

An active community can produce powerful change.



Tompkins Community Action Annual Report 2023

Dear Community,

Over the past year, Tompkins Community Action (TCAAction) continued to fight the effects of poverty in Tompkins County by applying for funding to create new programs and shifting existing program operations to address changing community needs. Community Action brings stakeholders and partners together to identify solutions and improve the quality of life for those impacted by poverty. At TCAAction we do this by focusing on Early Childhood education, food assistance and a variety of specialized housing programs. Here are a few things I would like to highlight from 2022-2023:

- Thank you to Welliver for working with us to make the improvements to our entryway. Essential updates were made to our Main Office lobby to create a play space for children, provide a computer/printer with internet connection for consumer use and installation of an accessible push button entry door. We hope these improvements make our space welcoming!



The new play space in the lobby at our main office.

- Utilizing COVID related funds, Welliver also completed outdoor play space improvements at our childcare centers in Dryden, Groton, and Ithaca. The improvements included adding pavilions for additional outdoor shade for activities and updating rubber playground surface areas.
- The Family Health Network (FHN) Mobile Medical Unit visits our Main Office the 2nd Thursday of each month, more information on that partnership can be found later in this report.

As I look towards 2024, I am happy to highlight:



The new Asteri Ithaca.

- A partnership with Racker adding additional classrooms to serve Early Head Start children at their Wilkens Road location.
- Asteri Ithaca, an affordable housing project in the City of Ithaca is set to open in early 2024. TCAAction will provide supportive housing services to 40 set-aside units serving people experiencing chronic homelessness.
- Making Moves, a Housing Choice Voucher Mobility Program, will launch in 2024. Our goal is to assist voucher program households with support and financial assistance to move away from high poverty neighborhoods into opportunity

areas in Tompkins County. Several community partners including the Ithaca Housing Authority, Alternatives Federal Credit Union, Human Services Coalition and Legal Assistance of Western New York will be working alongside us to launch this program.

I would like to share a heartfelt thank you to the staff at TCAction who worked tirelessly, during some of our community's most challenging times in history, to improve the lives of others. We are fortunate to have a very talented group ready to move the mission of our organization forward. I hope you enjoy taking a look at what TCAction has accomplished over the past year or so and join us in celebrating a successful 57th year of Community Action in Tompkins County.

Thank You & Be Well,



Danielle Harrington
Executive Director



Filling orders in our Food Pantry.



The dedicated employees of Tompkins Community Action.

Mission

Tompkins Community Action collaborates with individuals and organizations to sustain and improve economic opportunity and social justice for families and individuals impacted directly or indirectly by poverty.

Our History

During President Lyndon Johnson's 1964 State of the Union Address, he said "*this administration, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty.*" Through that declaration, Community Action Agencies were created. The Office of Economic Opportunity was established in 1964 to implement the War on Poverty - its first Director was Sargent Shriver. He believed passionately that we could end poverty and spent his life championing that effort. He helped create the first programs for Community Action Agencies (CAA) that year: Job Corp, Youth Work Training and Vista. In 1965 Shriver spearheaded the creation and implementation of Head Start. The Civil Rights Act of 1968 established a provision for Section 8 Housing Vouchers and the same year CAA's were awarded funds through the Department of Housing and Urban Development, starting a continued history of CAA funding from multiple Federal agencies.

In 1964 a small grassroots effort began to improve the lives of low-income children and their families in Ithaca. Two years later, we incorporated as the Tompkins County Economic Opportunity Corporation, a private, nonprofit charitable organization. In 1999, we renamed our agency Tompkins Community Action, Inc (TCAAction) Today, we work in partnership with community organizations and institutions; leveraging resources, coordinating referrals, and actively participating in community dialogue to reach all our low-income residents.

Governance

The Economic Opportunity Act directed CAA Boards to include all community members; it mandated that Boards be tripartite in composition: one third each of elected public officials, private/community sector, and low-income sector representatives. At the time, it was considered a "community revolution" to mandate representation by all community stakeholders. This mandate provided the structure for low-income voices to form their vision of the future. When Head Start program guidelines were defined in 1965, they included the formation of a Head Start Policy Council. Again, ensuring that low-income participants were provided with opportunities to voice their vision; Policy Council is comprised of past and current Head Start parents.

