

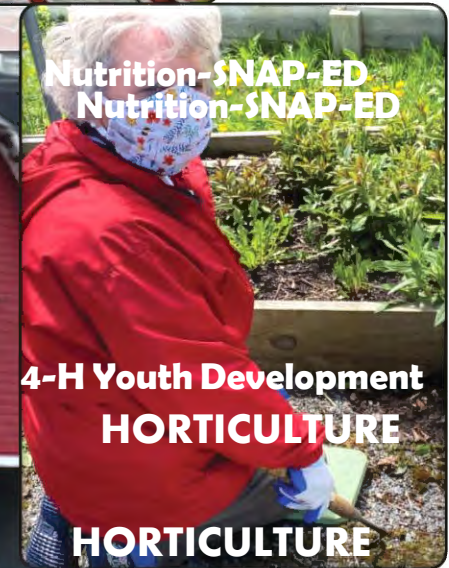
# Cornell Cooperative Extension Oneida County 2021 Annual Report



Horticulture



Child Care Council



Nutrition-SNAP-ED  
Nutrition-SNAP-ED

## Our Mission

Cornell Cooperative Extension puts knowledge to work in pursuit of economic vitality, ecological sustainability and social well-being. We bring local experience and research-based solutions together, helping New York State families and communities thrive in our rapidly changing world.

## Board of Directors - 2021

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Mary Beth McEwen, Executive Director  
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Marty Broccoli, Ag Economic Development Specialist  
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Carol Watkins, Health & Nutrition Issue Leader  
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## From the Executive Director's Desk . . .



It is a privilege to share the Cornell Cooperative Extension Oneida County (CCEOC) 2021 annual report with our community partners and constituents. As I reflect on the last year, I am in awe of the accomplishments of our dedicated and professional CCEOC staff.

Like all of you, at CCEOC we were hoping that 2021 would bring with it a return to normalcy, a return to life as we knew it before the pandemic. However, we quickly realized that normal is an ever-changing concept, and that what we once recognized as normal no longer exists in the same construct in today's world. We recognized that we must continue to evolve our programming and outreach to meet the emerging needs of the community in 2021 and beyond. We also realized that while uncertainty and trepidation might continue to be part of the narrative for a little while longer, we could also make excellence, excitement, and community engagement part of that narrative. We began to explore new ways to reach out to the community, including hosting a virtual Farm Fest event reaching approximately 4,000 children, hosting 'Meet the Farmer' events engaging over 2,400 youth, creating an on-line platform for vendors and shoppers at the Oneida County Public Market, disseminating funding to childcare providers that allowed them to remain open, and creating a Farm to School website. And that is just the beginning. As you look through the annual report, you'll see a sampling of program highlights from 2021. Although it's impossible to capture all we do within our annual report, it's a wonderful overview of our dynamic organization and all that CCEOC does to enable, empower, and educate our fellow community members, fostering the growth and development of a strong and resilient community.

I would like to thank our constituents, community partners, the Oneida County Executive, and the Oneida County Board of Legislators for their continued support. Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't close by thanking the entire staff at Cornell Cooperative Extension Oneida County, our Board of Directors, and our tireless volunteers for a *job well done!* Guided by a drive for service, compassion, and respect for all members of society, their dedication is unparalleled! Best wishes!

*MaryBeth McEwen*

# Agriculture & Ag Economic Development (AED)

**During 2021 CCEOC partnered in local, state, and**



**national efforts** directed at helping farmers build new markets, improve crop health, and continue to regain footing after two of the most unpredictable years in U.S. agricultural history. As an affiliate of the statewide Cooperative Extension Association, the agency was positioned to receive grants for facilitating growth and sustainability among growers ranging from newer farmers who hope to address local food needs to multi-generational producers evaluating their farm operations after changes in consumer shopping habits. Programming Highlights:

**NY State Food Systems: Bridging the Upstate-**



**Downstate Divide:** In 2021, CCEOC launched *The Queens Project (TQP)* for the purpose of connecting Upstate farmers, food hubs, and wholesalers, with institutional buyers,

food banks, and distributors in the New York City area. The goal of TQP is to regionalize and connect our food systems while keeping New York State profits in New York State. The project was funded as a line-item contract secured by Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon, shown above with CCEOC staff in a TQP press conference at Collins Creamery and farmstead in Rome.

