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## NYSCAA NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2015

Hello-

Much has been written about the late Governor Mario Cuomo since his passing early this month. Most mention his commitment to this state and his family, his determination to do what he considered "the right thing" regardless of the polls, and all note his eloquence in speaking up for those on the margins of society. His son, Governor Andrew Cuomo, summed it up beautifully, calling his father "the keynote speaker for our better angels." What better legacy can one have than that?

Many of those who worked with the Governor noted his fierce competitiveness, his



incredible work ethic and the fact that he expected no less from those around him, a high bar indeed. And some critics wondered if his eloquence outweighed his record of accomplishments. I am not a neutral observer in answering this question as I had the incredible good fortune to work for the Governor over the entire course of his administration, a story for another time and one of those incredible coincidences of being in the right place at the right time.

I am compelled however to remind all of us how important it is to have someone who articulates a vision and communicates that vision with the Governor's clarity and passion. I had neither interest nor experience in government and politics when I began working with Governor Cuomo's Task Force on Domestic Violence. When his administration ended, I had not only developed an interest in public policy and politics, I knew that there was little of more value that I could do with my life than to spend it speaking up and standing for those who were rendered voiceless. This commitment was not a result of the policies or programs we developed during his administration, though there were many of those about which I am quite proud. I was compelled to commit to the work of social change because of the inspiration of the Governor's words and because of the

fearlessness with which he spoke his truth, a fearlessness I also learned to adopt, even if I did not always feel it!

One can argue the Governor's "record," but I would argue that the record includes his words, words that told battered women that they did not deserve to be abused and that told batterers that this abuse was a fundamental violation of the sacred bonds of marriage and family. Words that led to the development of a statewide system of emergency shelters to provide a safe haven for those for whom home is not safe. Words that led to the creation of the Battered Women's Justice Center at Pace University, the first such program in the nation designed to train lawyers in this difficult area of legal advocacy. Words that helped to take this crime out of the hidden shadows of our homes and make clear that domestic violence is not a private matter but an affront to all, a public and very serious crime.



Governor Mario Cuomo and the Center's founders including Karla Digirolamo

As Lieutenant Governor, Mario Cuomo made many visits to the rural communities in New York, gaining an understanding of



Governor Mario Cuomo and Stuart Mitchell of Pathstone

the economic and social issues faced by rural New Yorkers and advocating on their behalf. The Office of Rural Development was created within the Division of Housing and Community Renewal under Governor Mario Cuomo. For the first time rural housing concerns and issues were given a voice at the table as state resources were being allocated throughout the state. Under Gov. Mario Cuomo the Rural Area Revitalization Program and the Rural Rental Assistance Program were created. The governor's leadership in this arena has resulted in significant revitalization of rural communities throughout New York State. Hundreds of units of rental housing have been developed and even more first time

home buyers in rural areas assisted by these programs. During the governor's tenure, the Farmworker Minimum Wage Advisory Council was established and worked diligently to improve the wages and working conditions of the farm labor force.

While these are examples of Mario Cuomo's commitment to domestic violence survivors and rural New Yorkers, there are many other examples of his tireless work on behalf of so many of New York's least heard and least advocated for groups. He recognized the chasm between the "haves" and the "have nots" and reminded us

that we are as one, a family, and that we have an obligation to see that everyone has access to the opportunity and resources of this great state and nation. He compelled many of us to commit to fighting violence, poverty, inequality and indifference - landing more than a few of us in the New York State Community Action Network. As we grieve the loss of this man, this leader, and as we benefit from the legacy of good work he leaves behind, we have a responsibility to continue to fight for the values he held dear.

Karla

Karla Digirolamo

[E-mail me](#)

## POLICY UPDATE

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo has announced the [Anti-Poverty Opportunity Agenda](#), the eighth part of his 2015 Opportunity Agenda. The ten point plan includes the following proposals:

- Raise the minimum wage to \$10.50 by 2016. *Due to the high cost of living in NYC, the plan proposes raising the minimum wage in NYC to \$11.50.*
- Expand the Unemployment Strikeforce to the top ten highest areas of unemployment.
- Double funding for the urban youth jobs program.
- Invest more than \$486 million in housing for vulnerable New Yorkers.
- Invest an additional \$220 million in homeless services.
- Commit \$4.5 million to advance the Anti-Hunger Task Force.

## UPCOMING NYSCAA EVENTS

**The NYS Community Action Virtual Legislative Day** will feature virtual and in person visits to elected officials in Albany on Wednesday, February 25. For more information, click [here](#).