This year our **Board of Directors** included Tommy Miller, President, Jody Scriber, Vice President, Sally Dullea, Treasurer, Leslie Connors, Secretary, Gary Evans, Seph Murtagh, Kevin Kelly, Rick Alvord, Daniel Lichter, Samantha Stevenson, Justin St Juliana, and Kate Laux.

This year our **Head Start Policy Council** included Daniella Rin Hover, Dawn Lehto, Joann Encarnacion, Jessica Giannicchi- Harris, Meggan Munson, Destiny Towns, Dreena DiMaggio, Sheena Veney, Mika Hazzard, Shyla Clemons, Stephanie Drake, Shawn Moyer, and Roberta Hardison.

These dedicated groups of community members provide insight to improve programs, identify community needs and ensure that we stay true to our organization's mission.

Joe Cassaniti Community Service Awards

The Joe Cassaniti Community Service Award (JCCSA) was established at TCAction in 1996 by Walter Gangl, an attorney and former Ithaca resident, to honor the work of local businessman and community activist, Joe Cassaniti. Joe has been an ongoing influence in reshaping the West End business district, provided encouragement to dozens of young people in area schools, and

inspired citizens all over Tompkins County to “get involved.” Joe is never at a loss for innovative and creative solutions to community problems. One of his foremost reasons for staying involved is his deep commitment to the development of young people. In keeping with this attitude and vision for the future, the JCCSA is awarded annually to a high school senior in Tompkins County, who has demonstrated their commitment to the community through volunteerism.



Ethan Musgrove Robinson

In 2022, our JCCSA Award winner was **Ethan Musgrove Robinson**. Ethan, a senior at Lehman Alternative Community School, was nominated by Jon Raimon. Ethan has made service an on-going part of his life. During his high school years, he was involved in several volunteer opportunities including building dividers for St. John’s Community Services Emergency Shelter during COVID- 19, helping at nursing homes, assisting food pantries, and reading books in Spanish to elementary school students. Ethan plans to attend college and pursue his love of hands-on trades, such as carpentry.

This year our JCCSA Award winner was **Braedy Dilger**. Sara Knobel, Library Director at Groton Public Library, submitted a nomination highlighting Braedy’s work with Healthy Tuesday Food Giveaways and establishing the LGBTQ Club at the Library in Groton. Braedy plans to attend college and continue service work in the community.



Braedy Dilger (right) with his grandmother (left) and TCAction Board President Tommy Miller (center).

Ethan & Braedy are Community Action!

Program Highlights

TCAction's program delivery is administered through three Departments: Family Services, Housing Services, and Community Services. Our service philosophy is based on the Family Development Model which redirects the way health, education, and human services are delivered to families. It moves systems away from crisis-oriented, fragmented services toward a comprehensive support-based approach to working with families. Family Development emphasizes strength-based partnerships, mutual respect, interagency collaboration, and family-centered services.

Family Services



Our **Head Start & Early Head Start Programs** served 300 children and their families. Program services were provided to pregnant women, newborns, and children up to five years old in classrooms and families' homes.

With 26 classrooms county-wide including nine in **Ithaca City School District** classroom collaborations, children and families received high quality, developmentally appropriate education individualized to enhance learning and access community resources in preparing our children for a lifetime of learning.

Utilizing High-Scope Curriculum, focused on five school readiness domains, this year's child assessments reflected achievement across all domains. Children's approaches to learning increased by 42%; reflecting their abilities to problem solve, plan, and expand their initiative. Language and literacy skills increased by 36% and physical development skills scores increased by 33%. Social skills increased by 36%. Children's math and science skills increased by 39%; these gains were enhanced utilizing the ECHOS science curriculum implemented through a collaboration with the **Sciencenter**. Program activities included socialization events, Parent Action Groups, trainings, secondary education opportunities and seminars throughout the year.



