

CONTACT

Community Services

2023

HOW ARE YOU
REALLY DOING?

THE ONONDAGA
COUNTY SUICIDE
PREVENTION
COALITION

2024 CNY YOUTH
MENTAL HEALTH
SUMMIT

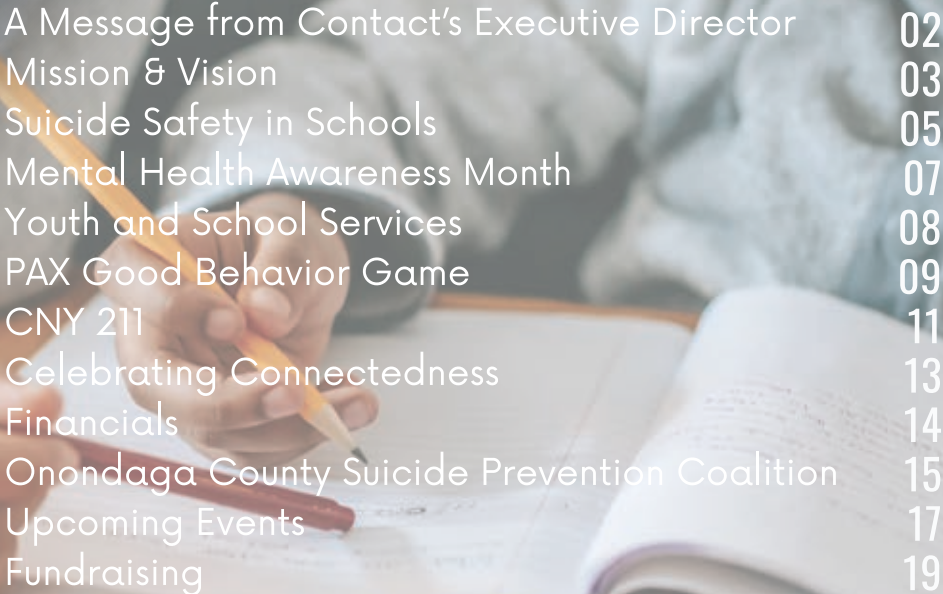
A photograph of three young girls sitting at a table in a classroom. The girl on the left is holding a red cup. The girl in the middle is looking towards the right. The girl on the right is looking towards the middle. They are all wearing colorful clothing. The background shows a classroom setting with a whiteboard and colorful decorations.

IMPACT

Report



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A MESSAGE FROM CONTACT'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By working together, we can provide much-needed assistance to our youth and improve the lives of all vulnerable and at-risk individuals in our community.

It is through the collective efforts of all individuals and organizations that we can create a brighter future for all.

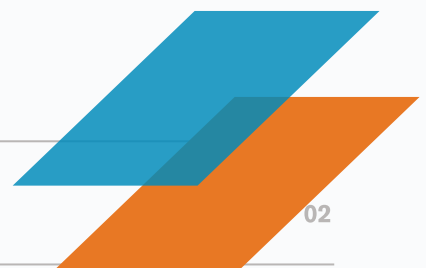
We are increasingly aware of the urgent need to support those struggling with mental health, particularly our youth who are disproportionately affected. The CDC recently issued a report on adolescent mental health with the alarming statistic that in 2021, more than 1 in 5 (22%) students seriously considered attempting suicide and 1 in 10 (10%) attempted suicide. It is vital to address this growing problem of youth mental health. At Contact, we aim to combat this crisis and make a positive change.

Our Impact Report showcases our endeavors working even more closely with the different school districts in Onondaga County, providing mental health education, raising awareness, and developing crisis plans. Our 988 services have expanded to include chat and text, which are the primary means of communication for many teenagers today. Moreover, we are collaborating with other organizations to create a robust support system within our community.

I feel immensely grateful for the unwavering dedication, hard work, and passion of each and every one of our employees, board members, and volunteers. I am continually inspired by their commitment to excellence, which has been a driving force behind the growth and success of Contact over the years. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt thanks to all our community partners and funders who have provided unwavering support.

By working together, we can provide the services & supports our youth need to improve their lives. To continue this journey and give those most impacted a voice, Contact will be hosting the first annual CNY Youth Mental Health Summit in 2024. We invite you to be part of the solution and help build a healthy tomorrow.

ANTARA MITRA





Contact's Executive Director and other staff attend the New York State Suicide Prevention Conference in October 2023.