**The region's first *Urban Farm Learning Lab***



was installed in the retired Railway Express Agency (REA) wing at Utica's Union Station. The working lab provides hands-on training for aspiring urban farmers in production (indoor and outdoor), business planning, and marketing via the connecting Oneida County Public

Market. After early workshops, the Central New York Veterans Outreach Center requested that CCEOC install equipment and run programming at their Utica veterans' facility. Fifteen aspiring farmers participated in programs last year. The labs were funded by Northeast Extension Risk Management Education Center and Cornell Small Farms Program, *Farm Ops*.

**Nearly one million food boxes were delivered**



under the USDA *Farm-to-Family* and New York State *Nourish NY* Programs for COVID-relief. CCEOC's AED staff organized stakeholders from the Mohawk Valley including growers, wholesalers, distributors, and food banks. The \$6 million effort delivered a *double impact* across the state and region by helping *both* individuals in need and farmers whose markets had diminished after school, restaurant, and business closures.

**Virtual programs drew Oneida County farmers** to their home screens after two years of COVID restrictions taught us how technology has truly re-defined our concept of the *face-to-face* meeting. Virtual learning environments became time- and money-savers for all in terms of travel and event logistics. CCEOC Ag staff used Zoom, Teams, YouTube, and other platforms to host:

- **The 2021 Oneida County Crop Congress** with virtual attendance increasing 50% over past years;
- **A three-part agronomic video series** on soil compaction, no-till planting equipment, and the effect of herbicides on cover crops; and
- **A farm producer panel discussion** on soil health with guests from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Canada.

**\$257K in Oneida County Public Market grants** (USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program, AmeriCorps Vista, and American Heart Association) helped attract 18,862 visitors and enabled CCEOC's Market management staff to develop tools that make the Market more accessible and user-friendly, such as:

- **An E-commerce sales platform** for weekly online market shopping and curbside pickup;
- **Multi-lingual marketing tools** that increase accessibility for and attendance by our international residents;
- **Market Nutrition Tours** that help patrons learn more about the health benefits of eating local;
- **Power of Produce (POP) kids club** which drew 328 kids for activities that earned 'shopping tokens.'

### More Moments in Ag

Ag Ambassadors enabled 2,400 Oneida County students from eight school districts to engage with ten farmers in CCEOC's virtual 'Meet the Farmer' series. They learned about responsibilities in farming and Ag careers.

The "School Supported Agriculture" Project was funded with a Cornell Innovation Grant and will help area farmers expand marketing connections with local institutions, in this case Oneida County school food services.

The Somali Bantu Farm Project in Westmoreland became the subject of a nationally-screened documentary telling how 36 refugee families turned a dream of returning to their Agrarian roots into reality after two years of planning with CCEOC. Their story can be viewed here: <https://vimeo.com/509892671>



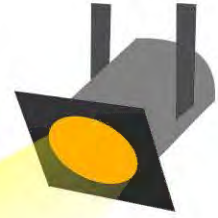
## AN INSTITUTION AT CCEOC: MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS



There's more to becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV) than paying dues and attending meetings. MGVs complete an educational and volunteer component their first year to become certified, and every year thereafter to maintain certification. And yes, there are dues and a few meetings...but they are *fun* and often involve *edibles!* MGVs are serious about their trade... and they make for some very handy friends to have around! Here's what kept them busy in 2021:

- Answering 618 Horticulture Hotline calls on topics covering insects, soil testing, tree pests, planting, and more;
- Offering six virtual classes for 167 people (followed by 2040 YouTube viewers);
- Submitting 110 gardening articles for publication in the OD and Rome Sentinel;
- Sharing weekly garden tips on Big Frog 104.