We served 73,813 breakfasts, lunches and snacks to children and families with expanded activities that linked the Learning About Nutrition through Activities (LANA) curriculum to the home. Our collaboration with **Finger Lakes Community Health** provided dental screenings and cleanings for children while reinforcing oral health care in the home through child and family education and supplies.

Transition to Kindergarten included a variety of activities, such as visits to school cafeterias, libraries, and gymnasiums. Our **Primary School Family Support Program** worked closely with parents and school officials to strengthen relationships for children in their first years of public school. TCAction staff supported families at parent-teacher conferences, coordinated services for children with special needs and supported positive communication between families and school staff.

Our **Family Home Library Program** provided 2,493 books and activities to family homes funded through **Reading Is Fundamental** and the

Park Foundation. As a literacy initiative, this program creates opportunities for families to develop and enhance a lifelong love of reading! Throughout the year, our Head Start families receive program packets that include new books, recipes, and activities for the whole family to enjoy. These projects connect to activities also happening in the classroom. Our Family Literacy Events are social gatherings with activities connected to book themes. These activities are fun and help develop a love of reading and promote school readiness. By the end of the program year, every household has the start of a home library.

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services program funding totaled \$4,131,103. Of which \$2,939,654 supported wages and fringe benefits, \$775,676 for operations, \$260,071 to support the Ithaca City School District collaboration and \$94,122 for consumable like classroom supplies. An additional \$61,580 of funding was dedicated to expanded staff and parent education and training.



Community Services



Glenda Abbey (right) hands out a turkey from our Emergency Food Pantry.

Our **Emergency Food Panty Program** offers households three to four days' worth of food and personal care items available every two weeks. Households can use the online ordering system to choose foods that best serve their family's dietary needs and preferences as well as request a pickup time. We continued to provide limited deliveries for households needing accommodation. Our pantry is a collaboration with the Food Bank of the Southern Tier, the Friendship Donation Network, the Food Distribution Network, Nourish Tompkins, local growers, businesses, and community member donations. Our Food Pantry offers fresh vegetables, fruits, and bread whenever possible. Additionally, cleaning supplies and personal hygiene products were made available. The Pantry provided 7,416 food boxes this year.

Additionally, through our partnership with the Food Bank of the Southern Tier we are able to provide diapers,

both infant, toddler, and adult sizes to community members through the Diaper Program.

The **Victory Garden Project** was held in May. The event provided 150 households with starter vegetable and herb plants including tomatoes, peppers, basil, and cilantro. Since 2010, **Cornell University Horticulture Department** has provided a beautiful selection of plants that are given out so that gardens can be planted at home. Volunteers from **Cargill** helped with setting up, packing plants, and loading cars making the event a true success.



Staff and volunteers setting up for our annual Victory Garden Project.

Housing Services

In Housing Services, we provided **Housing Choice Voucher Program** rental assistance to 1,144 households; this resulted in \$9,911,238 in rental subsidy for landlords issued by NYS Homes & Community Renewal. One hundred households participated in the **Family Self-Sufficiency Program**, of which 89 participants have program escrow saving accounts because of an increase in earned income.



Cornell Cooperative Extension's "Let's Cook!" class in action at Amici House.

Under our final year of partnering with the **Department of Social Services** to provide preventative services under the **Solutions to End Homelessness Program**, 25 households received rental assistance and supportive services to maintain their rental housing and avoid homelessness.

We assisted 16 households experiencing homelessness to secure rental housing through our **Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program**. This program is funded through NYS Homes and Community Renewal and supports chronically homeless households using a housing first approach. This funding has been used to support households to secure and maintain safe housing by providing rental assistance and supportive services using a scattered site model across Tompkins County.

