

Spirit

NEWSLETTER
FALL 2023

HONESTY • INTEGRITY • RESPECT

UNITY HOUSE

EMPOWERING LIVES, SECURING FUTURES.

Swingin' FOR A GOOD CAUSE



Unity House was delighted to be the selected beneficiary of Beardsley Architects + Engineers' 19th annual golf tournament on August 21. Thirteen foursomes came out to golf at Highland Park Golf Club on a cool, sunny day.

After months of coordination by Mark Rebich and Ed Onori at Beardsley, the day kicked off with a shotgun start at 11 am. Teams made their way around the course, stopping for door prizes and lunch along the way. Play wrapped up about 3:30 as golfers gathered in the clubhouse to await the outcome of the day and participate in a 50/50 and other raffle drawings.

At the award ceremony during an excellent barbeque dinner, it was announced that the winning foursome was Atlas Vacation Rentals. Consisting of Nick Shrimpton, Chris Shrimpton, Josh Swoleman, and Eric Hlywa, the lead team shot 12 under par and came in with an overall score of 59 on 18 holes. Congratulations!

At the end of the day, Beardsley and friends raised almost \$11,000 to support Unity House's mission of empowering people with disabilities! Beardsley has indicated that they would like to partner with Unity House again next year for "another round." If you'd like to participate as a volunteer helper, golfer, or sponsor in 2024, contact us at development@unityhouse.org.

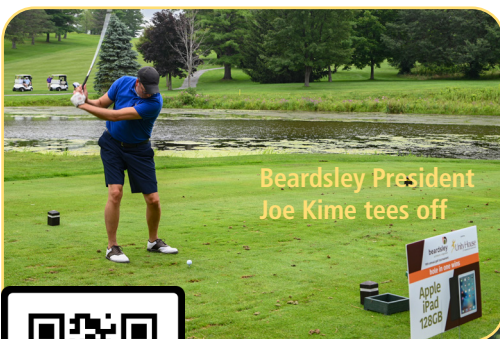
Our deepest gratitude goes out to Beardsley Architects + Engineers for supporting Unity House people and programs through this fun annual event.



Mark Rebich of Beardsley Architects + Engineers presents a check to Unity House Mission Advancement team

Kudos to all of the golfers who competed. Special thanks to all the businesses and individuals that donated a door prize and/or sponsored the golf tournament:

- Adams Insurance
- Albanese Construction
- Atlas Vacation Rentals
- Auburn Community Hospital
- Beardsley Architects + Engineers (gold sponsor)
- Bouley Associates
- Boyle and Anderson, PC
- Building Envelope Technologies
- Clean Start Systems
- Dr. Stephen Coleman
- Costich Engineering
- Cuddy Law Firm
- Excellus BCBS
- Patricia Festa
- The Jacobs Press
- Ronaele King
- Maguire Foundation
- Mutual of America
- Osteria Salina
- Pinnacle Investments
- The Printery
- Reagan Companies (bronze sponsor)
- Mark Rebich
- The Rev Theatre Company
- RG Wright Agency
- Rialto Wealth Management
- Rich & Gardner Construction
- Savannah Bank
- Scottie's Auto Detailing
- Sheriff Brian Schenck
- Speno Music
- Syracuse Blueprint Co.
- Unity House Board of Directors



Beardsley President Joe Kime tees off



Winning Team



Putting contest



SCAN ME

Video of Connor Sullivan of Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES sinking a 15' putt in the putting contest.



Spirit is published three times a year by
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Our mission: to empower and enrich the lives of people in recovery, coping with a mental illness, and/or diagnosed with a developmental disability. This is accomplished by offering services and supports in an inclusive, person-centered environment.

Our vision: all individuals are respected and lead lives of personal fulfillment and acceptance within our community.

Our core values:

Respect, Honesty, Integrity

CEO's PERSPECTIVE GIVING THANKS

Fall is a lovely time of year, full of promise and hope. It's also a time for gratitude. It's a season for giving thanks for the challenges we've overcome and for the people who've helped us along the way.

As the leader of a charity dedicated to empowering people with disabilities, I'm especially grateful for those who make it possible for Unity House to fulfill its mission: our employees and our donors.

If you follow us on social media, you'll see dozens of photos, stories and videos of the people we support. I love seeing the joy on their faces. It's what makes my job so rewarding.

But behind each of those smiles is a team of people dedicated to our mission.

First, and most important, are our direct support professionals. To the people we support, they are the face of Unity House. That puts them at the heart of our mission. They take time to listen. They teach. They care. They are my heroes.

Supporting the DSPs are their supervisors and dozens of support staff. These are the people who make sure our facilities are in top shape, our bills get paid, and our staff are well trained. Without them, our DSPs would be unable to do their important jobs.

