

2018

Commissioner's Advisory Council

Fran Bialy, Executive Director

A New Hope Center

Donna Corbin, Director

Glove House, Inc.

Ryan Dougherty, Superintendent

Newark Valley Central Schools

Cory Green, Superintendent

Owego Apalachin Central Schools

Kathleen Keene, Principal

Tioga Central Schools

Eric Knolles, Superintendent

Waverly Central Schools

Lisa McCafferty, Director

Tioga County Public Health

Lori Morgan

Community Services Director

Tioga County Mental Hygiene

Dr. Joseph Morgan, Superintendent

Spencer-Van Etten Central Schools

Sister Mary O'Brien

Executive Director

Tioga County Rural Ministry

Marilyn Ochs

ACT and Owego Citizen

Peter Punzo, Interim Superintendent

Waverly Central Schools

Susan Ruff, Advocacy Director

Southern Tier Independence Center

Renee Spear, Executive Director

*Catholic Charities of
Tompkins/Tioga*

Jackie Spencer

Association Community Educator

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Elizabeth Stieglitz

Berkshire Citizen

Kelly White

Nutrition Program Manager

Cornell Cooperative Extension

**On the Cover: Quinton Kerns proudly shows
off his adoption certificate on the Tioga
County Courthouse steps.**

A Message from the Commissioner



You should quickly observe from our cover photo this year, as well as other photos within this Annual Report, that adoptions are being highlighted.

There is an anonymous quote that reads "Adopting one child won't change the world; but for that child, the world will change." We celebrate all adoptions as changing

a child's life and opening new doors for both the children and their parents.

2018 was a challenging and successful year in many ways for the Tioga County Department of Social Services.

Organizational restructuring and staffing reductions in some areas allowed us to continue to do "more with less," helped by both technology and stabilization of the local economy. And, in Children's Services we were able to add a caseworker as part of the solution to meet the growing demands of the opioid epidemic and escalating hotline reports.

*"Adopting one child won't change
the world; but for that child,
the world will change."*

As always, it is the staff who deserve the credit for all we accomplish, both in large ways and small ways. By working together as a team, we accomplished so much, some of which we can never quantify. Children were kept safe. Families were kept together. The elderly were reassured and kept safe in their own homes. Good people found good jobs. Children were adopted. The community was strengthened.

We never know what lies ahead but we are certain of one thing. Whatever it may be, we continue to strive to be better prepared to serve those who will need us.

Shawn L. Yetter
Commissioner

Tioga County Department of Social Services

Mission

The Social Services department works to promote self-sufficiency and protect citizens by providing financial and social services to eligible Tioga County residents through program development, application of the law and encouragement of responsibility in an empathetic, timely and customer focused manner.

Values

Responsibility

Accepting personal and professional accountability for the delivery of dependable, reliable services.

Integrity & Ethics

Ensuring optimal standards of service with honesty, trust and dedication.

Equality

Promoting fairness and impartiality among all.

Respect & Compassion

Expressing consideration and empathy toward others.

Excellence

Encouraging and motivating the best in others and ourselves.

Vision

To be the most respected Department of Social Services, having a culture which values responsibility, efficiency, teamwork, compassion, excellence and universal respect.

Tioga County Department of Social Services

P.O. Box 240

1062 NY Route 38

Owego, New York 13827

607.687.8300

www.tiogacountyny.com/departments/social-services/

ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPERVISORY STAFF

ADMINISTRATION

Shawn L. Yetter, Commissioner
Gary Grant, Deputy Commissioner
Elizabeth Myers, Director of Services
Natalie Thompson, Director of Employment & Transitional Supports

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIVISION

Mickelle Andrews, Accounting Supervisor
Charles Root, Welfare Management Systems Coordinator

EMPLOYMENT & TRANSITIONAL SUPPORTS DIVISION

Rebecca Fetherbay, Principal Social Welfare Examiner
Katherine Garrison, Principal Social Welfare Examiner
Tara Hauptfleisch, Principal Social Welfare Examiner
Christopher Kallin, Child Support Enforcement Coordinator
Julie Whipple, Principal Social Welfare Examiner

LEGAL DEPARTMENT

Christian Root, Second Assistant County Attorney
John Van Wert, First Assistant County Attorney

SERVICES DIVISION

Charisse Campbell, CPS/Preventive Services Supervisor
Michele Resue, Adolescent/Adult Services Supervisor
Lauran Murphy, Foster Care/Adoption/Home Finding Supervisor
Joylynn MacNaughton, CPS/FAR Supervisor
Jennifer Green, CPS/Preventive Services Supervisor

