

## And The Winner Is... Agency Receives Healthy Workplace Award

Unity House is a winner of the first-ever Healthy Workplace Awards, sponsored by United HealthCare in collaboration with the Central New York Business Journal and Biz Events. Winners were announced at a luncheon and recognition program on September 28 in Syracuse; more than 200 people were in attendance.

The agency was one of three finalists in the Over 250 Employees, Non-Profit category. Unity House was selected for its innovative, agency-wide initiatives and health-conscious programs, including a new fitness room, wellness e-newsletter, healthy cookbook, and biometric testing and risk assessment for all employees that can result in lower health insurance premiums. More than two-thirds of the agency's 300 staff members participated.

"Our Wellness Committee has worked so hard over the past two years, and it is exciting and gratifying for them and the agency to be recognized in this way," said Executive Director Liz Werner upon returning from the award luncheon. "Unity House is all about care giving. Yet sometimes, the caregivers forget to care for themselves. We want to encourage staff wellness and healthy choices, at work and at home."

The Healthy Workplace Awards program honors companies that show exceptional dedication to creating a work environment that encourages healthy living among its employees. Unity House's Wellness Committee, established in 2009 as part of the agency's strategic plan, has introduced a

number of healthy lifestyle initiatives aimed at increasing overall self-satisfaction among its staff and to counteract rising health care costs.

The Wellness Committee is part of Unity House's three-year strategic plan, and receives support and resources from the agency's administration and board of directors. The committee's charge is to offer employees and consumers information, education, opportunity and access to programs that support health and wellness.

To meet those objectives, the committee has over the past two years implemented a number of healthy initiatives. When the agency instituted a smoke-free workplace policy in January 2010, the committee offered smoking-cessation classes for its staff members. In response to escalating health insurance costs, biometric testing and online health risk assessments were offered to all employees. Approximately 63% of all staff participated, which resulted in their receiving a newly created Gold/Silver health insurance option that featured better benefits and lower premiums if they successfully completed the five-step wellness initiatives. Among other programs, the committee has also developed a monthly e-newsletter for employees to increase awareness of wellness-related issues, and compiled and sold copies of a cookbook of healthy recipes.

"This is fantastic!" said Director of Human Resources Sara Glauberman, co-chair of the Wellness Committee with HR Generalist Jessica Janssen. "It is a great honor to be recognized by United HealthCare for our wellness efforts. Since we're still in the early stages, this award gives the committee the incentive it needs to continue and expand the program."

This fall, the committee is offering a hydration challenge (drink at least 40 oz. of water per day for three weeks), will sponsor the second annual "I'm Dreaming of a Lighter Christmas" contest to keep weight under control over the holidays, and is looking into a 6-8 week fitness boot camp and participation in Wegmans' "Eat Well, Live Well" program.

"I am so proud and appreciative of the Wellness Committee's dedication and the staff's positive response," continued Liz. "The committee put in a phenomenal effort, and I congratulate them on this award."



Wellness Committee co-chairs Jessica Janssen (left) and Sara Glauberman hold Unity House's Healthy Workplace Award.



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## Executive Director's Perspective

**I**t doesn't seem possible that another summer has passed and we will soon be preparing for the holiday season. Despite the upheaval in Albany, we continue to march forward. To me, fall is the most rewarding, productive time of the year.

Unity House's Wellness Committee recently received the first-ever Healthy Workplace Award, celebrating the good work being done by one of our Strategic Planning committees. In just two years, we've gone from a fledgling wellness program to an award-winning wellness program! I continue to be pleased with our progress in all areas as we wrap up the second year of our three-year plan.

We are in the final stages of renovations at 56 Grant Avenue in Auburn, and our consumers moved into their new apartments last week. The building looks fabulous, and the residents and staff are excited to be in their new location. An open house will be held after the residents are settled.

So much of what we do is about trust. In that spirit, I asked leadership expert Gwen Webber-McLeod to lead Unity House's managers and directors through a day-long retreat on "The Thirteen Behaviors that Inspire Trust." Trust is one of the most powerful forms of motivation and inspiration, and Unity House is making a conscious effort to extend and establish trust, and to restore trust where it has been broken.

Nurturing a culture of trust at Unity House will be imperative to our success as we work through the next months and years with the State of New York. The economic crisis has perpetuated a sense of chaos at the state and federal levels as they try to figure out how to provide services that are financially sustainable, and it looks as though human services in New York will move to a managed care delivery model. This is a big shift from what we are currently doing, and its success will depend on our ability to be flexible and develop positive collaborations.

Managed care means our reimbursement rates for services will be capped, and there will be heavy emphasis on monitoring the quality of services. This is already happening with the Office of Mental Health (OMH) and the Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS). Now services under the auspices of the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) will take on more of a managed care model as well. The intention is to be able to support more people, be fiscally responsible, and keep Medicaid expenditures under control.