Our **Supportive Housing Programs** serve people experiencing homelessness by providing permanent housing with rental assistance and supportive services. The goal of our Supportive Housing Program is to help remove barriers to resources and prevent a return to homelessness. Our service delivery focuses on supporting residents with building life and housing stability skills as well as establishing other resident-identified goals. Our Supportive Housing Programs are in the City of Ithaca. **Chartwell House** serves 12 residents in a single room occupancy (SRO) setting. **Magnolia House** serves 14 residents in studio apartments. **Amici House** and **Corn Street Apartments** provides 29 apartments serving young adults 18 to 25 years old. We offer supportive services using the same program model at **Ithaca Arthaus**. We provide supportive services to 40 units serving young adults (ages 18-25) within the building developed and operated by the Vecino Group. All supportive housing residents with children are connected to our Early Head Start/Head Start programming.



Supportive Housing staffer Michelle (center) with residents Ashlie (left) and Zhariyana (right).

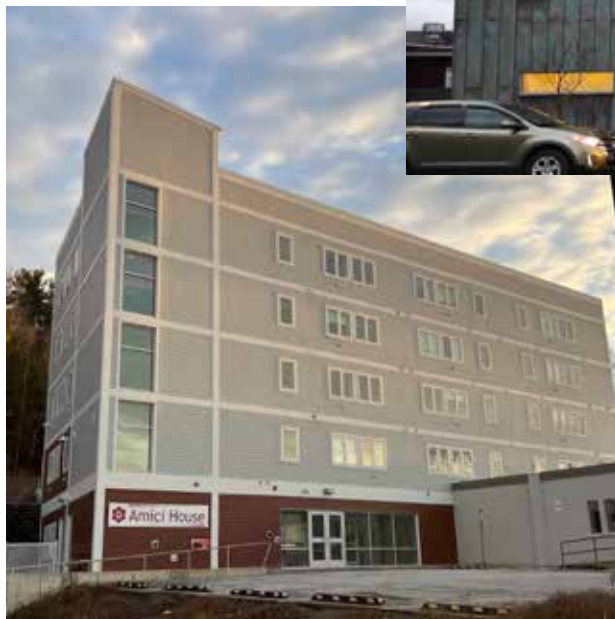
The strength of Community Action comes from our dedicated staff team, community partners and collaborators, "Because an Active Community Can Produce Powerful Change".