Contact Community Services is a nonprofit agency supporting social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health of individuals throughout the lifespan. Contact is a recognized leader in fostering healthy emotional development in the community. We do this by offering free community resources, trainings and expertise that builds upon the strengths of the diverse individuals and organizations we serve.



Contact's Administrative team and PAX Good Behavior Game counsellors wear purple and teal to support September Suicide Prevention and Awareness month in 2023.

Contact Community Services began in 1971 from a single volunteer working in the basement of a local church. As community needs have evolved, so have our programs and services. Today, through our direct programs in crisis services, school services, and training & education, we improve the lives of individuals throughout their lifespan.

This effort requires the passion and commitment of our staff, supporters, and other like-minded organizations who enable us to fulfill our mission. With their collaboration and support, we strive to decrease the number of losses from suicide and eliminate the stigma surrounding mental health.

HOW ARE YOU *REALLY* DOING?

The Power of Understanding your Mental Health.

Krysta Broeker embarked on her journey to understand mental health during her college years at Niagara University. In May of 2019, she obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in Social Work with a minor in Sociology. Shortly after, she began her career at Restoration Society Inc., a peer-operated community agency that provides recovery-based mental health services in Western New York. As a Lead Resource Advocate, Krysta worked to educate and assist vulnerable homeless populations and communities throughout Buffalo, NY. After some time, she decided to take on a new challenge and accepted a job offer as a Suicide Prevention Project Coordinator at Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center. Krysta had discovered her true passion. When she moved to Syracuse, NY, she worked as a counselor for transitioning at Hutchings Psychiatric Center, until a position at Contact Community Services Inc. opened for a Mental Health Educator for Suicide Safety in Schools.

During her work with Contact, Broeker presents training throughout Onondaga County school districts, to parents, students, teaching staff, and district administration. Training includes Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), Question. Persuade. Refer. (QPR), More than Sad, It's Real: Teens and Mental Health, Suicide Safety in Schools, School Crisis Team Training and Talk Saves Lives. She is finally back to doing the vital work she loves: offering training and resources to the communities, friends, or family, of those who may be struggling with their mental health.



“The only harm that could come is if we ignore suicide and pretend that it is not a possibility. In school communities, and Onondaga County as a whole, we need to continue to push for more advocates who are willing to openly have discussions”

KRYSTA BROEKER, MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATOR

The most common misconception around suicide prevention, according to Broeker, is that talking about suicide can lead to suicidal thoughts.

It's important to remember that there's no right or wrong way to have a conversation about mental health, as per Broeker. She suggests taking the first step to show your friends that you care about them and that they're not alone. Broeker emphasizes the significance of asking those whom you're worried about how they're doing, expressing your concern, and giving them a chance to share without providing solutions. If you have a gut feeling that something is wrong with a friend, family member, or someone you don't know too well, it's important to tell someone who might be able to help.

Over 35,000

Students, guardians and teaching staff have been trained through our Suicide Safety in Schools Program



William DeSantis and Krysta Broeker are mental health educators at Contact Community Services. They have joined the School Crisis Recovery and Renewal Project Leadership Fellowship, an 8-month intensive training program for 20 to 25 school crisis leaders across the country. The program focuses on co-constructing national standards, training the trainers, and serving as a resource for school crisis recovery and renewal.



Mental Health Awareness Month

Students of Nottingham High School from the Syracuse City School District raised awareness for mental health issues and Contact's Student Assistance Program (SAP) during May Mental Health Awareness Month in 2023 by selling bracelets that read "I'm not perfect but I am still good enough." The funds raised will directly benefit SAP for the next academic year.



STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Contact's Student Assistance Program (SAP) offers free mental health and substance abuse support to students and their families. Our counselors use a strength-based, trauma-informed approach and have undergone Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) training to ensure equitable and inclusive services. All SAP counselors are highly skilled and experienced in working with diverse populations, using a strength-based trauma informed approach.



98% of students increase coping skills

PRIMARY PROJECT

Primary Project is an early intervention program that uses child-led play to teach children essential skills for academic success. During a session, a child associate shared her experience with a second-grade girl who initially seemed unresponsive, but gradually, she began to open up and participate in play. Through play and laughter, the girl learned to confront her emotions and express herself positively, resulting in improved self-esteem.



POSITIVE ACTION

Positive Action promotes personal growth by encouraging positive behaviors in different aspects of life. It helps individuals deal with concerns by focusing on positive actions, believing that there's always a positive approach to any situation. After participating in the program, student participants reported that it improved their self-perception.