TIOGA EMPLOYMENT CENTER

Sheri McCall, Manager

YOUTH BUREAU

Natalie Thompson, Director

2018 Tioga County Legislature

Martha C. Sauerbrey, Legislative Chair

District 2

Ed Hollenbeck

District 7

Richard L. Huttleston

District 1

Tracy Monell

District 4

Health and Human Services Committee

Dennis Mullen

District 5

Health and Human Services Committee

Michael Roberts

District 3

William Standinger

District 7

Chair, Health and Human Services Committee

Loretta Sullivan

District 4

Health and Human Services Committee

Dale Weston, Deputy Chair

District 6

Administrative Services

Administrative Services

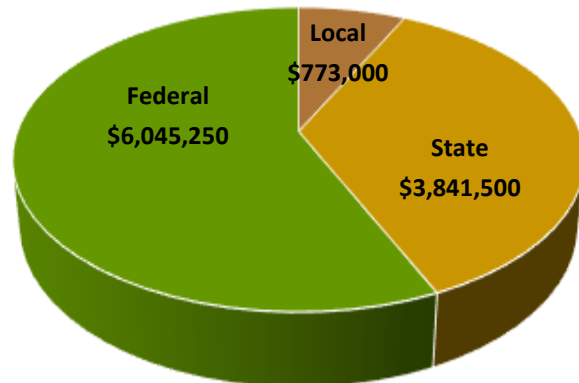
Gary Grant, Deputy Commissioner

The **Accounting Department** is responsible for monitoring and processing all Agency cash receipts and disbursements of the Agency and for the accurate recording and reporting of all DSS expenditures and revenues to the County Treasurer's Office. This includes all program and administrative expenditures. The Accounting Department prepares and submits monthly and quarterly claims in a timely manner to State agencies to receive maximum reimbursements of Federal and State aid. Other functions include bank reconciliations, financial management case reconciliations, budget preparations, maintaining the Agency's rep-payee accounts, and issuing temporary benefit cards.

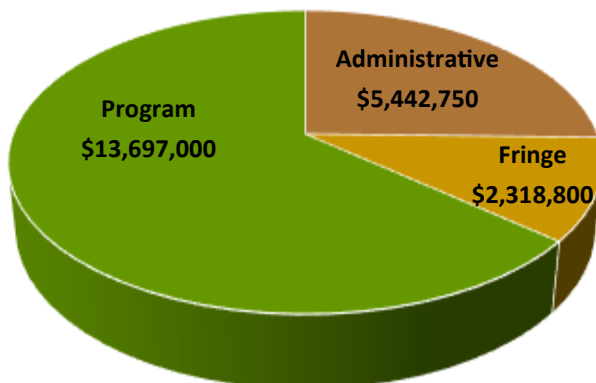
Accounting 2018 Highlights

- ♦ The Accounting Department participated in the Annual State Single Audit. The programs tested were HEAP (40 payments), Adoptions (40 payments) and Title XX (40 payments). Forty administrative disbursements were also audited. There were no significant findings.
- ♦ Due to the dedication of the Accounting staff using and creating improved processes, the successful implementation of the financial management system *Munis* was completed in 2018. Other counties in the State moving to *Munis* continue to use Tioga County as a model.
- ♦ To keep up-to-date with 2018 changes, Accounting staff were trained in new accounting functions. Due to staff turnover and health related absences, the department was, at times, short-handed and remaining staff took on the new tasks with minimal loss of efficiency.

2018 Revenue by Source



2018 Expenditures by Category



- ♦ Accounting is continuing to work toward a goal of going paperless by scanning all invoices, receipts, claims and rolls. Electronic signatures, and electronic attachments through *Munis* are utilized. The Department continues to access BICS reports and rolls in TREAT. The reports accessed in TREAT were expanded, and the Agency continued to use online banking services and electronic transfer of information to auditors. At least 90% of our reports are maintained as PDF files in lieu of printing.
- ♦ A total of 41 Representative Payee accounts were maintained resulting in 3,962 transactions with payments, totaling \$320,443, made on behalf of the clients.
- ♦ Local Revenues and recoveries totaled \$772,989 in 2018.

The **Systems Department** is responsible for maintaining and providing user support for both hardware and software. The unit manages a variety of hardware from Apple iPad devices to computers. Security access is maintained to a variety of State-owned software such as the *Welfare Management System (WMS)*, *Imaging and Enterprise Document Repository (I/EDR)*, *MyWorkspace*, *Connections* and other applications.

Systems also provides agency-wide services such as data entry, processing State reports, (electronic and printed) and creating custom databases for departments across the Agency.

