

COMMUNITY LINK

Empowering people through a helping hand, not a hand-out

This Newsletter

Community Link is a publication of Hope Full Life Center, Inc., a charity located in Faith Plaza, Ravenna. You may know us better as Helping Harvest, Gracefully Chic Boutique, Peace of Home or the Linda Civill Community Garden - all programs we run to serve people in Ravenna, Coeymans, Selkirk and the surrounding communities.

Read on to learn about our efforts to empower people and revitalize our community.

Visit our website for more information:

HopeFullLifeCenter.org

Our Mission

Hope Full Life Center empowers people. Activated by compassion, we offer a helping hand, not a hand-out, to improve life for our neighbors.



Local Girl Scouts got their hands dirty at the Linda Civill Community Garden last year.

Linda Civill Community Garden seeks gardeners *Community groups welcome to participate*

Spring has sprung and warm weather will soon be upon us. It's time to start thinking about gardening! Hope Full Life Center is seeking gardeners for the Linda Civill Community Garden.

The Community Garden gives people the opportunity to grow fresh produce and help the needy too. No experience is needed to participate; other experienced gardeners will help you get started and answer your questions throughout the growing season.

In return for a free bed we ask for your help maintaining the beds that grow produce for Helping Harvest, our food assistance program in Faith Plaza.

The garden is located right in the plaza along the stockade fence across from the stores.

In 2018 local Girl Scout Troops 1368 and 1490 maintained four beds as part of their Sow What Leadership Journey, which is about our food network.

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The Journey considers how food production is affected by local laws, global markets, workers' rights, and by climate change and weather. It also examines how some people have enough food, others have more than enough and some have too little. The Sow What Journey helps girls cultivate ideas by observing and analyzing various food needs and land-use issues in our community and in the world.

All the produce grown by the Scouts was donated to Helping Harvest. The young ladies also sorted dry

goods in Helping Harvest, cleaned and did other tasks.

"We were thrilled to have Troops 1368 and 1490 maintain the community garden and see first-hand how food scarcity affects people in Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk," said Hope Full Life Center's Executive Director, Rebecca Flach. "We need a new generation of leaders prepared to tackle the issues the Sow What Journey explored. We hope the experience was an eye opener for these Scouts."

We invite anyone, including community groups, interested in gardening to become involved this year. A bed, composted gardening soil, tools, water and often seeds and/or starter plants are supplied to anyone interested in using the garden.

Learn more at:
HopeFullLifeCenter.org/Linda-Civill-Community-Garden

Local kids receive Toys for Tots through Center

Nearly 110 children in the RCS community had a brighter Christmas thanks to our Toys for Tots program. Hope Full Life Center and Abounding Love Christian Fellowship (also located in Faith Plaza) work together to serve as a distribution point for the U.S. Marine Corp.'s Toys for Tots.

Families in need of gifts for children 12 and under could register for the program at Hope Full Life Center's Helping Harvest or Gracefully Chic Boutique and Peace of Home. Meanwhile kind-hearted members of Abounding Love's church family shop for additional toys.

Toys were distributed to parents the week before Christmas.

"It's always rewarding to know kids are going to have a better Christmas thanks to Toys for Tots and our distribution point," said Rhonda Baker who has served as the coordinator of the joint HFLC and church program for many years.

Great fashion at a low cost!

Where can you get a complete outfit like these for \$10 to \$12? At **Gracefully Chic Boutique** located in Faith Plaza! Our staff assembled these outfits right from the racks and you can do the same.

Proceeds from sales at **Gracefully Chic Boutique** help us buy food for Helping Harvest, our food assistance program, and cover other costs to run the charity.

Donations of gently used clothing and housewares are accepted Tuesdays and Saturdays.

Store Hours:

Tuesday - Saturday 10-5

Now open Sundays 12-4!



Annual Report

An overview of Hope Full Life Center's work in 2018

What is Hope Full Life Center?

- Hope Full Life Center (HFLC) is the hands-on ministry of Abounding Love Christian Fellowship.
- The organization assists the needy in Ravena, southern Albany County and around the world through aid programs and economic development initiatives.
- HFLC is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation founded in 2012.
- HFLC oversees four programs: Helping Harvest, Gracefully Chic Boutique & Peace of Home, Cross Culture Market and the Linda Civill Community Garden.