Chartwell House



Magnolia House



Amici House



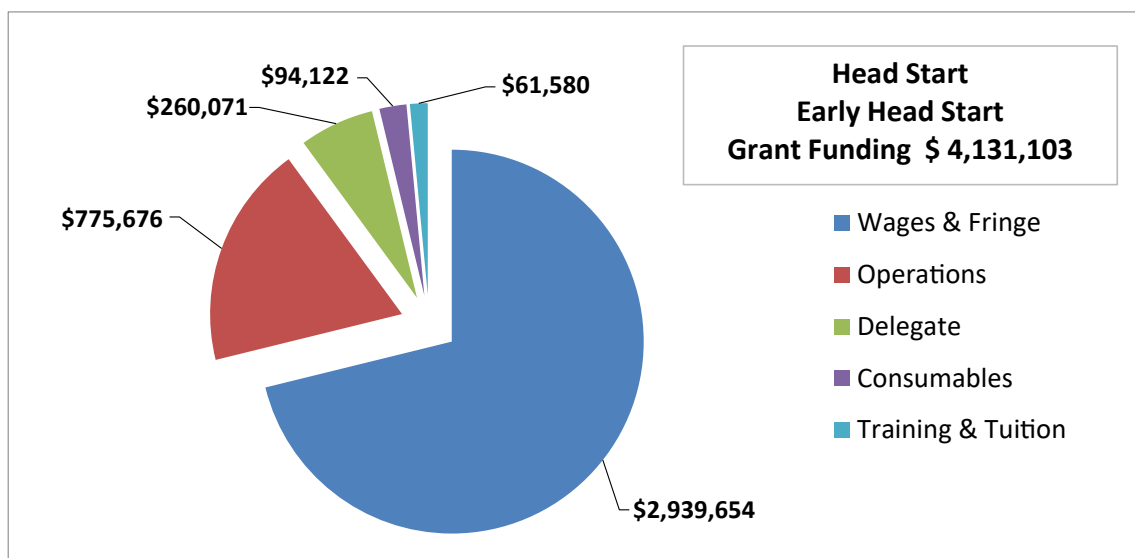
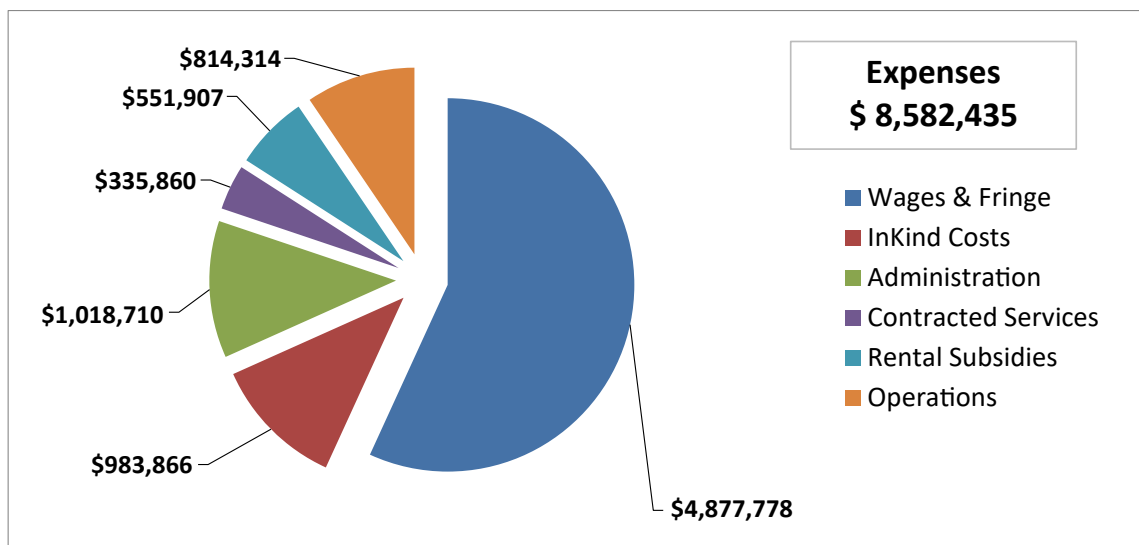
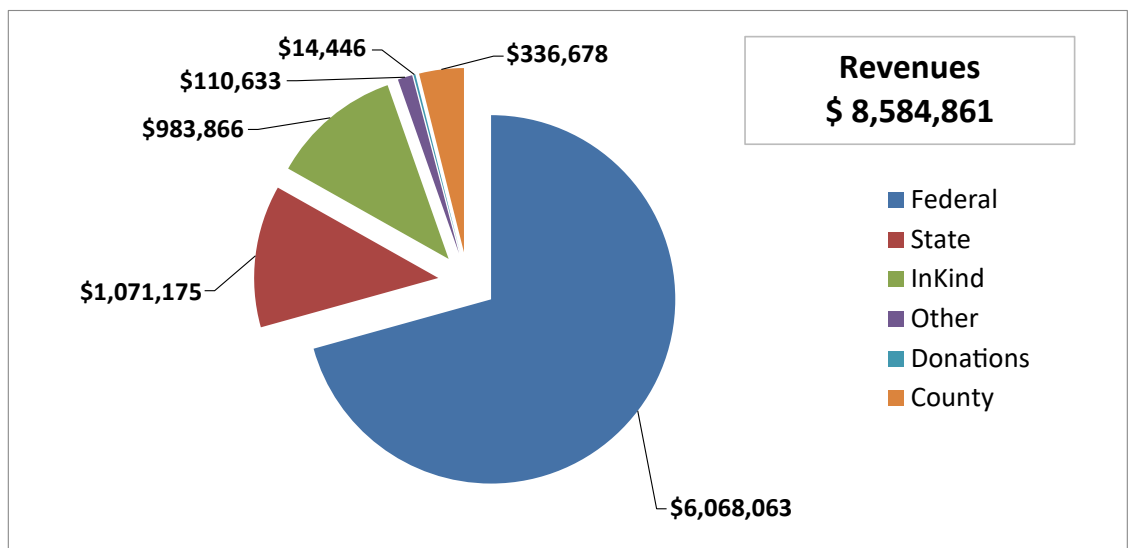
Corn Street Apartments