2018 Systems Highlights

- ◆ In January 2018, the Systems Department set up and configured an application called *Compass Pilot*. This application allows Child and Family Services workers to manage their caseloads electronically and convert numerous paper forms to an electronic format. This reduces the need to retain paper-based caseloads. The *Compass Pilot* software will be receiving automatic data feeds from New York State's *Connections* application. This will allow a worker to make one change to a record and result in an update to two systems. It is anticipated to roll out in early 2019.
- ◆ A total of 33 iPads were deployed to Child and Family Services workers allowing them access to their email, complete case notes, and to have clients electronically sign forms while in the field. The software primarily used on the iPads is called *Compass CoPilot*, which works with the *Pilot* application to transfer documents back to the *Pilot* application.
- ◆ In the Spring 2018, Systems began registering all HEAP applications electronically through *MyWorkspace*. As a result, a client's paper application is entered into the system, allowing the workers to electronically process the application without printing paperwork that would generally be shredded.
- ◆ In August 2018, working with County IT, DSS purchased new copiers. The print cost per page is less-per-piece than the previous copiers. The machines automatically order toner when needed, serving as a time saver for Systems' staff.
- ◆ A new mail metering machine was leased in 2018. The Mail Department meters mail for County departments including offices at the Health and Human Services (HHS) Complex, Sheriff's Office, Treasurer's Office, and DMV. Over 84,000 pieces of mail were metered in 2018.
- ◆ Social Services' Annual Review was conducted by State staff for the application usage of *Connections*, overseen by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). The *Connections* review focused on user security controls, verified that users only received permissions needed for their job scope, and that staff position changes and removal were completed in a timely manner. The review team found that Tioga County continues to be consistent with State requirements and is prompt in keeping user profiles current and only granting access when appropriate.



Children and Adult Services

Children and Adult Services

Liz Myers, Director

2018 was another busy year for the Children and Adult Services Division. Referrals to the New York State Central Register for child protective reports, the number of family and children served by DSS in-house preventive services and adult protective services remains steady or is increasing. In the midst of the everyday job duties, the Children and Adult Services staff went through the process of implementing a new software program called *Pilot*. This was a significant undertaking which is showing its benefits.

Contracts for preventive services continue to prove their value and effectiveness in keeping children safe at home. In response to the ongoing opioid epidemic, caseworkers continue to work with a contracted therapist to conduct in-home assessments to assist them in ensuring safety of children and developing service plans with families. Other contracted services successfully assisted families in addressing childhood substance abuse, mental health and behavioral concerns, runaway behaviors, and increased positive communication between children and their parents.

Children in foster care were stable and safe in their placements. Child Protective Services and Foster Care staff continue to identify relatives and fictive kin of children needing out of home placement. Eleven children were discharged to permanency in 2018.

New Technology Changes the Way Caseworkers Work

In 2018, Tioga County DSS integrated a new electronic documentation and paperwork management platform called *Compass Pilot* through Northwoods, a software solutions company. *Compass Pilot* is a proven technology for caseworkers that increases agency-wide productivity by automating routine tasks all from a single application.

With *Compass Pilot* installed on the desktop, case and client data this is collected at any point in the system is immediately available to all workers and processes that require that data. For the Agency, this results in measurable increases in productivity and service levels. “The impact of this software is far reaching. It allows casework staff to have more options on how to manage their workload,” explains Services Director Liz Myers. Features and benefits of the application include: document capture; forms and document management; client and case management; and task organization. In addition to caseworkers, clerical, CSW and SWE staff in all the Services’ units utilize *Pilot*.

Enhancing this application is the addition of *Compass CoPilot* which puts the functionality of *Pilot* on a tablet. The Agency purchased 33 iPads enabling workers in the field to access case and client information as well as forms and documents, just as they would in the office. Another important feature is that clients now have the ability to sign paperwork electronically on the iPad during out-of-office visits.

There has been a reduction in the amount of paper generated within the Division, thus reducing the amount of time having to look for specific documents as they are readily at the workers’ fingertips. “Clients are supportive of the use in technology and children can keep the engagement activities (pictures) they produce during visits because caseworkers are able to take pictures of them, whereas before the physical document would have to be made part of the paper record,” Myers added.

Implementing the program was not without its challenges - waiting for the data feeds from the State system and having to “relearn” the program with the new feeds. As with any project, some people quickly embraced the ability to use technology and others have been much slower to be engaged with the software, but as *Compass Pilot* becomes standard within the Services division there is no doubt that 2019 will show measurable improvements to efficiencies and quality of service to our clients.

Adult Protective/Adolescent Services by the Numbers 2018

439

The number of Adult Services referrals - down 15% from 2017

153

The number of Adult Protective referrals - compared to 151 in 2017

Adult Protective investigations decreased from 72 in 2017 to 65 in 2018

PINS Diversion opened 39 cases in 2018, a decrease from 42 cases in 2017. Of the 39 cases, 25 were opened to MST, six to Berkshire Farms, and eight to PINS Preventative.



A 2018 Kali's Klub House 7 Keys to Success Program participant and his equine buddy at Fargnoli Farms in Apalachin.

Youth Bureau

The Tioga County Youth Bureau serves the County by addressing the priorities of preventing child abuse and neglect and providing programs for youth during non-school hours.

In 2018, the Tioga County Youth Bureau and its board funded nine programs that served a total of 1,645 youth. 100% of \$46,300 allocated to the programs was reimbursed to the County by the State Office of Children and Family Services.