**The Ninth Annual Symposium on Poverty and Economic Security** will be held on April 1 & 2, 2015 at the Holiday Inn on Wolf Road in Albany. Richard Reeves will be a keynote speaker! Click [here](#) for more information.

**The NYSCAA Professional Development Conference** will be held on June 16 & 17, 2015 at the Lake Ontario Conference Center in Oswego, NY. Save the date - more information coming soon.



- Create a \$50 million nonprofit infrastructure capital investment program.
- Increase Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise Opportunities to 30 percent.
- Launch the Get on Your Feet Loan Forgiveness Program to supplement the federal Pay As You earn (PAYE) income based loan repayment program.



[Click here to see the full agenda.](#)

## NYSCAA NEWS

**NYSCAA Welcomes Kimberly Stall**, NYSCAA's new Event Planner/Office Manager.



Kimberly graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Business Management from Keene State College in Keene, NH. Her background includes account management, fundraising, and event planning. She is looking forward to starting a new career with the team at NYSCAA.

**Nominations for the 2015 Community Action Awards are open** on the NYSCAA website. Please consider staff, volunteers, participants and community supporters that make a difference every day in your agency/community and nominate those deserving individuals for one of the awards - Leadership Award, Personal Achievement Award, The Service Award, The Community Action Vision and Values Award and The Innovation Award. Though the nominations process is ongoing, to be considered for an award in 2015, a nomination needs to be submitted no later than April 24, 2015. The Awards will be presented at NYSCAA's June Conference. Click [here](#) for more information and to nominate somebody.

**NYSCAA's IT Help Desk is open** every Tuesday from 1 PM to 5 PM and every Friday from 9 AM to 1 PM. Call 518-690-0491, extension 28 during those times to access the help desk. You can also fill out a support request on our website anytime by at: <http://nyscommunityaction.org/information-technology/help-desk>.

**2015 Emerging Leaders Institute (ELI)** begins February 5 - 6 in Syracuse. This year the program has 14 ELI 1.0 participants and 4 ELI 2.0 participants from Community Action Agencies across New York State.

The 2015 ELI 1.0 participants are:

- Inga Back, Oswego County Opportunities, Inc.
- Lori Gilbert, Pro Action of Steuben & Yates, Inc.
- Erica Gleason, Pro Action of Steuben and Yates, Inc.
- Bethany Hawkinson, Community Action Partnership for Madison County
- Melissa Molongo, Action for a Better Community
- Melissa Nicolini, Cayuga Seneca Community Action Agency
- Kristen O'Connell, Cayuga Seneca Community Action Agency
- Katie Palmer, Schoharie County Community Action
- Courtney Pearson, Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency
- Shane Putnam, ProAction of Steuben and Yates
- Michelle Ramos, Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency
- Sandra Sheridan, Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency, Inc.
- Emily Tortorici, Cayuga Seneca Community Action Agency
- Anne Wilkes, Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency, Inc.

The 2015 ELI 2.0 participants are:

- Cara Johnson, Pro Action of Steuben & Yates
- Eric Poulson, Economic Opportunity Commission of Nassau County
- Pamela Smith, Pro Action of Steuben & Yates
- Tyler Whitney, Washington County EOC

**Are you using the [Tools and Trends](#) section of NYSCAA's website?** In January several new reports were added, data sheets using the opportunity index, the NYS pages of the recent ALICE report, papers on working families and the working poor, a parental rights toolkit for immigrants and affordable housing data. Check them out [here](#).

**Are you looking for a job at a Community Action Agency?** Do you know somebody who is? NYSCAA's website has a list of current openings at NYS Community Action Agencies. Check it out by clicking [here](#). NYS Community Action Agencies are encouraged to submit job postings for inclusion on the list. If you would like to have your Community Action Agency's opening(s) listed, [click here](#).

## MEMBER NEWS

Recently Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, a girl scout troop and **Community Action Angels of Wyoming County** were busy stuffing backpacks with good food - oatmeal, crackers, applesauce, granola bars and more. The backpacks are used for a program to provide weekend food to families whose children are eligible for free or reduced lunches at school during the week. "For a lot of families that are food-insecure, having a backpack go home with their kids, that has nutritious food in it, really makes a difference," Gillibrand said afterward. "It helps families make ends meet. Angel Action in Wyoming County supplies 135 children with food to take home for the weekend. Angel Action has been operating the Snack Pack program for five years. Read more [here](#).



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