400 students served annually



PAX Good Behavior Game

95% of classrooms supported by PAX show a reduction in off-task and disruptive behavior.

The PAX Good Behavior Game is a highly effective approach for students to learn self-regulation and self-control. The program has been extensively researched and endorsed by reputable organizations such as SAMHSA, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, and the Institute of Medicine. It involves teaching students how to regulate their own behavior, work collaboratively with their peers, and develop important life skills.

The PAX Good Behavior Game has been shown to be effective in any school or after-school program and is a powerful tool for improving classroom behavior and academic performance. By implementing this approach, educators can help students build the self-control and self-regulation skills they need to succeed both inside and outside the classroom.

WITH HELP, COMES HOPE

“THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE. YOU GOT ME THROUGH TONIGHT.”

“YOU’VE DONE SO MUCH FOR ME. I REALLY APPRECIATE YOU, YOU’VE REALLY HELPED ME”

“YOU’VE BEEN VERY HELPFUL, BECAUSE YOU ARE TALKING TO ME LIKE A PERSON.”

In 2020, the US Congress established 988 as a dedicated hotline for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. By dialing or texting 988, anyone in the US can connect with trained crisis counselors who provide support 24/7 for mental health or substance use distress. Our center is one of over 200 state and local centers that answer 988 calls, texts, and chats, providing primary coverage for approximately 9 counties in New York State and backup coverage for an additional 22 counties.

988
SUICIDE
& CRISIS
LIFELINE





211 CNY is a vital community service that connects hundreds of people to help every day. Our trained Community Connectors are skilled at assessing caller needs and navigating a comprehensive database to provide linkage to crucial services such as food, shelter, financial assistance, and mental health resources. 211CNY is available 24-hours a day, 7-days a week by phone. People can also text or visit 211cny.com to explore available services.

Most Common 211 CNY Caller Needs

- 01 HOUSING ASSISTANCE**
15,816 Callers were in need of Housing Assistance.
- 02 INCOME SUPPORT**
4,966 Callers were in need of Income Support.
- 03 FOOD & MEALS**
2,272 Callers were seeking Food and Meals.



United Way supports 211, the 24/7 go-to resource that helps people in 99% of the U.S. and all across Canada find the local resources they need.

Celebrating Connectedness

The Contact Hotline



The Contact Hotline is a haven for individuals seeking support, and no problem is too big or too small to call about. While many callers may not be experiencing an immediate crisis, they struggle with life challenges, ranging from financial stressors to relationship difficulties or enduring chronic physical and emotional health issues.

A substantial portion of our callers find themselves in states of isolation and loneliness, turning to the hotline as a reliable sounding board. Here, they are assured of encountering a compassionate and understanding voice on the other end of the line. The hotline serves as a lifeline for those who may feel disconnected, providing crucial support and a non-judgmental space. Our dedicated team of staff and volunteers work around the clock to answer the Contact Hotline 24/7. This commitment ensures that callers can receive the free, confidential, and non-judgmental support they need and deserve.

In addition to the Contact Hotline, we've expanded our reach by answering the Cortland County Hotline since 2021. The collective impact of these efforts is evident in the significant number of telephone calls received in 2023, with over 17,191 calls handled. This statistic reflects the growing need for empathetic support and the crucial role community hotlines play in fostering a sense of community, understanding, and connection for those navigating difficult times.

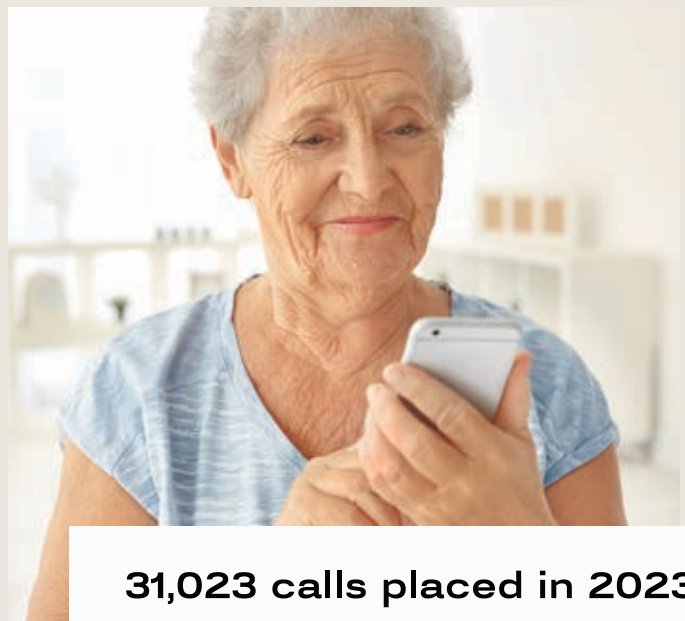
Sometimes a person just wants a phone call. They feel lonely...most likely, they live alone, and they just need some social interaction. Sometimes, people just need reassurance if they're in a difficult time, just to talk to someone and air it out.