Program	Allocation
Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentoring Program	\$5,000
Cornell Cooperative Extension Family Resource Centers	\$7,000
Cornell Cooperative Extension 4-H Summer Youth Enrichment	\$5,000
Kali's Klub House 7 Keys to Success	\$4,800
Spencer-Van Etten Schools After School Program	\$5,500
Tioga Central Schools Summer Recreation	\$8,000
Tioga County DSS Sexually Exploited Youth (SEY) Awareness and Education	\$30,000
Town of Owego Summer Camp	\$3,800
Village of Newark Valley Summer Recreation	\$2,200
Village of Waverly/Barton Summer Recreation	\$5,000

Foster Care/Adoption Unit by the Numbers 2018

2018 Foster Home Certifications

Six new foster homes were opened in 2018. Three of the homes were emergency certified relative homes, eliminating the need for children to be placed with strangers allowing for continued stability through their family connections. These new, local foster homes are critical in response to growing needs as a result of the ongoing opioid epidemic.

0

The number of children that had to move more than two times during their first year of placement. There were also zero children that re-entered care within one year of discharge.

11

The number of children that were discharged from Foster Care. Three were reunited with a parent, two were discharged to a relative, two discharged to themselves, and four were adopted. Of the eleven, two children were discharged within one year of their placement date.



Family Ever After: Ashton, Destiny and Marcus are all smiles as their adoptions to the family of Brian Brainard and Katie Tracey are finalized. Jaydin (in orange) looks forward to his adoption ceremony in 2019.

Foster Care/Adoption Unit, cont'd



Crystal and Brian Burdick are thrilled to have their hands full with the adoptions of siblings Owen, Killian, Isaac and Gabriel. The brothers dressed the part as the official ceremony with Judge Keene took place!

Child Protective/Child Preventive Services by the Numbers

1,111

The number of Child Protective Services reports received. 804 of these were tracked to the investigative units and 307 tracked to the Family Assessment Response (FAR) Unit.

Of the 804 that were tracked as investigations, 151 were consolidated, 166 were secondary reports and 59 were "add info" or duplicate reports. The remaining 328 reports Tioga County was responsible for determining.

21%

The percentage of Central Registry reports received that contained allegations involving drug use. Up from 18% in 2017 and 14% in 2016.

In response to the ongoing opioid epidemic, caseworkers have been tasked with developing a Plan of Safe Care in situations where a report is received alleging a child is born with a positive toxicology for drugs, or is identified with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Staff work with families to identify resources and areas of resiliency and strength in hopes that our most vulnerable population can be safely cared for in their homes.

131

The number of children in the 61 families who were provided in-house Preventive Services. Of the 31 families discharged from Preventive services, 25 (81%) had no new indicated reports for the year.

Employment and Transitional Supports

Employment and Transitional Supports Natalie Thompson, Director

The Division of Employment and Transitional Supports (DEATS) plays an integral part in assisting Tioga County residents to become self-sufficient, helping them secure employment by offering them the tools and support needed and supplementing their basic needs when they are not working, unable to work or under-employed.

DEATS houses over 40 employees at the County's Health and Human Services location working in three major service areas: SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and Medicaid (MA); Energy/Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP); and Employment and Temporary Assistance. Also under its purview is the Child Support Enforcement Unit (CSEU), located at 20 Court Street in downtown Owego.

The DEATS unit handles over 23,000 cases each year. DEATS staff also cover the reception desk for the entire Health and Human Services building, greeting and directing over 15,000 visitors each year.

Child Support Enforcement Unit by the Numbers 2018

The Child Support Enforcement Unit (CSEU) is mandated under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act to ensure that legally responsible persons, to the best of their ability, contribute toward the support of their children. Child support services are available free of charge to any parent, guardian, or caretaker of a child for whom child support is needed. (There is a \$25 annual service fee for any custodial parent who has never received TANF and is collected when the non-custodial parent has paid \$500 towards current child support). As part of the application process for Public Assistance and Medicaid, applicants who are custodial parents must file for child support from non-custodial parents. Applicants for, or recipients of, public assistance are automatically provided with support services unless otherwise indicated.

The Office of Child Support Enforcement works to: locate non-custodial parents; provide assistance in obtaining court orders for child support payable to the Support Collection Unit; establish paternity for children by assisting both parents with the signing of a voluntary acknowledgment of paternity or through family court by filing petitions to establish paternity - genetic marker or DNA testing may also be used to aid in making a determination about paternity; enforce unpaid child support: all individuals obligated to pay child support obligations through the Office of Child Support Enforcement are subject to any and all enforcement measures available; review support orders for increased support based on cost of living adjustments; and modify child support orders based on changes in circumstances.

\$5,261,367

The amount of child support collected for children in Tioga County.

2,932

The average monthly caseload

735

Total petitions filed

\$422,067

Reimbursements to DSS, up 16% from 2017.

Energy/HEAP by the Numbers 2018

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) is a vital program that helps low-income people pay the cost of heating and cooling their homes. The 2017-2018 HEAP Season ran from October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2018.

5,336

\$2,903,978

The number of benefits processed and the resulting total allocation, with an average of \$497 per benefit.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid by the Numbers 2018

The SNAP and Medicaid Unit - often referred to as FSMA - manages the applications and undercare for those requiring assistance with food stamps and medical coverage. SNAP issues monthly electronic benefits to individuals and families that can be used to purchase food at authorized retail food stores and farmer's markets. Eligibility and benefit levels are based on household size, income and other factors. Medicaid is an income and resourced based program available for individuals who need coverage for their medical expenses.

