

What's happening at Lewis County



Changing Lives ... One family at a time

Life CAN get easier ...

To say life has been hard for Barbarajean Berndt would be an understatement. As a child she struggled with dyslexia (which was not diagnosed for 20 years). She became a parent at an early age, and struggled with mental and emotional disabilities which led to the loss of jobs, divorce, and poverty. *“When you’re poor, you can’t afford the face creams and nice clothes, which help build your self esteem.”* This low self esteem led her to a lot of wrong decisions and bad choices (like alcohol and drug abuse).

She’s had more than her share of personal tragedies, had to overcome alcoholism, suffered from severe anxiety and depression, and raised her daughters on her own with very little family support. She often felt stuck, but was determined to make a better life for her and her children.

“My kids are the only reason I didn’t lay down and die, I had to show them that you need to keep on keeping on.”

Barbarajean will admit that what made the biggest difference for her was asking for help. She proudly states that she has been clean and sober since 1987. After being on Social Security disability for over 20 years, she’s now in their



Mindy Stoffle, LCOI Family Service Worker stands with a proud Barbarajean Berndt next to the vehicle she obtained through the Lewis County Opportunities Transportation Loan Program.

“PASS Program” designed to help her re-enter the work force. She has a new part-time job with NRCIL, a new (used) car made possible by the Lewis County Opportunities loan program, and a million ideas of ways she can give back to her community. When asked how she’s able to remain so positive, she replies *“I’m not embarrassed about anything — because everything I’ve been through has made me who I am today.”*

What’s life like for Barbarajean now? *“Promising. For the first time in a long time, I’m excited about me. I know I have a long road ahead of me, but I feel like I have enough tools to get me through.”* Congratulations and good luck Barbarajean! Thank you for sharing your story.

*“God Bless Opportunities!
If I need anything I can’t do for
myself, I go there and
they always hold their door
open to me.”*

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Barbarajean Berndt

Has Opportunities helped you ? Send your story to “News” at the address below.

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.
8265 State Rte 812, Lowville NY 13367
(315) 376-8202

Monday - Friday: 8 am - 4 pm
www.lewiscountyopportunities.com

Opportunity Knocks Thrift Store
376-2981

24-hour Crisis Hotline
376-HELP (4357)