## Special Initiative Spotlights:



### Green & Healthy Homes (GHHI):

A local push for GHHI occurred in 2019 when several Lead-Free Mohawk Valley Coalition partners and representatives of the national GHHI Initiative signed a Compact establishing *Utica-Oneida County* as one of 26 designated GHHI sites in the nation. Today our local GHHI is staffed by CCEOC, co-located at the HomeOwnership Center in Utica, and funded by the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, Inc. 2021 efforts to promote healthy housing included:

- Offering technical assistance to Lead-Free Kids New York (state-wide) on policy issues that merit review by public officials;
- Conducting soil testing, demos, and educational workshops for Utica/Oneida County residents in collaboration with county, state, and federal partners;
- Fostering partnerships among stakeholders in housing such as rehab/social services providers, health departments, residents, codes offices, and philanthropists.



### Twilight Tours in Agriculture:

*Twilight Tours* were held at four farms last Summer and in partnership with the Oneida County Farm Bureau: Pugh Farm (Bridgewater), Post Street Farms (Franklin Springs), Collins Farm (Rome), and Curtain Bros. Dairy (Cassville). The concept grew out of interest in peer learning expressed at a Young Farmers' Discussion Group. Tours and talks focused on calf-rearing technologies, farm diversification, value-added dairy products, and using field mapping technology for seed variety selection. Tours were open to all and attended by 45 individuals.



**ANNIE'S PROJECT**  
EMPOWERING WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

**By and For Women in Agriculture:**

Annie's Project is a national organization dedicated to strengthening women's roles in agriculture through education and networking. Annie's Project has run programs in 33 states and CCEOC was co-founder of Annie's Project New York, one of the most active affiliates in the country. During 2021 there were two programs offered in New York – *Financial Management for Decision Making*, and *Annie's Project Classic*, a six-week core program that focuses on the five areas of farm risk management – production, human resources, marketing, regulation, and finance. Approximately 30 women attended each program.

**Cornell Companions  
of Oneida County:**

Animal therapy can reduce pain, anxiety, and fatigue in people with social needs or health issues. This ten-year-old program brings well-socialized, obedient dogs and their owners together with others who might benefit from pet interaction: kids, seniors, college students, and people with disabilities to name just a few. After a hiatus in 2020, Cornell Companions of Oneida County volunteers resumed a visitation schedule in the second half of 2021. Visits included patrons of all ages from Holland Patent and Stockbridge Schools, Brookdale Assisted Living and Memory Care Unit, Utica College, SUNY-Poly, and Masonic Care Community. The program averages 15-20 volunteer dog-owner teams per year.



FRIENDS OF CCEOC  
**SAMANTHA & JOHN COLLINS**



Perhaps you recall in 2020 when dairy farmers dumped their milk – and therefore their profits – because of reduced processing/delivery capacities and falling milk prices during COVID-19. Producers faced some unappealing options: selling cows, culling cows, or changing their business' direction. Samantha and John Collins of Rome took a risk, chose the latter, and not only *stayed* in business but *expanded* by opening a creamery and retail store. Their value-added venture opened in July, and 2021 was devoted to further expansion in other counties. Also in 2021, the Collinses partnered with CCEOC to host informational tours for farmers exploring marketing and production options after the worst of COVID. Their willingness to share their insight was beyond admirable. It was critical to the sustainability of Oneida County farming. For this, Samantha and John Collins were honored as *Friends of CCEOC* at the Annual Dinner in October 2021.

# Health & Nutrition: SNAP-Ed, Eat Well Play Hard,



CCEOC's Health & Nutrition Department is home to the SNAP-Ed New York Central Region serving four counties -- Oneida, Herkimer, Oswego, and Hamilton. This program, funded by the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability

Assistance, offers tools, tips, and support encouraging SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) recipients and SNAP-eligible persons to choose healthy diets and active lifestyles. Services and reinforcements are provided through no-cost nutrition education and obesity prevention activities. Programming Highlights:

## **Exceptional Central Region class participation!**

Despite the challenges of 2021, participation was high in all four counties. Central Region SNAP-Ed programming reached 2,338 adults and youth through in-person classes, and 75 adults and youth through virtual classes.