23,467

The total processed applications, recertifications, and undercare maintenance using the task-based process management model

4,970

The average monthly number of individuals receiving SNAP benefits - approximately 1,741 of these were children.

Monthly caseload averages

3,554

1,190

220

Medicaid
(624 children)

SSI Individuals
(199 children)

Chronic Care

Temporary Assistance and Employment by the Numbers 2018

Co-located in the Tioga Career Center (TCC), the Temporary Assistance and Employment Unit's primary goal is to provide their clients with the tools and resources needed to find and maintain employment in order to become self-sufficient.

8,076

The number of check-ins at TCC reception.

52

Monitored employable/ work experience clients - 21 of these had positive job placements.

197

Average TANF caseload - a 4% decrease from 2017.

326

Individual Cash Assistance cases

158

Average Day Care cases - serving approximately 316 children and 208 adults.

\$306,993

Tax refunds as a result of VITA (Voluntary Income Tax Assistance) processing 153 returns.

Summer Youth Employment Program



SYEP, administered by DSS in conjunction with Broome-Tioga BOCES, is a program designed to introduce qualifying youth (ages 14-20) into the workforce, helping them acquire skills that can be used to improve school performance and become responsible adults.



Education is an important component of the program with strong focus on internet safety, social media use, career exploration, nutritional information, healthy relationships, financial literacy and volunteerism. In 2018, participants took field trips to Binghamton's Ross Park Zoo and Tioga Downs. Two educational days were held with speakers from Mothers and Babies Perinatal Network, Oneonta Job Corps, TOI Family Planning, CASA-Trinity, and included topics on financial management, career building, work ethic and perseverance.

During the 2018 session the SYEP program placed 53 up 23% from 2017. participants, 22 male/31 female with an average age of 16, at 19 participating worksites throughout Tioga County. SYEP youth are paid the prevailing minimum wage.

Fraud and Front-End Detection Systems

The Fraud and Front End Detection Systems (FEDS) Unit's primary function is to ensure that the expenditure of public funds is only for those who are legally entitled to receive these benefits. Through a variety of mandated programs and local initiatives, DSS investigators save taxpayer dollars by uncovering fraud of unreported assets, income, household composition, dual assistance, fraudulent vendor billing, misuse of funds, and the filing of false applications. Referrals to the Fraud Unit can be generated from within the agency or from external sources.

- ◆ 213 Front End Detection (FEDS) referrals were received and investigated during 2018. 105 of these were founded, resulting in denials/withdrawals with State projected 6-month savings of \$718,308.

- ◆ In 2018, 230 Fraud referrals were received.

Referral sources:

In-Agency → 80

Electronic Tracking Systems → 141

Public → 9

- ◆ 68 overpayment referrals were acted on, resulting in repayments to the Agency of \$15,158.

Tioga Career Center (TCC)

As a result of Department of Labor rebranding, the Tioga Employment Center was renamed the Tioga Career Center in April 2018. The Career Center is a NYS certified comprehensive full-service center serving job seekers and businesses. With partner agencies, we continue to provide services, referrals and funding to assist job seekers and businesses.



- ◆ For the 3rd consecutive year, the Tioga Career Center received NYS Department of Labor's *Veteran's Program Office Award* for number one in services to veterans. We work closely with the Tioga County Veteran's Service Agency in providing full services and benefits to our local veterans.
- ◆ The fourth Annual Tioga County Job Fair held March 7, 2018 was a great success. 110 employers participated and 440 jobseekers attended. Tioga Co Job Fair continues to receive high praise from participating employers and job seekers. As a strictly hiring event, it focuses on providing employers with a large labor pool to pull from and gives job seekers the assurance that all participating employers have open jobs to fill.
- ◆ Tioga County Business Services Team, which was formed prior to the first annual job fair, continues to provide services to new and existing businesses.

The average unemployment rate for 2018 was 4.6%, which was back to the pre-recession average. As of December 2018, with a 4.0% UR, Tioga County was ranked 28th lowest out of 62 Counties in Unemployment rates.

- ◆ Tioga County Chamber of Commerce received \$140,000 in On-the-Job Training funds, and partnered with TCC to provide 28 OJT contracts to Tioga County businesses in 2018.
- ◆ 953 Unemployment claims were filed in 2018. 343 were union or temporary layoffs, of the remaining 610 who were required to job search, 281 were seasonal workers.

Staff Development and Training

- ◆ 138 State-sponsored trainings were attended by 82 staff equaling 2902 training hours. These trainings took place both in classroom and web-based setting. Some notable State-sponsored trainings in 2018 were the revamped Child Welfare Foundations Program, Pragmatic Approaches to Domestic Violence Cases for Child Support Caseworkers and Legal Staff, the HEAP Statewide Conference and *FISH!*, with the late Denise Schaller.
- ◆ Staff attended a total of 71 local-sponsored trainings equaling 1,625 training hours. These trainings were offered in-house and in the community. Some notable local trainings in 2018 were Discipline with Dignity, Identifying and Responding to Sexually Exploited Children in Rural Communities and Transportation as a Social Determinant of Health.