Ithaca Arthaus



Revenues & Expenditures for 2022-2023



One of our Partners: Family Health Network

Family Health Network of Central New York Inc., or FHN, is a licensed Article 28 Diagnostic and Treatment Center established in 1972. As a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), FHN serves as the primary safety net provider for this part of Central New York, and on an annual basis delivers more than ~45,000 visits to ~15,000 patients. FHN offers the following services: Family Practice-Primary Care, Dentistry, Occupational Health Services, Obstetrics/Gynecology, Pediatrics, School-Based Health Services, Behavioral Health, Medication Assisted Treatment, 340B Pharmacy Services, Insurance Enrollment, & Care Coordination.



FHN's Mobile Medical Unit visiting TCAction.



FHN has five medical health centers, one of which includes dental services, four school-based health centers, one school based dental program, and one Mobile Medical Unit. FHN proudly serves residents of both Cortland, Cayuga, and Tompkins Counties; as well as the contiguous counties of Madison, Chenango, Broome, Tioga, and more. FHN is the only source of care in four of the communities served, and the only source of primary health care on a sliding fee schedule for qualifying individuals and families in the Cortland County region.



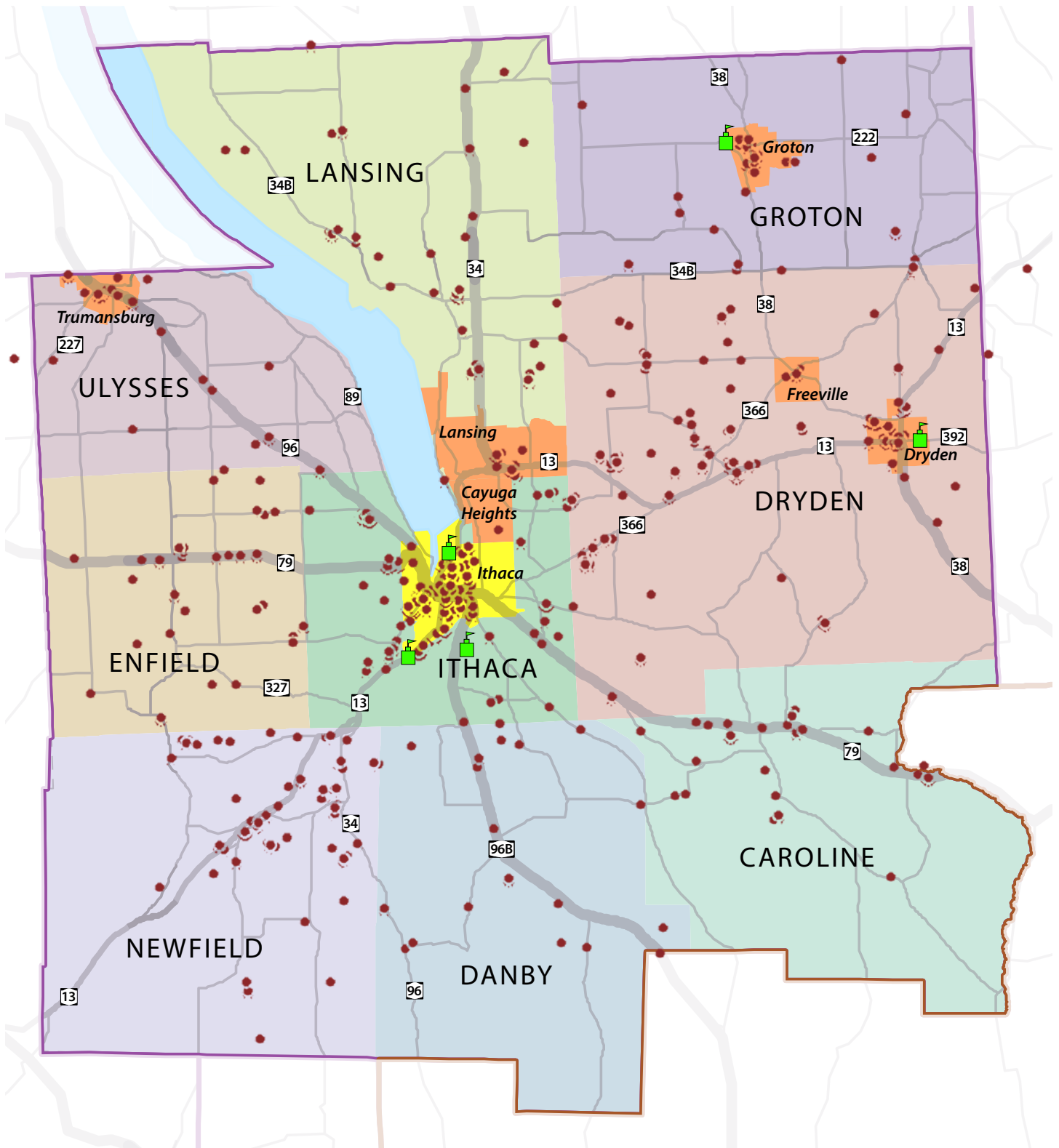
FHN has maintained Patient Centered Medical Home recognition, achieved multiple Quality Awards (including the HRSA 2023 Health Center Bronze Quality Leader badge, Maternal and Child Health Quality Badge, Advancing HIT for Quality), expanded service capacity, and is now operating a brand new Mobile Medical Unit.