Conceptually, I think this is a great idea. If it works as intended, it has the potential to get services to those in need in a more flexible way. However, the speed at which the state is moving is of concern to me. Many agencies have spent years building an infrastructure based on the former service model and existing funding resources. Taking on this new model so quickly may mean greater financial risk for us all during the transition.

Change can be scary, and such a significant shift at lightning speed is downright daunting. One thing I know we do best at Unity House is being creative in shaping new service and staffing models. I anticipate most of the state-mandated changes will be implemented by 2014, and I have full confidence that Unity House will rise to the challenge. We will rely on your support even more as we adapt to these changes.



Liz Werner, Executive Director

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## New Leaders Join Board

*Unity House welcomed two new board members over the summer:*

### Bradley Chapman

Brad brings six years of accounting experience to the Unity House board. He formerly worked with the Auburn accounting firm that prepares Unity House's annual audit, and then with Dermody, Burke & Brown, where fellow board member David Corey is employed. Brad is currently the business manager of behavioral health services at Oswego Hospital, a role he began in January.



"When I saw that there was a board position open, it felt like a good fit," said Brad. "Since I was familiar with Unity House and have a behavioral health background, I thought I might be a good resource for the agency. Now I have the opportunity to learn alongside some of the senior board members, who bring strength to a proactive organization like Unity House."

Brad received his undergraduate degree in accounting and an M.B.A. from Niagara University. He grew up in Skaneateles, and now lives in Elbridge with his wife and new son. Brad sits on the Elbridge Zoning Board of Appeals and volunteers for the Jordan-Elbridge Lacrosse Club, Inc.

### Carolyn Bresee

Carolyn was suggested for board membership by Susan Sloan, director of Unity House's intensive psychiatric rehabilitation treatment program. As a former recipient of IPRT services, Carolyn has a unique insight to the workings of Unity House.

"I thought it would be interesting and they can use my enthusiasm," said Carolyn. "I used to feel like no one cared, but Unity House was there for me through IPRT and showed me there was more to life than sitting in a corner. I like going to the meetings – it makes my mind work and gets me out of the house. The more I learn, the better I feel, and being on the board is a learning experience. I'd like to help Unity House the way they helped me."

Carolyn has been to four meetings so far and is beginning to grasp how the board operates. In her free time, she volunteers at the Head Start program in Auburn, where she prepares food and delivers snacks to the classrooms. She also spends a lot of time with her thirteen grandchildren and one great-grandchild. She enjoys cross-stitch and is particularly fond of ceramics; she takes a class in town and enjoys creating and decorating pieces, especially hearts, for her grandchildren.



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## Collaborative Learning

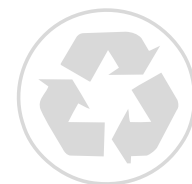
Unity House and Cayuga Community College have joined forces and are collaborating on a pilot internship program this fall semester. The learning opportunity is designed for business administration students and is the equivalent of three credit hours. The newly created Unity House program offers students a chance to take part in projects and tasks in the areas of marketing, development, human resources, quality assurance, and finance.



The first intern, Rosanne Delaney, is excited to join the agency: "Unity House is such an asset to the community. I'm really glad that I can work here while earning college credit."

Rosanne is a second year business student interested in pursuing a career in finance. In addition to her internship and classes, she volunteers at the Seward House.

"This is a great way for us to continue to grow our partnerships within the community and support CCC students," said Kelly Buck, director of marketing and development, who is the agency's internship liaison to CCC. "Internships offer such an excellent learning experience. I hope we will be able to host more interns in the future."



### Recycle for Unity House!

Fingerlakes Community Recycling Center, located at 393 Grant Avenue Road in Auburn (across from Pizza Hut on the east end), will collect cans and bottles year-round on behalf of the agency. Drop off your returnables, tell them your load is for Unity House, and the center will send a quarterly check to the agency. It's that simple!



## A Bright Future for Eric Klock

*Gaining confidence, building a work history*



Eric Klock's journey with Unity Employment Services (UES) in Geneva started in July 2010 when he confided to a UES job coach his interest in eventually becoming an auto mechanic and working with vehicles. With no paid, hands-on work experience,

Eric and his coach discussed the importance of securing and keeping a job in order to build a work history and continue working toward his long-range goals.

Shortly thereafter, Eric accepted a position as a laborer mowing lawns, and continued his mechanic search with Unity's help. He was successful in securing a position at a local auto shop with an employer willing to train him on the job; Eric had impressed this employer by demonstrating a positive work ethic and reaching toward his dream.

