

ANNUAL REPORT

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.

www.lewiscountyopportunities.com

20
24

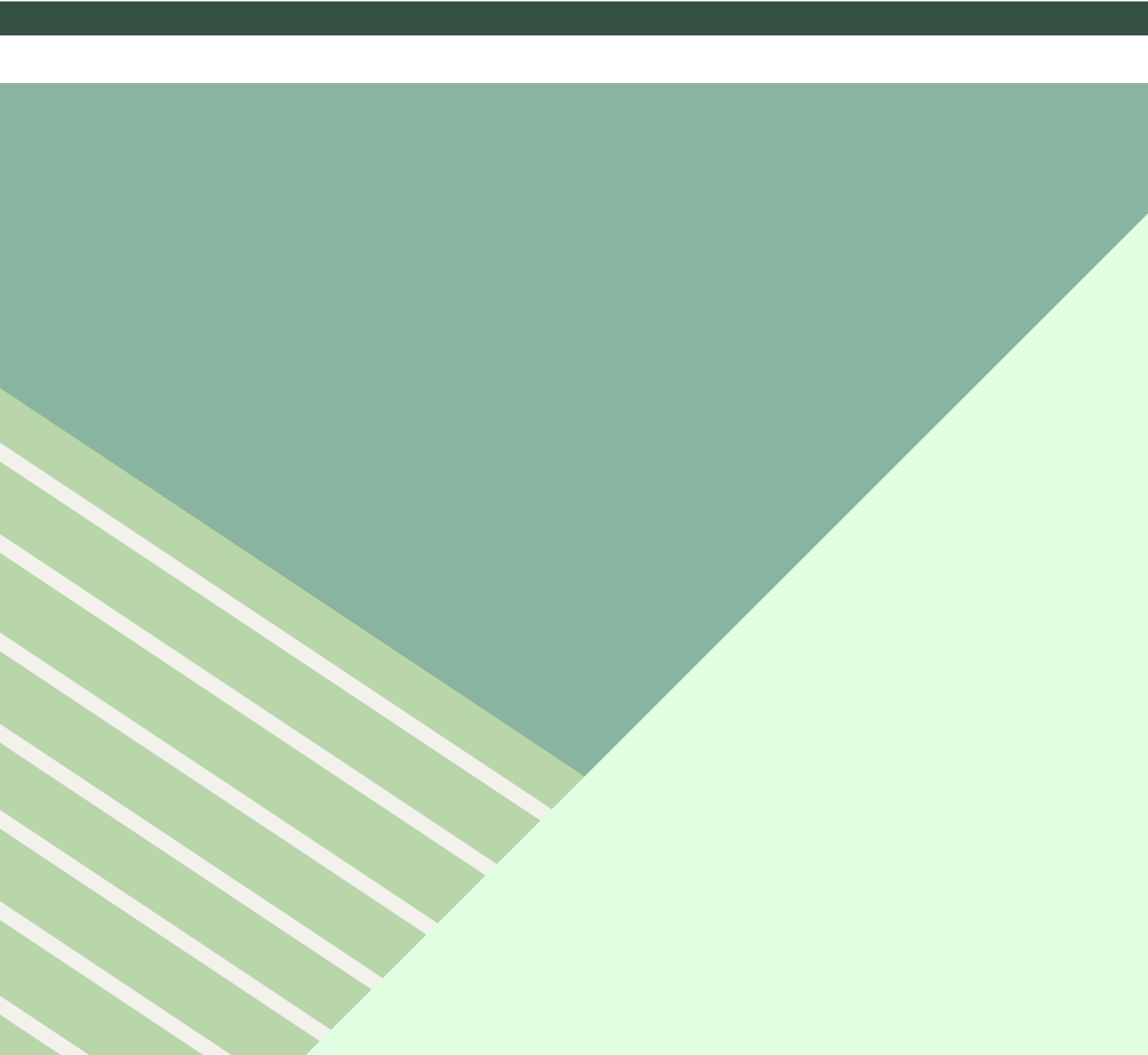


Table of Contents

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.