----- Mary Moeller, Telecare Volunteer



Reassurance is a Phone Call Away

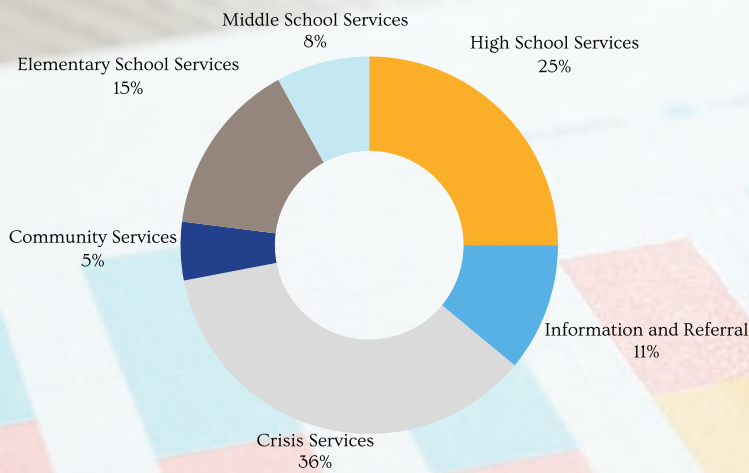
TeleCare is Contact's homegrown telephone reassurance program. Our center makes roughly 100 calls per day to isolated and vulnerable members of our community. These calls are so rewarding to make and are a real lifeline for our clients. These friendly phone calls provide social connections, reminders to take medications, and well-being checks. For many, this phone call may be the only voice a client may hear all day and it is instrumental in helping clients age in place. TeleCare remains a free service thanks in large part to the dedication and support of our volunteers. Our volunteers have a heart for service and each call is an opportunity to put a smile on someone's face.