Mission Statement: Hope Full Life Center empowers people. Activated by compassion, our multi-faceted outreach provides a helping hand, not a hand-out, to improve life for our neighbors.

2018 Program Achievements

Helping Harvest - A food assistance program for income-eligible families.

- Helping Harvest sent home an estimated \$300,000 worth of groceries with low-income families in the area.
- The food assistance program served more than 1,000 people in the region. Many members are from Ravena, Coeymans and Selkirk, but we have people travel from as far away as Albany, Rensselaer and Schenectady.
- When we had an overabundance of food we shared it with the Ravena Senior Projects, Teen Challenge, the Capital City Rescue Mission and area food pantry programs.

- We supported Capital Roots, a Troy-based not-for-profit, through the purchase of produce in the winter and spring. We also supported local farmer Jon Audietis who purchased produce on our behalf at auctions this summer and fall.
- The Linda Civill Community garden had good year with four of its eight beds in use. Local Girl Scouts maintained the beds and harvested produce for Helping Harvest as part of their Girl Scout *Sow What Leadership Journey*.
- During the Christmas season we launched the Blessing Bag Project, where we gave food away to area charities and individuals in desperate need. Individuals' bags were full of kitchen staples such as pasta and sauce, tuna fish, peanut butter, beans and other foods that offered a variety of flavors and nutrition.

Agencies such as the Street Soldiers, Albany Teen Challenge, Senior Projects of Ravena and Albany homeless shelters received boxes full of rice, chicken and beef broth, tomato sauce and other ingredients needed to cook for large groups as part of the project. More than 50 families and agencies received Blessing Bags. Generous donors helped to make the Blessing Bags project possible.

Gracefully Chic Boutique & Peace of Home - Thrift stores serving the community.

- Provided a convenient way for people to recycle unwanted clothing, furniture, housewares and other gently used items.



Local teens have their first jobs at Gracefully Chic Boutique.



Blessing "Bags" assembled and ready to give out.



STARS InterGen volunteers take a break from work at Peace of Home.

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- Sold 35,000 items with proceeds benefiting the charity's food assistance program, Helping Harvest.
- Administered Cartwheels for Kids, which provides free clothing, footwear and fills other needs for foster kids in the Capital Region.
- Contributed \$500 worth of merchandise to two area families facing emergencies.
- Sowed into the Salvation Army, Capital City Rescue Mission, Grace United Methodist's Book Nook, and Jezreel with its overflow.

Cross Culture Market - After six years in operation, Hope Full Life Center's Board of Directors decided to close Cross Culture Market in April 2018. Despite our best effort with the resources we had available to us, this international economic development ministry wasn't growing. In addition, it used a tremendous amount of staff time and financial resources.

Cross Culture Market had great impact during its six years in operation:

- Supported 21 ministry and humanitarian organization partners and the artisans they worked with through the purchase of \$20,000 of Fair Trade merchandise.
- Gave people in our community a great place to buy gifts.
- Educated the public about the importance of ethical shopping behaviors.

Other Accomplishments

Events & Special Projects

- HFLC hosted its sixth Harvest Fest in conjunction with Abounding Love Christian Fellowship in October, which drew several hundred people with free activities.
- We welcomed students and several senior citizens from STARS Interger Corp. for community service days in March and November. Every program was bustling with volunteer activity.



Healthy carrots from the Linda Civill Community Garden.

- Working in conjunction with Abounding Love Christian Fellowship, HFLC served as a distribution center for Toys for Tots.

Volunteers

- Albany Teen Challenge provided us with help two days a week. We depend on their student's strong backs and energy to help us with labor intensive projects.
- Late in 2018 Albany Teen Challenge's Women's Program began to send volunteers as well.

- Living Resources and the Special Education Department at RCS sent student and adult volunteers to assist us weekly.
- The Albany County Community Justice Outreach Center consistently sent us defendants for community service hours.
- More than 50 volunteers worked in various capacities in all programs and events to help us achieve success last year.

Grants and Donations - HFLC generates the bulk of its operating income from individual donations. However, the charity was grateful to receive grant money from The Bank of Greene County and Stewart's. We also received donations from Gould Erectors, Port of Coeymans, P&M Brick, Trader Joes, LargeHolicim and many other local businesses.