OUR MISSION AND VISION.....	2
MESSAGE FROM THE CEO.....	3
BOARD OF DIRECTORS.....	4
STAFF.....	5-6
STATISTICS.....	7
FOOD SECURITY.....	8
SHELTER.....	9
SAFETY.....	10
FINANCIAL SECURITY.....	11
THRIFT STORE.....	11
CRITICAL NEEDS.....	12
CAR SEATS.....	12
CONTACT.....	13



Our Mission and Vision

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.



Vision:

A community where people are empowered to live safely and without economic barriers

Mission:

Working with people in need to promote a higher quality of life in our community

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc. (LCOI) is a Community Action Agency formed in 1965; in October, we will celebrate our 60th Anniversary. We work with people in need to promote a higher quality of life in our community, and we envision a community where people are empowered to live safely and without economic barriers. We provide many programs to help with unmet needs related to poverty or victimization as well as other services which offer a long-term approach to the chronic impacts of poverty. The services we offer are carefully designed by first assessing local needs and then identifying priority areas based upon that data.

From the CEO

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.

Poverty is a complex social issue. The prevalence of poverty in our community is influenced by the number and type of available jobs, availability and cost of childcare, natural resources and infrastructure in our region that can either foster business growth or hamper it, the cost of living relative to labor market, and individual personal accountability. Ultimately, poverty touches the entire community whether a person is identified as “low-income” or not.

At LCOI, we don't want to sit back and allow our community to degrade. We don't want to see our youth move away for jobs. We don't want to see our housing stock deteriorate or be abandoned. We don't want to see people struggle to get by in their working years only to face financial distress during retirement. LCOI is one of many partner agencies trying to make a positive impact on the people in our community. We want to be a helping hand for people struggling with challenges. The items briefly discussed above are just some of our many services. If you or someone you know could benefit from our assistance or want to know more about our other services, please “Like” our Facebook page, call us at 315-376-8202, or visit us on the web at www.lewiscountyopportunities.com. We are here to help.

We thank our employees, board members, volunteers, and the community for helping with our mission. Without the combined efforts of everyone, Opportunities wouldn't be able to make such an impact within our community. Thank you!

-Scott Mathys

Board of Directors

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.

Daina Dicob.....	Chairperson
Sheri Schulz.....	Secretary
Jake Moser.....	Treasurer
Pamela Stanley.....	Vice-Chairperson
Genevieve Fidler.....	Private Sector
Kristen Aucter.....	Private Sector
Loren Lyndaker.....	Elected Public Official
Jennifer Jones.....	Elected Public Official
Marilyn Patterson.....	Elected Public Official
Judy Karelus.....	Target Sector
Jannet Seelman.....	Target Sector
Jeanne Wooding.....	Target Sector

Staff (Lewis)

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.

Scott Mathys.....CEO
Leslie Cherry.....Deputy Director
Kevin Buckingham.....Special Projects Manager
Deanna Finster.....Finance Director
Jessica Barney.....Payroll Clerk
Michelle Widrick.....Weatherization Manager
Carl Finster.....Building Analyst/Auditor
Lewis Bucy III.....Crew Chief
Dalton Finster.....Crew Laborer
Jeffrey Trombley.....Crew Laborer
Judy Edick.....Housing Manager
Courtney Terry.....Housing Specialist
Eliza Rennie.....Housing Specialist
Shauna Roggie.....Family Services Manager
Jamie Aucler.....Family Services Rep Payee
Heather Kloster.....Family Services
Taylor Munger.....Family Services/Reception
Calla Morrison.....Victim Services Manager
Melody Mercurio.....Victim Services Senior Advocate
Carole Hoch.....Victim Services Advocate
Chelsea Greenwood.....Victim Services Advocate
Kimberly Watkins.....Victim Services Advocate

Staff (Jefferson)

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.