31,023 calls placed in 2023

Financial Summary 2023

Total Operating Revenue



Elementary School Services

Middle School Services

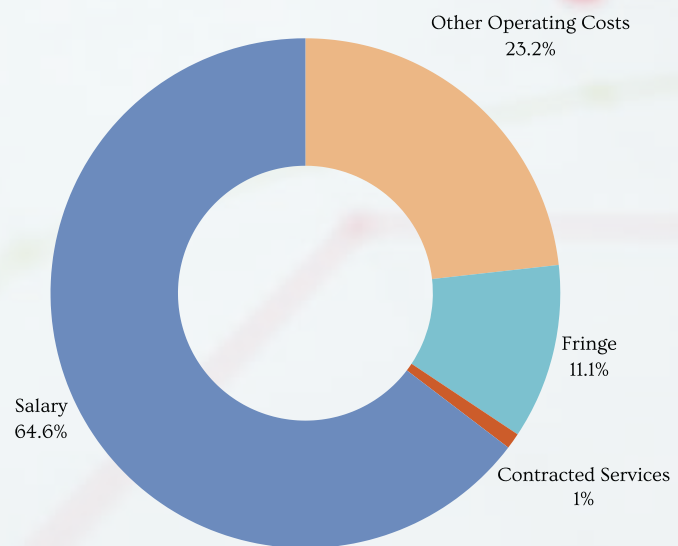
High School Services

Information and Referral

Crisis Services

Community Services

Total Operating Expenses



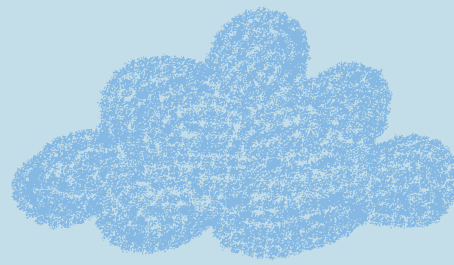
Salary

Fringe

Contracted Services

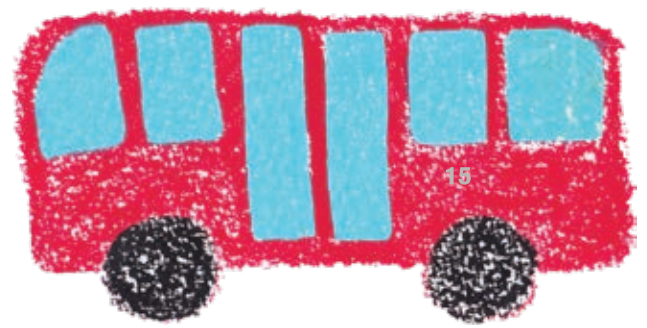
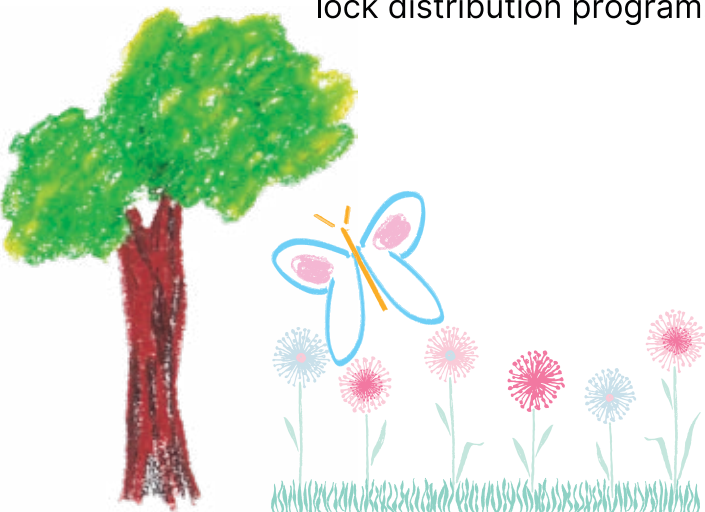
Other Operating Expenses

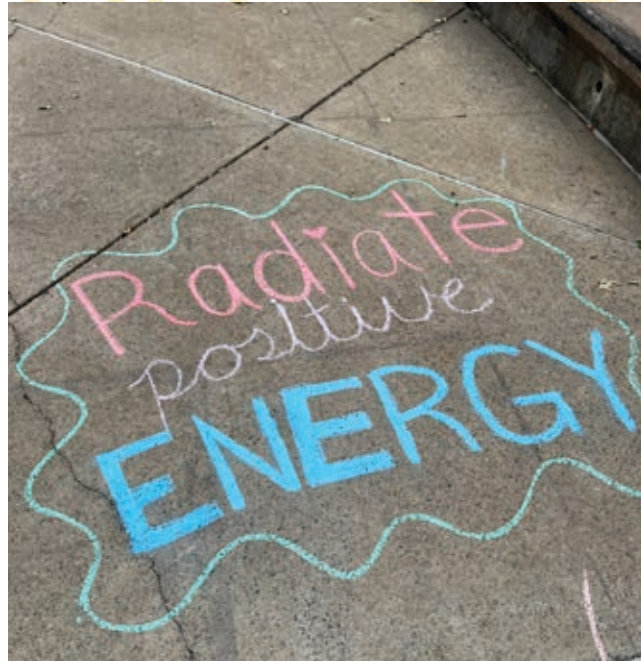
Onondaga County Suicide Prevention Coalition



The Onondaga County Suicide Prevention Coalition (OCSPC) is a group of stakeholders who are committed to creating a community that is safe from suicide. Currently, the coalition has 40 members, including service providers, volunteers, and community members who are invested in this cause. The main goal of OCSPC is to provide community training, outreach at local events, and distribute educational materials. Additionally, serve as a hub for sharing and communicating suicide and crisis-related news and trends throughout the county.

We are thrilled about the progress we made in 2023. This year, OCSPC launched a new website, [OCSPC.org](https://www.ocspc.org), and expanded social media reach. Some of our other accomplishments include collaborating in the creation and piloting of a new lethal means prevention training called "Firearm Safety Through the Lens of Suicide Prevention," running a media campaign on TV and streaming platforms titled "We Hear You," and initiating a new gun lock distribution program.