Impact

Hope Full Life Center is proud to lend a helping hand to improve life for our neighbors. In addition to giving access to low-cost food, clothing, furniture, housewares and decor to low-income families in the RCS community, we supply a benefit far less tangible - dignity.

Our staff and volunteers strive to offer clean, friendly, professionally operated stores where customers can make selections to suit their individual tastes and needs. Through modest donations, customers contribute to their wellbeing and ensure the survival of the programs for others.

Blessing Bags benefit area families and agencies

Struggling families received an unexpected blessing this holiday season from Hope Full Life Center in the form of "Blessing Bags." These bags were full of kitchen staples such as pasta and sauce, tuna fish, peanut butter, beans and other foods that offered a variety of flavors and nutrition.



Harvest, is often fortunate to have overstocks of food. The charity doesn't want the food to sit in its warehouse; it wants to get it to people who don't have enough to eat.

"The Blessing Bags helped the Center distribute food in a different way and get it into the hands of people in our community who need it most," Flach said.

Human services agencies such as the Street Soldiers, Albany Teen Challenge, Senior Projects of Ravena and Albany homeless shelters also received boxes full of rice, chicken and beef broth, tomato sauce and other ingredients needed to cook for large groups as part of the program. More than 50 families and agencies received Blessing Bags.

"We called them Blessing Bags, but we ended up packing the food in boxes because grocery bags couldn't hold everything we gave to families and the agencies," said Rebecca Flach, executive director of Hope Full Life Center.

Hope Full Life Center's food assistance program, Helping

Generous donors helped underwrite the program. Hope Full Life Center extends a sincere thanks to these people for helping us make the project a reality.



Accepting donations of children's clothing, footwear, toys, furnishings and more to support area foster children.

Learn more at HopeFullLifeCenter.org

Donations accepted Tuesdays and Saturdays 10-5 at Gracefully Chic Boutique and Peace of Home.



Thanks to the employees of Ferguson Enterprises in Coxsackie for the donation of nearly 1,000 lbs of food during the holidays. Pictured L to R: Brian McNulty, Maintenance Manager, and Andrew Scarpinati, Human Resources Manager.

Birthday Bags make kids smile

Helping Harvest members with children can get a sweet surprise when their kids' birthdays draw near – a free Birthday Bag. Each bag contains a cake mix, frosting, candles, a bake pan and little toys and candies for the birthday boy or girl.

The bags were the idea of a local volunteer who assembles them and donates the bags to Helping Harvest.

“The Birthday Bags are a creative way to help a struggling family make their child feel special on his/her big day,” said Rebecca Flach, executive director of Hope Full Life Center. “We’re grateful to



the volunteers who came up with the concept and who contribute the bags and all their contents to Helping Harvest.”

Birthday Bags are available to Helping Harvest members for free.

Did you know?

Helping Harvest, our low-cost grocery store for struggling families, served 1,000 people in our community in 2018?

If you or someone you know has a hard time affording food, please send them to Helping Harvest. Learn more at HopeFullLifeCenter.org, call 518-756-9091, or stop by for a visit. Open Wed/Fri 2-6 and Thurs/Sat 10-2.



We need you!

Hope Full Life Center is a small charity, with few resources, trying to make big changes in our community. Consider helping us in these ways!

- Volunteer. We constantly need help to run our labor-intensive programs.
- Give us your financial support. Hope Full Life Center is a charity recognized by the IRS and donations are tax deductible. You can make secure donations right on our website via Paypal at HopeFullLifeCenter.org. You can also mail a check or drop it off at any of our programs.
- Donate gently-used clothing, housewares and furniture to Gracefully Chic Boutique and Peace of Home.



Molly and RCS School District Teaching Assistant Brenda (supervising students) volunteering at Helping Harvest.

Learn more at HopeFullLifeCenter.org/Get_Involved or call us at (518) 756-9091.

Community Link

A publication of:
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Our Programs

Helping Harvest
Fighting hunger
 Gracefully Chic Boutique and Peace of Home
Providing value and dignity
 Linda Civill Community Garden
 Teaching self-sufficiency