FHN's mobile medical unit is a mission driven project and assists in the integration of high quality, comprehensive health care services in the communities of Cortland, Tompkins, and contiguous counties. Essential health care services are provided by a FHN care team and offers the unique opportunity to deliver accessible health care by traveling to the patient, rather than the patient traveling to a FHN health center.

With a heavy focus on underserved communities in the Central New York region, FHN has identified locations where an impact can be made on the health outcomes of the residents through the utilization of the Mobile Medical Unit. As a safety-net provider, FHN proudly organizes and delivers a significant level of health care and other needed services to uninsured, underinsured, Medicaid, and other vulnerable populations who have limited means for transportation and experience various barriers to accessing health care.

In 2023, FHN partnered with Tompkins Community Action (TCAAction) in Tompkins County. This collaboration offers the opportunity for FHN and TCA staff to work together to provide whole-person care to the established clientele seeking services at TCAAction. FHN's 40-foot, two exam room, Mobile Medical Unit allows FHN to effectively and efficiently provide services including, but not limited to, routine check-ups and physicals, well child exams and sports physicals, blood work, immunizations, screenings, diagnosis, and treatment/management of chronic conditions, direct coordination of care and health education, insurance enrollment by referral, and more.

FHN's Mobile Medical Unit visits TCAAction on the second Thursday of every month, from 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM. Appointments are recommended, but not required, and can be scheduled by calling 607-218-6704. FHN is always accepting new patients and never turns patients away due to an inability to pay.



Serving families across Tompkins County

Honoring Lee Dillon

It is with profound sadness that we mark the passing of our former Executive Director, Lee Dillon on January 28, 2023. Lee began her career with us in 1985 as a Housing Inspector and became a fierce advocate for those experiencing homelessness.

She was a founding member of the Continuum of Care that established guidelines to ensure those with the greatest need were housed first in coordination with all county agencies. She was instrumental in bringing New York State Homeless Housing and Supportive Housing Program funds into the county, resulting in numerous buildings serving the homeless, providing supportive services and meeting the needs of those gripped by substance use dependence.

In 2000, she became the Executive Director, working in that capacity until her retirement in 2021.

In addition, she served on the New York State Community Action Association Board of Directors and was an active participant and presenter for the Supportive Housing Network of New York.

Under her leadership, TCAAction expanded and integrated services for individuals and families living in poverty in an effort to move those impacted toward self-sufficiency and she did so with respect and passion for all those served.





Tompkins Community Action

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