Jason McAvoy.....Housing Manager
Sarah Sheridan.....Administration Assistant
Kayla Struncius.....Senior Housing Specialist
Alisa Degon.....Housing Specialist
Amanda Palmer.....Housing Specialist
Holley Maxwell.....Housing Specialist
Krystal LaPlante.....Housing Specialist
Lisa Snyder.....Housing Specialist
Mark Gordon.....Housing Specialist

During this past year, our overall turnover rate was 12% which is very low for the current labor market.

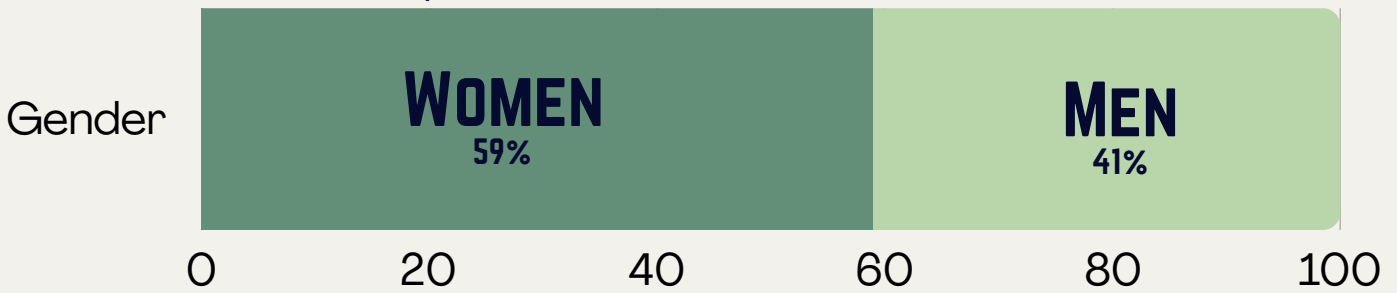
We said goodbye to a few of our coworkers who retired or transferred their skills into other employment pursuits. We will miss them and their dedication. Those departures brought in new faces to help fulfil our mission.

Statistics

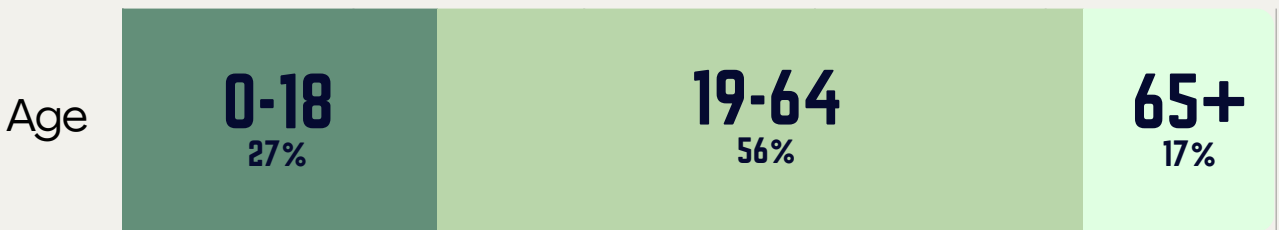
Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.

The following are general statistics of our services in 2024. Please look beyond the numbers as each number is a face in our community who needed help; these are the faces of men, women, and children who compromise our neighbors and friends. Throughout 2024, we helped provide community programs to 3,189 people.