Finally, there are our many volunteers and donors – people like you. They give of themselves – their time, their talent and their treasure. They give us what we need to help people in new ways, to overcome new challenges and to keep our organization strong for the next generation.

I'm grateful for every member of our Unity House team. That's why I've dedicated this edition of *Spirit* to them. Look for stories honoring our generous donors, our amazing board of directors and our dedicated staff. You'll see how we're showing our appreciation for the work they do. You'll also see opportunities for you and others to get more involved – as a donor, a board member or an employee.

Thanksgiving is just around the corner. As you gather with family and friends, please take a moment to join me in giving thanks for the team of people here at Unity House. They ensure that people with disabilities get the support they need to learn, grow and thrive. They make our community a better place for all of us.



Liz Smith
Chief Executive Officer



*I'm grateful
for every
member of our
Unity House team.*

Elizabeth Smith

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PROGRAM Happenings

Rise and Shine Breakfast: Unity Employment Service's Career-Specific Vocational Training program participants are learning to cook! They recently demonstrated their new skills at Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES' Center for Learning, where they cooked and served a delicious breakfast of eggs, sausage, bacon, home fries and toast for some hungry Unity House staff.



Friends Helping Friends: Our Community-Based Pre-Vocational group from Unity Employment Services volunteered at Friends Helping Friends of Cayuga County inside Finger Lakes Mall. The group put together school and hygiene supplies for a back-to-school drive. UES will be volunteering with Friends Helping Friends for the remainder of the year.



Foam Party Picnic: Ithaca Day Services traveled to Myers Point Park in Lansing for a picnic by the lake. The day included playing in a mass of foam, treats from an ice cream truck, a friendly game of kickball and a class led by Maestro Music Therapy.



Carnival Fun and Games: In mid-August, Auburn Day Hab hosted a free public carnival at Market Street Park. More than 300 people stopped by to play some games, grab some food, and have fun. Our dunk tank was a huge hit. Volunteers got their fair share of splashes.

New Opioid Treatment Facility: GRACE House Director Dorothy Radcliff recently toured Farnham Family Service's brand-new facility, located on the second floor of Nick's Ride 4 Friends at 13 Chapel St. in Auburn. With grant funding from OASAS, Farnham will now offer a specialized outpatient program that includes clinical services and access to the three medications approved by the FDA to treat opioid addiction: methadone, buprenorphine and naltrexone.



Cherry Turnovers, Anyone?: As part of a recent cooking class, our Auburn Day Hab folks baked cherry turnovers. They even made an extra tray to take to the Auburn Fire Department to say 'thank you' for filling the dunk tank for our carnival in August. Everyone signed a poster and Kyle and staff took it over to thank the firefighters.



 [@unityhouseofcc](https://www.facebook.com/unityhouseofcc)
 [@unityhouseofcc](https://www.instagram.com/unityhouseofcc)
 [unityhouse](https://www.linkedin.com/company/unityhouse)

Introducing Our New .org Domain

We have replaced our .com domain with .org to reflect our 46-year history as a nonprofit. Find us at [unityhouse.org](https://www.unityhouse.org).

The new website looks familiar, yet provides an improved user experience. Read more about these changes by visiting the 'News' tab on our website.

Unityhouse.com visitors are automatically redirected to our new domain. Staff emails have also changed. Emails sent to @unityhouse.com addresses are redirected to our new @unityhouse.org addresses.





Employees OF THE QUARTER

We couldn't deliver on our mission without our amazing employees. That's why we're proud to celebrate some of them here. Each Employee of the Quarter is nominated by their peers. Congratulations and thanks for your service!

Q-2 HONOREES

Carol Rossman – Administrative Assistant at PROS

"Carol is the first face of PROS, which is perfect because she is always smiling and welcoming to everyone who goes to the program. Her personality helps to create the positive vibe of the space. Additionally, Carol knows all the ins and outs of the program, which is especially helpful to me as a teacher who comes in to assist periodically."

-Alyssa Militello, Behavioral Intervention Specialist



Michele Pollard – Community Integration Specialist at Auburn Day Hab

"Michele is a team player and a great advocate for the people she serves at ADH. She often works with people others have been hesitant to work with and has built an excellent rapport. The critical thing is that I can count on Michelle to show up to work, do her job to the fullest, and always make sure at the end of her shift that the place gets picked up."