This September OCSPC sponsored its third annual “Chalk the Walk,” a community campaign that encourages people to get outside to chalk messages of hope and connection. It is a way to destigmatize suicide and promote help seeking. Over 80 kits were distributed with hundreds of people participating through area schools, universities/colleges, non-profits, churches, clubs, and businesses.





UPCOMING EVENTS

Contact Community Services is proud to announce that it will be organizing and hosting the first annual Central New York **CNY Youth Mental Health Summit in October 2024**. The summit will provide young people with a platform to share their experiences, ideas, and opinions to be part of the solution towards better mental health.

2024 CNY YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT

The summit will draw inspiration from the recommendations made by Governor Hochul's Youth Mental Health Summit in 2023, which include:

- 1** Involving young people in policy making and program design.
- 2** Strengthening and creating youth-led programs.
- 3** Educating and training adults on how to support young people, including mental health literacy, setting clear expectations and confidentiality, and listening without judgment.
- 4** Investing in community-based resources for recreation and mental wellness promotion.
- 5** Recognizing the critical role of schools in mental health promotion, prevention, and intervention.
- 6** Providing youth-vetted training to navigate social media for young people and parents.
- 7** Increasing resources for no-cost and low-cost mental health care that is confidential, respectful, and culturally competent, including increased diversity in mental health providers.



2023 LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Cassie Flager, London Wright, and Kierra Richardson, three outstanding employees and volunteers at Contact, were featured in a Public Service Announcement broadcast at Destiny USA, Movie Tavern, and Onondaga Community College, and LeMoyne College. Their aim was to raise awareness about mental health and disperse the negative stigma encircling it, emphasizing the availability of help and support.

The Public Service announcement was shown on college campuses a total of 96,876 times!

THE 9-8-8 SUICIDE AND CRISIS LIFELINE COUNSELORS PROVIDE CONFIDENTIAL SUPPORT FOR THOSE STRUGGLING WITH MENTAL HEALTH OR SUICIDAL THOUGHTS.





SUBARU

Share the love®

EVENT

For over a decade, Subaru of America, Inc. has been rallying a heartwarming event called Subaru Share the Love®. This annual event has raised over \$256 million for charity by giving customers the chance to pick their favorite national charity and over 2,100 hometown charities to donate to. Talk about sharing the love! But, Subaru's charitable spirit doesn't stop there. Their retailers across America are always on the hunt to give back to their communities. The Share the Love Event is an opportunity to support local charities that are near and dear to their hearts. In 2022, Romano Auto Dealerships picked Contact and Vera House as their Hometown Charities, shining a spotlight on the missions.



Thank you to our friends at Romano Subaru for their generosity!

Subaru believes in making the world a better place and the Subaru Love Promise is their vision of respecting all people. They are committed to showing love and respect to our customers and to work to make a positive impact in the world





We are incredibly grateful for the support provided by the Echo Foundation and the Syracuse Crunch Hockey Club. Thank you for your generous donation.



CRUNCH TIME MARCH 2023

During a game between Syracuse Crunch and Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins in the American Hockey League (AHL), held at the Upstate Medical University Arena in Syracuse, New York, Kim Pavlus, the Division Director of Administration and Finance of Contact, presented a ceremonial puck to honor both teams. During the first intermission of the game, Vance Lederman, CFO of the Syracuse Crunch, generously donated to Contact Community Services through The Echo Fund, which amplifies the voice of local nonprofit organizations and their noble endeavors.



THE AMAZON COMMUNITY HEROES PROGRAM

As the Crunch takes the ice for their home games, the realm of heroes comes alive. Amazon, in its quest to shine the limelight on the valiant denizens of Syracuse, seeks out those who have woven a tapestry of goodwill and kindness throughout the community. These real-life heroes, whose tireless efforts have uplifted the spirits of many, are duly celebrated as Amazon Community Heroes. Those recognized have made a positive impact on the Syracuse community. Central New York is home to many real-life heroes whose hard work and dedication to others deserve recognition



COMMUNITY HEROES

OF THE GAME



KATHLEEN PESCI & MS. ADUKE

VOLUNTEER AND EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

From volunteer to superhero, Kathleen Pesci is a shining example of how a simple phone call can transform someone's day. For three years, she's been spreading joy and reminding folks that they're loved, valued, and never alone.

Meanwhile, Ms. Aduke Watts-Branch is a true community champion with more than 40 years of experience making a positive impact. She's fought hard for Syracuse City School District's youth as a professional youth interventionist. Contact Community Services is lucky to have her on our team!