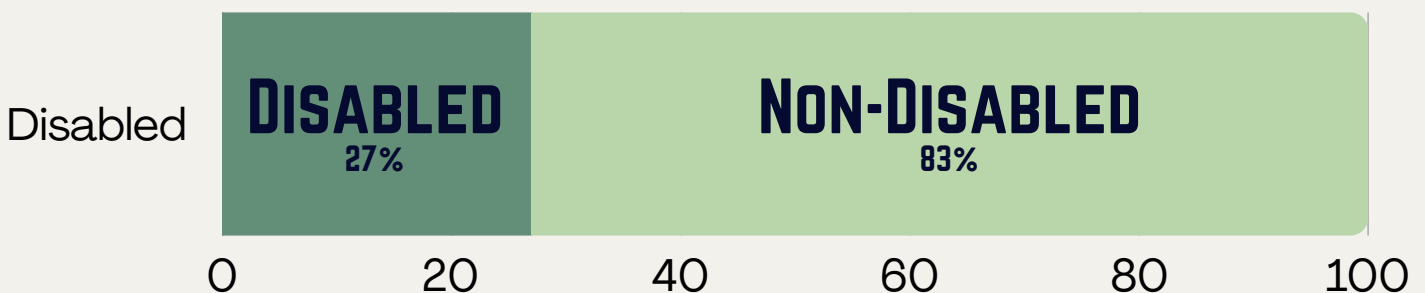
Poverty is not gender specific, but trending does tend to show an impact on females more than males.



Poverty does not discriminate by age and is felt throughout the entire age spectrum.



In addition, 27.3% of our consumer base reported some level of disability.



Food Security

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.



In 2024, food pantries located in New Bremen, Harrisville, Port Leyden, and Copenhagen provided the equivalent of 37,347 meals to families. This is up very slightly over the previous year. The buying power of the Food Bank of Central New York was essential in this effort. Likewise, the Northern New York Community Foundation was vital to the process by providing substantial donations to food pantries and administering additional contributions from the WinDenmark Advised Fund during the year. Many other groups in our community helped the pantries with food drives as well. We are appreciative of all these efforts!

Copenhagen Food Pantry:

9871 #3 Road, Copenhagen NY 13626

River of Life Fellowship Church

Open: 3rd Wednesday of each month, 4-6PM

Harrisville Food Pantry:

14206 South Creek Road, Harrisville NY 13648

Open: 1st Tuesday Each Month 7-8PM

3rd Tuesday Each Month 10-11AM

New Bremen Food Pantry:

8259 State Route 812, Lowville NY 13367

Open: Monday-Friday 9AM-3PM

Port Leyden Food Pantry:

7108 North Street, Port Leyden NY 13433

St. Martin's Rectory

Open: Monday-Friday 8:30-11:30AM

Shelter

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.



Safe and affordable housing can be a challenge for families in poverty. In 2024, LCOI helped over 1,300 families with rental assistance through Housing Choice Vouchers which totaled more than \$11 million in landlord subsidies in Jefferson and Lewis counties. Even if a family has a place to stay, the housing costs don't end there. Heat bills can erode the monthly budget drastically

In 2024, we increased energy efficiency to over 40 homes; this included replacing windows, furnace cleaning and tuning, and adding insulation in walls, attics, and crawl spaces. Funds for these services were administered by NYS Homes and Community Renewal, with supplemental services funded through the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). Some of our seniors need accessibility improvements to their home in order to remain there; these include things such as access ramps, widening doors, and modifying bathrooms. In 2024, we improved the homes of senior citizens through a OFA Home Modification Grant, funded by Lewis County Office For the Aging.

There are some members of our community who need extra one-time help paying their rent/mortgage or emergency utility assistance due to unforeseen circumstances. Through the Emergency Food and Shelter, administered by United Way Worldwide, the agency assisted many families with these acute needs.



Safety

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.



People should not have to live in fear of physical, mental, financial, or sexual abuse. Unfortunately, such problems do exist in Lewis County despite its reputation as a safe place to live and raise a family.

