, Sunmark FCU, Mood Media, Heatcraft, Malone and Tate, Lane Press of Albany, Tower Automotive, CDPHP, 3N Document Destruction, and AE Rosen Electrical and our Honorary Committee: Keith and Patricia Barney, Stephen and Amanda Benamati, Susan Bouton, Ronya Bynum, Fred Callins, Sharran Coppola, Stephen & Abby Curro, Alex & Christina Dell, Harold & Karen Fogg, Alex & Betty Hallenstein, Darren Hallman, Mark Hathaway, Mary Isabella, Honorable Karen Brown Johnson, Ellen MacNeal, Shaterra McAdoo, Anne McGhee, Walter & Edith Morlock, Robert Long, Paul & Dolores Nelson, Louise O'Leary, Danny Payne, Alberta Peroutky, Alleesa Rosenfield, June Schermerhorn, Kimarie Sheppard, Dave Smingler, Susan Snyder, Terry & Anne Marie Stroble, Sam & Estelle Sylvetsky, M.J. Teresco, Barbara Viver, Richard & Eunice Werner, and Sue Williams.

From our house to yours, we wish everyone a peaceful and Happy Holiday Season.

