**37 events touched 2,300 residents** with food demonstrations and displays, representing key opportunities for CCEOC's SNAP-Educators to deliver critical health and nutrition messages in entertaining, interactive, and functional formats. SNAP-Ed staff gave out recipes, nutrition guidance, kitchen tools, fitness advice, and tips on getting kids involved in food shopping, preparation, and tasting. The goal was to help parents engage their children so they start taking responsibility for their own diet choices, fitness, and health *early in life*.

**"Life's Tight; Eat Right!"** was adopted as the SNAP-Ed Central Region's community health campaign theme for 2021. Public messaging varied, and outlets included billboards, newspaper, print advertising, and digital promotions via social media. The campaign reached over 75,000 members of the area's SNAP-eligible population throughout the year. Other counties in the Central Region ran concurrent campaigns.





## & other healthy happenings...



**Food & Nutrition Tours were held for 170 visitors** during Oneida County Public Market Saturdays under funding from the American Heart Association. Tours were promoted by community partners such as the Mohawk Valley Latino Association, the Somali Bantu Community, and *The Center* in Utica. Food demos highlighted in-season produce and participants received vouchers to try local products at home.

**Child Care Centers in 11 counties were beneficiaries** of special programming through NYS Department of Health funding for the creation of childcare environments that promote healthy lifestyles among young families. CCEOC's *Eat Well Play Hard in Child Care Settings (EWPHCCS)* program reached 440 adults and youth with services including classes and the popular *Farm-to-Preschool* component. Farm-to-Preschool is designed to engage local growers in helping to reduce fresh food access barriers for challenged communities and families.

**CCEOC drafted curriculum for statewide SNAP-Ed use** on two occasions in 2021. Curriculum was first requested in the spring for use by *teachers* seeking remote programs during COVID. Later in the year CCEOC's Nutrition team was invited to develop a second curriculum, this time targeting *families*. Facebook modules with virtual cooking lessons and food demos were filmed at CCEOC's Oriskany teaching kitchen. See a sample of the Nutrition Department's great work in the promo video posted here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SztVGKeuATM>

### COMMUNITY CHAMPION ARIANNA DELOACH



Arianna DeLoach, Program Director at Utica's Neighborhood Center, has been a community champion of SNAP-Ed for many years. Having recognized the role that good nutrition plays in a child's physical and cognitive growth, she took every opportunity available to have CCEOC in for programming. During COVID, however, Arianna went the extra mile to ensure SNAP-Ed continued serving the Center's families. She facilitated virtual 'cook-alongs' -- kids cooked at the Center while SNAP-Ed did virtual demonstrations. Better yet, kids got to *taste* the fresh foods they had just prepared! Arianna even furnished the ingredients to keep the program going through challenging times and she referred other service providers to SNAP-Ed enabling more families to learn how good food and activity can build a better future. Arianna was recognized at CCEOC's Annual Dinner in October 2021. Thank you, Arianna!

# The Child Care Council at CCEOC...



**Working Parents needed quality childcare** in 2021 despite the pandemic's persistence in impacting the number of providers available for those returning to work. The Child Care Council at CCEOC, however, continued to work with parents in Oneida, Madison, and Herkimer Counties, connecting them to childcare providers and financial assistance to help cover the costly burden of securing affordable daycare. The Child Care Council also worked with over 450 daycare providers across the tri-county area offering technical assistance, training, newsletters, additional resources, and a large network of other care providers for peer support and sharing.

**The Council administered \$600,000 in federal aid** designated to provide Essential Worker Scholarships under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act – or CARES Act – of 2021. Funds were managed and disbursed by the Child Care Council as payments directly to childcare providers for eligible families who had completed the required application process. Also in 2021, New York State launched a historic investment of \$1.1 billion in Stabilization Grants enabling CCEOC to further assist childcare programs in efforts to recover from the pandemic and keep doors open.



# Promoting Healthy Children & Families

## 2021 Successes in Child & Family Development:

- **CCEOC delivered opioid prevention education to 4,751** individuals ranging from first graders to teachers under a Mother Cabrini Health Foundation grant. Topics included drug use trends, social-emotional health, decision-making, and trauma-informed care;
- **Staff assembled 700 Baby Bundles for families of infants** that included resources on daycare, childhood development, early intervention, lead poisoning prevention, nutrition, and other information to promote healthy child and family development;
- **\$500K in food cost reimbursements** were made to registered, licensed, and legally-exempt childcare providers who offered children healthy meals and snacks under the Child & Adult Care Food Program.