-Ryan VanDoren, Program Manager at Auburn Day Hab



Q-3 HONOREES

Morgan Miller – Residence Counselor at New Life

"Half Acre has struggled with staffing lately. Every time I've had an open spot that needs to be filled, Morgan does her best to fill it. She pulled a double shift recently and I needed assistance with transportation the following morning. She worked nearly 20 hours straight to help out. She's great with the individuals and makes the tough days easier to get through with her sense of humor. We are blessed to have her on our team!"

-Desiree Jernigan, Assistant Program Manager at New Life



Shannon Hoselton – Assistant Program Manager at Auburn Day Hab

"Shannon knows all the ins and outs of Day Hab. She walks in everyday with a smile on her face and keeps it as the day goes on. When there's a crisis in action, Shannon responds in a calm manner as quickly as she can. Shannon is the type of person who is always at work. She never wants to take a day off. When she does, she says how bad she feels for taking time and that she will miss everyone. Shannon, thank you so much for giving your best each and every day. We are very grateful to have you as part of our team."

-Brittany O'Connor, Community Integration Specialist at Auburn Day Hab



Working to support more mothers in recovery



Too often, mothers suffering from addiction don't get the help they want, need and deserve. They may fear losing their children while in treatment. Or they may be unable to find a program that meets their needs as mothers.

At Unity House, we're working to change that.

For more than 25 years, our recovery reintegration program has built a statewide reputation for helping people overcome addiction. It allows people who have completed the rehabilitation phase of recovery to build the strength they need to successfully relaunch their lives.

We currently have the capacity to help just two mothers who want to live with their young children while they complete our reintegration program. Working with community partners, potential funders and the New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS), Unity House is developing a plan to dramatically expand that capacity.

DSPs: THE HEART OF OUR **Mission**

Miracle worker might not be an official job title, but we think it should be.

Unity House employs approximately 200 Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), making up about two-thirds of our workforce. DSPs engage in the daily tasks of transporting people, preparing meals, administering medications, and so much more. These are critical services that our staff provide so that people with disabilities can live fulfilling, healthy lives.

Every September, Unity House celebrates the role DSPs play in the health and vitality of our organization. To thank our DSPs, for everything they do, Unity House leaders present them with a special gift.

"Thank you so very much for all that you do every day," CEO Liz Smith said in a message to all DSPs. "You are at the very core of our mission and the people you support are so lucky to have you there cheering them on."



Unity House's Family of Support

Empowering people with disabilities isn't easy. It helps to have strong relationships with the family members of people we support.

In recent months, we've been talking with family members to learn how Unity House could do a better job of engaging the parents, siblings and guardians of people we support. We're ready to take the next step in this journey.

Our newly-formed group is considering ways to improve communication and to bring family members together for support, advocacy and fun. If you're interested in learning more or joining our Facebook group, we'd love to hear from you.

To get involved, contact
Chief Advancement Officer Chris Iven at
chris.iven@unityhouse.org or 315-253-6227 ext. 360.



Seeking meaningful employment? At Unity House, our employees are at the heart of our mission. They empower those we support to learn, grow and thrive. That's why we offer great pay – up to \$20/hour to start for our Direct Support Professionals – plus:

- Full-time benefits for those who work 30+ hours/week
- Flexible hours
- Generous time off
- 401k with an employer match
- Wellness incentives
- Early payday option
- Tuition reimbursement

Welcome **NEW BOARD MEMBER**

Dr. Shari Weiss, executive director of Cayuga Community Health Network, joined the Unity House board of directors in August. Dr. Weiss has extensive experience in a range of human services, including homeless housing, chemical dependency, mental health, and public health and policy.

"I have known Shari a long time, and her expertise in our industry will lend well to our board and organization as a whole," said Unity House CEO Liz Smith. "Shari understands the challenges and the rewards of providing services to those with developmental disabilities and mental illness."

Dr. Weiss joined Cayuga Community Health Network in October of 2019. Previously, she was the community housing manager for Catholic Charities of Cortland County. She is an adjunct faculty member at LeMoyne College and Southern New Hampshire University. In addition to numerous professional affiliations, Shari is a published writer and the recipient of a number of grants and honors.

"I am honored to be a part of the Unity House board of directors," Shari said. "I have spent the majority of my career serving the most vulnerable populations in our communities. It is my hope that my experience and knowledge will help Unity House continue the important work they have been doing in our community."

Shari holds a Ph.D. in Public Health with a specialization in public health education and health promotion from Walden University. She earned her master's in public administration from Binghamton University, and her undergraduate degree in communications from SUNY Cortland. Shari is a CASAC-2 (Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor) and holds OASAS (Office of Addiction Services and Support) certifications as a master counselor and an education and training provider.



FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

PROVIDE FOR YOUR FAMILY

PROTECT YOUR ASSETS

SUPPORT YOUR CHARITIES

Wed., Nov. 1, 2023

10:00am - 11:30am

West Middle School Community Room
217 Genesee St., Auburn

Join volunteer members of Unity House's Planned Giving Advisory Council for coffee and an interactive panel on how to make the most of your assets. This free, casual event will give you an overview of estate planning options and resources available, with time to get your questions answered.



Mike Antonacci
FINANCIAL ADVISOR

RIALTO WEALTH MANAGEMENT



Carolyn Hendrickson
DIRECTOR OF PLANNED GIVING

THE UPSTATE FOUNDATION



David Tehan
PARTNER

BOYLE & ANDERSON, P.C.

Grants & Gifts

Unity House is the grateful recipient of funding from:

Fred L. Emerson Foundation - \$28,700

Renovations to a bathroom at a group home in Auburn to accommodate residents in wheelchairs. Handicapped-accessible facilities are a growing need across the organization as aging service recipients require modifications to their homes.

Triad Foundation - \$7,500

For general operating needs and staff appreciation initiatives. Unity House is developing new ways to attract and retain employees, who are central to our mission of empowering adults with disabilities.

A BETTER Way to Give

If you have an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) and are at least 70½ years old, you have a powerful tool to support the nonprofits you love. With a qualified charitable distribution (QCD), your gift flows directly from your IRA to your charity, tax-free. It also counts toward any required minimum distribution (RMD). This holiday season, please consider directing your QCD to Unity House.

Spirit

RSVP to Nicole Hube by **Oct. 27**

Email nicole.hube@unityhouse.org or call 315-253-6227 x358

Longevity Awards

In September, Unity House recognized some of our longstanding employees.

Congratulations to the following staff members on their employment milestones:

30 years: Darlene Podolak

25 years: Gary Fellows, Amy Santobianco, Raven Hudson

20 years: Philip Dutton

15 years: Tina DiGraci, Sharon Pratt, Robin Demetro, Elspeth Peterson

10 years: Amie Jablonski, Michael Murray, Michele Pollard, Brett Budetti

5 years: Holly Esposito, Jarred Keuhn, Judi Magee, Morgan Miller, Barbara Bryant, Edward Church, Lisa Van Horn, Matthew Miner, Julie Goodspeed, Kristina Frank

3 years: Randy Woods, Gail Van Ditto, Matthew Godden, Bryan Bush, Kimberly Faltyn, Helen Waldron, Daryn Cummings, Victoria Miner, Hede Perenyi, Christopher Davies, Reese Moffatt, Carol Rossman, John Maher, Dianne Quintavalle, Deborah Quick, Brittany Randolph, Scott White

Thank you for your dedication to our cause!



Auburn



Ithaca

GIVING TUESDAY

YOUR DAY FOR GIVING BACK

On the fourth Thursday in November, we give thanks. The following Tuesday, we give back.

By sharing our Giving Tuesday campaign on social media, you'll be giving your friends a gift: the chance to feel the joy you feel whenever you give to our cause.

To get started, follow us on Facebook and Instagram (@UnityHouseOfCC). Look for our Giving Tuesday posts in November and share them with your endorsement. Then, on **November 28**, make your Giving Tuesday gift at www.unityhouse.org

SEEKING BOARD MEMBERS

Are you passionate about disability advocacy, mental health outreach and/or substance use disorder recovery? Unity House is seeking community leaders to join our board of directors. Those with fundraising experience, who live in Tompkins County, and those younger than 50 are especially encouraged to apply.

Unity House supports more than 700 people with disabilities in Tompkins, Cayuga and surrounding counties. To learn more, visit www.unityhouse.org. Then, contact CEO Liz Smith at liz.smith@unityhouse.org or 315-253-6227 ext. 320 to express your interest and set up a time to talk about how your expertise and interests might align with Unity House's needs.

Meet Cliff



My name is Clifford. You can call me Cliff. I'm a tattoo enthusiast, a music lover, and a cat dad. I suffer from borderline personality disorder, major depressive order and PTSD.

Since coming to PROs, I have learned to realize that I am more than just my diagnosis. With the help of PROs, I am learning to love myself and the people around me. I am working on ridding myself of my misanthropic ideals and anger.

PROs staff (present and former) have truly saved my life. They helped me get through the roughest points of my life, such as my mother's

passing in 2020 due to alcoholism. I've also found ways to express myself so that I can avoid self-harming.

Some of my favorite classes I've taken here have been Music for Recovery, Grief and Loss, and Dialectical Behavior Therapy.

I'm grateful for all of my new friends. I used to feel a sense of shame and embarrassment. I didn't know how to talk about my diagnoses. PROs helped me change as a person. I recommend PROs to anybody who is suffering in silence.