- ◆ SDC conducted New Employee Orientation for 11 new hires equaling 112 hours of training
- ◆ In 2018 there were 5 new Caseworkers hired and trained. The training was completed through modeling and hands on practical experience for a period of 6-9 months. The Caseworkers followed a training plan to ensure all necessary training was completed. These trainings covered such things as computer usage, field visit guidelines, court proceedings, State regulations, local procedures and on-call training.

2019 Agency Goals

Continue to reduce the length of placement for children in foster care by using Family Team Meetings and Coached Family Visitation to support parents in caring for their children safely.

Remain at or below the budgeted local share for 2019.

Continue to support succession planning both internally as well as continuing to support the County Institute for Succession Planning.

Continue to reduce Public Assistance caseloads through ongoing case management and employment engagement activities.

Redesign facets of the Employment and Transitional Supports Division in response to both anticipated retirement(s) and ongoing State takeover of the Medicaid program.

Staff Highlights

Each year, the Tioga County Department of Social Services recognizes five of its outstanding staff with the honor of Employee of the Quarter and Supervisor of the Year. These employees exemplify the CORE values of the Agency and its staff.

Community & Compassion Ownership & One Vision Respect and Responsibility Excellence & Equality

Employee of the First Quarter 2018

Joy MacNaughton

Joy began her career with Tioga County DSS in January 2011 when she was hired as a CPS Investigator. Joy has worked as a CPS Investigator, was one of the initial FAR caseworkers in April 2013, and then was promoted to Senior Caseworker/Staff Development Coordinator in March 2015.

Joy ensures that HHS staff throughout the building receive not only their initial new employee orientation and training, but also coordinates all ongoing training opportunities. She keeps track of all the trainings for DSS, and is responsible for scheduling out of town trainings and coordinates with her statewide colleagues to ensure workers are as comfortable as possible while away from home.

Most recently, Joy has been the go-to person for the Northwoods Project. She served on two of the early implementation teams, Forms and Taxonomy, and quickly became an expert in formatting the forms to be used in the new data management system. As an Assistant Coach, Joy quickly learned the new processes, and is an invaluable asset to her colleagues as they are learning a new way of doing things. Joy will often drop what she was in the middle of doing to help a frustrated colleague trouble-shoot an issue they are having with the new technology. If she is unable to fix the problem herself, she works to resolve the issue in a calm and professional manner.

Joy is an excellent communicator and gives constructive feedback to new caseworkers and their supervisors. She facilitates the Services' Morning Meeting, using trivia and song of the day to liven things up; she truly lives up to her name in attitude and demeanor. She serves on the DSS Newsletter, Sunshine Fund, and LIT (Local Implementation Team) committees, as well as Staff Development Association and Caseworker Training Steering Statewide committees.

Employee of the Second Quarter 2018

John Torrey

John was recognized for his outstanding work, contributions, and service to the Tioga County Department of Social Services and in particular to the clients, respondents, and children receiving services through the Tioga County Child Support Office.

John began his career with the Tioga County Department of Social Services in February 2004 as a Social Welfare Examiner. In February 2009, John was promoted to Child Support Investigator.

During his time in the Child Support Unit, John has always maintained a respectful and courteous attitude towards our clients and Respondents and a willingness to help his co-workers whenever needed including changing his work schedule to accommodate them.

John's sense of humor helps to keep everyone's spirit and attitudes in a positive mode. His hard work and diligence are some reasons why Tioga County has consistently ranked higher than the State's average for support and paternity establishment percentages.

Staff Highlights

Employee of the Third Quarter 2018

Amber Phillips

Amber was recognized for her exceptional work and contributions to the Tioga County Department of Social Services. Amber began her career with Tioga County DSS in September 2015 as a Typist in the FSMA unit. She was promoted to Social Welfare Examiner in September 2016.

Amber is currently a Social Welfare Examiner in the HEAP Unit where she efficiently keeps up with the unpredictability of the Energy programs with professionalism and a good sense of humor.

In Spring 2018, Amber was assigned to help administer the Summer Youth Employment Program in addition to her HEAP duties. She did an incredible job of balancing the responsibilities of both programs.

During the youth employment season, she helped prepare and administer the logistical aspects of interviewing over 100 applicants and assigning 57 youth to various job sites.

In addition, Amber was charged with the supervision and scheduling of the six youths assigned to the DSS job site. She secured work opportunities with various agencies in the County; providing transportation to and supervision at those sites.

Most importantly, Amber served as a great role model and had a positive impact on the youth involved in the employment program.