**The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Week of the Young Child** was celebrated in April by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The Child Care Council hosted virtual sessions attended by 146 individuals and offering interactive child enrichment activities. Find two opportunities to watch and listen to our staff at work by visiting YouTube here: <https://youtu.be/8L54ptVZqio> or here: <https://youtu.be/zDkM6yYt0Kk>). The Council also hosted a free giveaway attended by 130 childcare providers. Attendees received health and safety supplies in a drive-thru staged at CCEOC headquarters in Oriskany.



### The 4-H Mission:

4-H provides meaningful opportunities for youth and adults to work together toward sustainable community change.

This is accomplished within three primary areas – civic engagement & leadership, healthy living, and science.



# 4-H & Youth Development

 **2021: An amazing year to be young!** 

CCEOC mastered the principles of virtual education in 2021 as staff used their creative teaching skills to develop and/or modify programs that could help keep area students on track during the educational transitions of 2020-2021. Thanks to technology, school activity kits were delivered, videos were produced, and student conversations, creations, trials, and tours were live-streamed, enabling kids to continue exercising their senses!



### 2021 Virtual Programming Successes:

- **Farm Fest 2021** – Over 2,600 Oneida County students participated in classroom-based virtual activities, a ‘Why Milk?’ poster contest, Ag career exploration, and discussions about food systems, farm life, and farm operations;
- **Ag Literacy Week** – Around the same time, nearly 1,400 students enjoyed reading books with an agricultural theme. A highlight for all was the opportunity to hear stories read by volunteers, public officials, and local celebrities;
- **Conservation Education Day** – Tapping into remote learning tools and guest presentations, 450 students explored New York State’s wildlife, ecological environments, outdoor recreation and safety, conservation careers, and efforts to protect our precious natural resources.



## 4-H Keeps Oneida County Kids Active When School's Out & When School's at Home

Area 4-H groups delivered plenty of opportunity in 2021 for youth to gather, get involved, and give back. Oneida County has 23 4-H clubs involving volunteer leaders and 250 kids ages 5-19. Their activities are skill-building, service-oriented, social, competitive, and *fun*.

### 2021 4-H Program Highlights:

- **Showmanship:** 150 individual youth projects were exhibited at the Oneida County Fair in Boonville. An additional 66 youth participated in showing animals that included dairy cows, beef cows, sheep, goats, poultry, swine, rabbits/cavy, horses, and dogs;
- **Environmental Stewardship:** 4-H clubs completed an environmental project by creating habitats for the Bluebird, New York State's official bird;
- **Community Service:** 91 youth in the *Faces of 4-H* Community Service Project volunteered 800 hours in 2021 and adults donated another 400 hours. According to the non-profit community services watchdog *Independent Sector* the current value of a volunteer hour in the U.S. is \$28.54, establishing the value of service given back to the community by Oneida County 4-H'ers at \$34,228;
- **Team-Building with Robotics:** 4-H's FIRST LEGO LEAGUE team works with local professionals to create competition-caliber projects and to learn about winning as well as *not* winning - both important life skills;
- **Animal/Equine Science:** Members of 4-H Horse Clubs competed in New York State equine contests including the 'Horse Bowl,' hippology, horse judging, and horse communications.



# Leading Us Into the Future...

## 2021 Grants & Contracts

Adirondack Central School District

American Farmland Trust

American Heart Association Community Impact Fund

AmeriCorps VISTA

Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties

Cornell CALS Small Farms Program

Cornell University Innovation Grants Program

Early Care & Learning Council

Herkimer County System of Care Grant

Mohawk Valley Economic Development District

Mother Cabrini Health Foundation

Northeast Extension Risk Management Center

New York Agriculture in the Classroom

NYS 4-H Rice Poultry Fund Resource Awards

NYS Cares for Communities

NYS Council on Children and Families

NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

NYS Department of Health

NYS Grown & Certified Ag Producers Food Safety Grant

NYS Office of Child and Family Services

NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

Oneida County Government

Prevent Child Abuse New York

Texas A&M (with National Institute of Health)