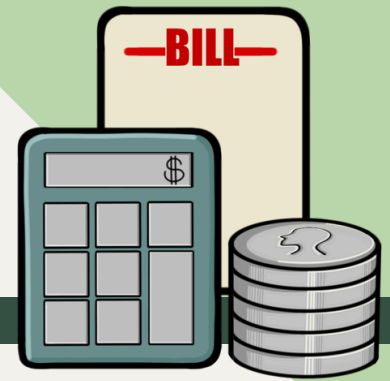
To address victimization, LCOI has a Victim Services program which served 382 people in 2024. Unfortunately, this is a 15% increase over the prior year. Under this program, the agency operates a safe dwelling where families can begin the next chapter in their lives. That safe dwelling provided 677 protected nights during the year, and even 97 nights for pets through our Pet Safe program. Due to the local housing shortages, the length of stay at the safe dwelling was much longer than in prior years; in fact, it was a 70% increase from 2023.

Other services include operating a 24/7 crisis hotline, providing many counseling services, completing orders of protection, assisting victims with restitution claims, and serving youth who have been sexually exploited.

The Victim Services Program also assists with a joint satellite Child Advocacy Center project spearheaded by our neighboring cohort-agency, the Victims Assistance Center of Jefferson County. Our Victim Services program is funded through the NYS Office of Victim Services, Office of Children and Family Services, Division of Criminal Justice Services, the County of Lewis through the Department of Social Services, and private foundations. If you or someone you know has been a victim and needs help, please contact us at our **crisis hotline number, 315-376-HELP**, which is available 24 hours a day.

Financial Security

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.



Many people in poverty are eager to take control of their money instead of being controlled by financial pressures. We provide money management tips and face-to-face meetings with people to help provide tools for them to build a better relationship with their money. Funded by CSBG grants, these resources help people build budgets, learn to live within their means, and develop essential money management skills.

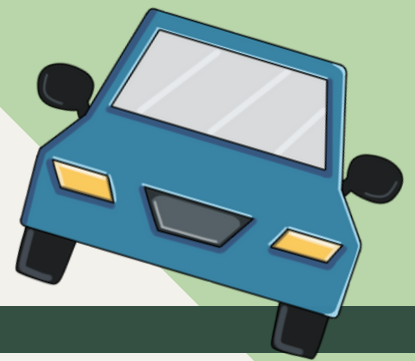
The agency also provided Representative Payee services for 19 people.

Our thrift store, “Opportunity Knocks,” is a great resource for volunteerism and a place to buy gently used items at a great price to stretch your own budget. The proceeds from sales at the thrift store also generate funds for services that grants don’t cover.



Critical Needs

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.



Unmet critical needs come in many forms: vehicle repairs, monthly car or insurance payments, beds for a child, other household needs, furniture, small appliances, clothing, gas cards, car seats, hygiene products, medical devices, laptops for college-bound students, Beaver Camp scholarships, work clothing for BOCES students, and much more.

In 2024, we helped 94 individuals with \$19,393 in critical needs assistance; this is up 20% from the previous year. Our critical needs are made possible by funding from Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) administered by the NYS Department of State, the United Way of Northern New York ALICE initiative, Stewart's Holiday Match, private donations from Kraft-Heinz and Tractor Supply Company, and our own unrestricted revenues from the proceeds of the Opportunity Knocks Thrift Store.

In addition to the critical needs above, having safe and properly fitting car seats should not be something reserved only to families able to afford them. Because of this, LCOI has 4 certified Car Seat Technicians who, in 2024, provided 62 car seats to help keep our littlest county residents safe. This program was supported by Child Passenger Safety, administered by the NYS Governor's Traffic Safety Committee and CSBG.



Contact Us

Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.



If you or someone you know could benefit from our assistance or want to know more about our services...

LIKE US ON 

Lewis County Opportunities

FOLLOW US ON 

@lewiscountyopps

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE

www.lewiscountyopportunities.com



Lewis County
315-376-8202



Jeff. County
315-788-0193



315-376-8421



315-782-3813



8265 State Rte. 812
Lowville, NY 13367



749 LeRay Street
Watertown, NY 13601

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