Employee of the Fourth Quarter 2018

Christine Freyvogel

Christine was recognized for her exceptional work and contributions to the Tioga County Department of Social Services. Christine began her career with Tioga County DSS in September 2017 as a Community Services Worker in the Children's Services division.

Since she began at the agency, Christine has had a positive impact on those she works with, both within the agency and in the community. Christine's duties include assisting with transports, supervising visits and parent aide services; but she does so much more than that.

Christine has ensured families have holiday meals, children have winter coats and boots; she has taken them shopping, to court and doctors' appointments. Christine has been able to engage the most resistant clients, including the difficult adolescent population. She has convinced folks to go to rehab, counseling and gotten them connected with GED programs. Christine has dropped off diapers, filled out services applications and cleaned residences. She has taken home a family's laundry when a mom was feeling overwhelmed. Christine has held babies (and snakes), wiped noses and has been a sympathetic ear when folks need to let off steam... or cry it out.

Christine has sought out new ways to help others; she has familiarized herself with the health insurance, SNAP, HEAP and public assistance eligibility processes. Families have asked Christine to have meals with them, go to their children's school functions and to come back and visit, even after their cases have closed.

Christine is a stellar example of how a kind heart and a non-judgmental attitude can have the most profound influence on people's lives.

Staff Highlights

Supervisor of the Year

Julie Whipple

Julie was recognized as Supervisor of the Year 2018 for her accomplishments and contributions to the Tioga County Department of Social Services.

Julie began her career with Tioga County DSS in the Fall of 1989 when she came on board as a Temporary Clerk Typist for that year's HEAP season. Within a month, she was hired as a permanent Clerk Typist. She served and was promoted in various Typist positions throughout the Agency until becoming a Social Welfare Examiner in 1992. In 2001 she was promoted to the position she holds today – Principal Social Welfare Examiner.

In 2018, Julie went back to her roots and became part of the HEAP Unit – this time as its Supervisor. Filling some big shoes, Julie did not miss a beat and seamlessly adjusted her knowledge and skills from SNAP and Medicaid to those needed for the administration of the Agency's energy eligibility programs. She immediately became a constructive supervisory resource to the current Energy Unit staff as well as efficiently managed the hiring and training of the seasonal HEAP employees. She seemed unfazed by the influx of 400 walk-ins, 2,000 phone calls and 1200 applications in the first three weeks of the HEAP season. With the stress as a supervisor new to the unit, along with staff enduring the hectic busy season, she maintained an encouraging environment and positive morale. Once up to speed on her new duties, Julie continued to assist her FSMA co-supervisors in case auditing and new employee training as needed.

Julie exemplifies the DSS Core Values of responsibility, integrity, equality, respect, compassion, and excellence. She is a great asset to the Tioga County Department of Social Services.

Tioga County Employee of the Fourth Quarter

Charles Root

The Tioga County Employee Recognition Committee selected Charles Root as Tioga County's Employee of the Quarter for the 4th quarter of 2018.

Charles has been with Tioga County since May of 2006. He was promoted to his current position of Welfare Management Systems Coordinator at Tioga County DSS in January of 2014. Some of his responsibilities in this position include maintaining state computer equipment and state user accounts for DSS employees, overseeing user administrative in a variety of state applications, writing custom reports and databases, and supervising the Systems Department for DSS and the Mail Clerks.

Charles routinely goes above and beyond, putting in whatever extra time and effort is needed to support DSS personnel. His positive, helpful, and humble attitude has earned him the appreciation and admiration of his co-workers at DSS and other departments throughout the County.

Staff Highlights

Tioga County 2018 Employee of the Year

Sheri McCall

The Tioga County Employee Recognition Committee selected Sheri McCall as Tioga County's Employee of the Year for 2018.

Sheri has been with the Tioga Career Center (formerly known as the Tioga Employment Center) for 20 years, and Center Manager since 2007. In this position, she leads the Career Center in the invaluable task of helping the residents of the County find gainful employment, and assisting area employers find suitable workers. She is instrumental in the organization and execution of the numerous job fairs held by the County. Sheri is passionate about her work, and always willing to go above and beyond to help those who come to the Career Center for assistance.

Congratulations Sheri, and thank you for your hard work and your dedication to the residents you serve.

Additional Staff Notes

In December 2018, three DSS employees graduated from Tioga County's Institute for Advancement designed to enhance leadership succession planning throughout the County's departments. Congratulations to

Mickelle Andrews - Accounting Supervisor

Elizabeth Myers - Director of Services

John VanWert - First Assistant County Attorney

In January 2018, DSS Commissioner **Shawn Yetter** was sworn in as the President of the New York State Public Welfare Association (NYPWA). The NYPWA's role is to independently represent New York's 58 local social services districts. NYPWA provides information, policy analysis and technical assistance to Federal, State and local policy makers.

Annual Commissioner's Awards for Excellence

Every year at the Annual All Staff Meeting unique awards are presented to DSS staff. Nominated by their peers and supervisors, these presentations allow the Agency to recognize employees in special areas of performance. The following were awarded in 2018.