Tractor Supply Company

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

USDA Rural Business Development Grant Program

Walmart Local Community Grants

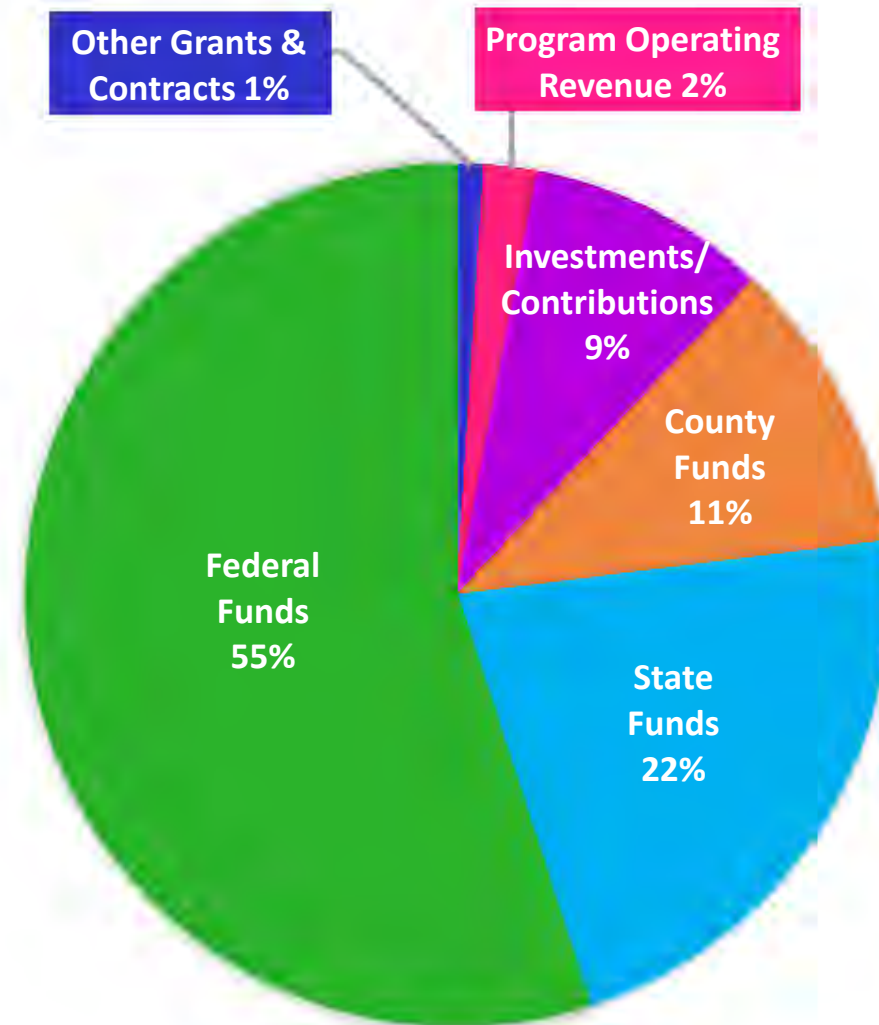
Workforce Development Institute, Inc.

## A Loyal Community...

## A Growing Network

CCEOC is fortunate to have a loyal community and growing network of philanthropic partners who support our services each year in and around the Mohawk Valley. We hope the program vignettes in this report have shown readers how CCEOC's reach extends to almost every resident and family in the region. Staff have worked to enhance education for teachers and youth, ensure families have quality childcare, improve skills and safety for entrepreneurs and workers, help farmers grow the food we put on our tables, and otherwise enhance quality of life for all residents. With 56 employees and a \$6 million operating budget in 2021, keeping our doors open and our program gears in motion could not have been accomplished without the trust and investments of our public and private partners. Thanks to all who made 2021 a successful year of learning with CCE Oneida.

## 2021 Revenue Sources





Cornell Cooperative Extension is an employer and educator recognized for valuing AA/EEO, veterans, and individuals with disabilities, and is an equal program and employment opportunity provider