Attendance

Judy Dunbar, Brenda Holt, Tina Lounsbury, Sarah Moore, Elizabeth Myers, Charles Root, Kandi Saxton, John Van Wert

Initiative Deb Goodspeed

HEAP (Having Energy for Activities and Play) Kim Clark

Outstanding Teamwork FSMA & HEAP

Outstanding Teamwork Jo Ellen Yoest & Christine Freyvogel

Lifesaver Doreen Holbrook

Dynamo Donna Gilligan

Professionalism Jamie Cornell

Whatever it Takes Cheri Zlinsky

Staff Highlights

Former Employee of the Quarter Awardees who are still current Tioga County DSS Employees

Beth Ayers	Sarah Moore
Jessica Belles	Lauran Murphy
Amy Canzler	Linda Myers
Judy Dunbar	Rachel Palladino
Katherine Garrison	Gail Perdue
Deb Goodspeed	Kim Place
Jennifer Green	Bernadette Poppert
Sarah Gunther	Mary Roddy
Tara Hauptfleisch	Charles Root
Stephen Herbert	Andrea Rossi
Kim Heyman	Kandi Saxton
Tracy Hill	June Sisenstein
Brenda Holt	Sarah Tiffany
Denise Haskins	John VanWert
Doreen Holbrook	Samantha Webster
Kelly Kelley	Julie Whipple
Tina Lounsbury	Corrine Whitmore

Former Supervisor of the Year Awardees who are still current Tioga County DSS Employees

Mickelle Andrews
Chari Campbell
Becky Fetherbay
Katherine Garrison
Jennifer Green
Elizabeth Myers
Christopher Kallin
Michele Resue
Julie Whipple

Retirements

The following employees retired in 2018

Kim Clark, DEATS
Susan Eschler, DEATS
Michelle Robins, DEATS
Corrine Whitmore, Fraud
John Torrey, Child Support

Years of Service

***The following employees reached a milestone of
longevity with Tioga County during 2018***

5 Years

Karen Northup, DEATS
Karen Signs, Accounting

10 Years

James Cornell, Administration
Stephen Herbert, Child and Family Services
Jeanette Horan, DEATS
Samantha Webster, Support Collection

25 Years

Beth Ayers, Accounting

New Employees for 2018

Melissa Barnhart, Mail Clerk
Joseph Breitwieser, CSW
Miranda Delaney, SWE
Amy Eiklor, SWE
Collin Ferraro, Caseworker
Jessica Lee, SWE
Eric Silvanic, Caseworker
Tricia Soper, Caseworker

Staff Highlights

DSS Employees Make A Difference by Dressing Down

DSS Employees raised \$2,921 in 2018 Casual Day donations benefiting the following agencies

Relay For Life
Heart Association
Open Door Mission
Tioga County United Way
Tioga County Rural Ministry

DSS employees also pledged \$3,215 towards the 2018 United Way Campaign.

In 2018, Tioga County DSS staff represented the agency on numerous boards and committees throughout the County, region and State including the following organizations:

Angel Eyes Animal Rescue & Wildlife Rehabilitation	Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities
Big Brothers/Big Sister	Open Door Mission
Broome-Tioga Workforce Investment Board	Our Lady of Good Counsel Endicott
Catholic Charities	Partner's Outreach
CCNN Coalition	Southern Tier Critical Incident Stress Management
Community Foundation of South Central New York	SPOA
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tioga County Board	Stray Haven
CSEA	Susquehanna Regional EMS Council
Division of Aging Advisory Council	Ti-Ahwaga Community Players
Endwell TLC	Tioga County Alcohol and Substance Abuse Coalition
EPAC	Tioga County Animal Response Team
Family Enrichment Network Board	Tioga County Anti-Hunger Task Force
Guthrie Home Care Advisory	Tioga County Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team
Happy Tails	Tioga County Drug Court Treatment Team
Hiawatha Soccer Association Board	Tioga County Energy Council
Homeless Coalition of Broome/Tioga	Tioga County Health Department Medical Reserve Corps
Horseheads Thrashers Swim Club	Tioga County Medical Reserve Corps
Interim Health Care Advisory Council	Tioga County Mental Health Committee
KIND (Kids In Need of Diapers) Project	Tioga County Rural Ministry
Lakeview Chapel Administrative Board	Tioga County Search and Rescue Team
Lourdes Hospice Advisory Council	Tioga County Youth Bureau
Maddie's Meadows	Truth Pharm
Mildred Faulkner Truman Foundation	U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary
New York Public Welfare Association Board	UHS Homecare Board
Northern Tioga Youth Field Hockey League	Union Endicott Baseball/Softball League
NYS CASA Association	United Council of Welfare Fraud
NYS Welfare Fraud Investigator Association Executive Board	United Health Services Board
	Weltonville Fire Company



A huge thank you to Shirley Yetter and Karen Beebe from East Berkshire United Methodist Church. On behalf of the congregation, they delivered an overflowing cart full of holiday gifts to DSS for distribution to our foster children.

Tioga County Department of Social Services

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