Eric had worked at his new position for about a month when he went in one morning and learned his boss, the sole proprietor of the business, had passed away. Eric was devastated but said, "When I was down and out, Unity staff kept me motivated, and helped me get back up and keep going."

One month later, Eric accepted a job as a stock associate at WalMart in Waterloo. "This job at WalMart is nice," he says. "I'm treated with respect, and dealing with the customers helps me with my social skills. I would like to continue to grow with this company while I pursue my long-term goals."

In addition to his time at WalMart, Eric has been busy lately working towards achieving Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certification so he will be more marketable to large auto shops.

Geneva UES Program Manager Loraine Gianfrate is delighted with Eric's progress: "While Eric isn't in his dream job yet, I am 100% confident he soon will be. He is completely dedicated to reaching his goals, and understands the importance of building a work history, all of which has helped him gain more confidence. Eric has interviewed for three auto mechanic positions since speaking to employers about his ASE certification, and his future looks bright!"

*As we went to print, we learned that WalMart has reached out to Eric about his interest in transitioning into their auto and tire shop. Exciting possibilities are on the horizon for Eric!*

## Grants and Gifts

**Unity House is the grateful recipient of support from these sources:**

### ***Friends of the Tompkins County Public Library – \$565***

The Friends of the Tompkins County Public Library made a generous contribution for the purchase of healthy cookbooks and medication administration manuals. These items will benefit our Nursing department and a number of consumers in the Ithaca area, promoting healthy lifestyles and good eating habits.

### ***Legacy Foundation – \$1,240***

Unity House received funding from the Legacy Foundation to equip its newly established music room with professional sound equipment: a keyboard, amplifiers, microphone and stand, and other accessories. The agency serves more than 50 persons with developmental disabilities at its Ithaca Day Habilitation Center. Through this grant, these consumers will receive a higher level of musical enrichment and performance capabilities.

### ***UBS Wealth Management – \$500***

The employees of UBS Wealth Management in Syracuse voted to give proceeds from their company's "Jeans Day" to Unity House. The staff contributed \$250 for the chance to wear jeans to work one day this summer, and the company matched their donation dollar-for-dollar.



## Join Our Team!

Seeking meaningful employment with competitive salary and excellent benefits? Join our team! Unity House is looking for caring individuals who are interested in working with those with mental health illnesses, developmental disabilities, and/or chemical dependencies. A nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, Unity House partners with these individuals to develop their personal skills and potential, enabling them to live more full and independent lives.

View our current job listings and complete an online application at [www.unityhouse.com/employment/employment.asp](http://www.unityhouse.com/employment/employment.asp).

## New Director of Finance

Christine Farrell-LaPage has been promoted to director of finance. Christine was most recently finance manager at Unity House for 2 ½ years. She has more than 20 years of experience as a controller in two publicly-held corporations and several years of public accounting experience. She began her new duties on July 5.

“We are very excited to have Christine’s fresh perspective in this role,” said Executive Director Liz Werner. “She brings a for-profit mentality that is necessary for non-profits in these difficult economic times. Her previous experience will lend itself well to the fiscal components of our organization as we seek to do more with less.”

Prior to coming to the agency in 2008, Christine was market controller for ten years at Citadel Broadcasting Company in Syracuse, overseeing annual revenues of \$10 million. She

previously served as controller at Northeast Environmental Services, Inc. in Canastota, NY. Christine replaces Maxwell Haines, who served as Unity House’s finance director for 17 years.

“I am excited for the opportunity and look forward to assisting the agency with its development and growth through strategic and efficient financial tools,” said Farrell-LaPage.

Christine earned a B.A. in economics from Elmira College, and an M.B.A. from LeMoyne College in Syracuse. She has taught management decision-making courses for Bryant & Stratton.

As director of finance at Unity House, Christine will be responsible for the development, oversight and management of the agency’s general ledger in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. She will manage the preparation of all agency budgets and required fiscal



reports to governmental agencies and Unity House administration; ensure proper cash flow management; maintain adequate and accurate internal controls; and provide oversight and guidance with the agency’s annual independent audit.

## Honing Supervisory Skills

Grace House Director Michele Leonello attended a special “train the trainer” workshop in Albany this August. She was one of only 20 applicants state-wide to be invited to participate in this pilot program given by the NYS Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS).

The purpose of the intensive workshop was to provide clear guidance and direction to clinical supervisors who work in the field of addiction, specifically as it pertains to staff training. As the clinical supervisor at Grace House, Michele is responsible for training and coaching her staff to be

professionals in the field of chemical dependency. OASAS closely tracks and mandates the amount of time supervisors spend working with their employees.

“This special training was informative and gave me a tremendous amount of insight into the importance of clinical supervisions, particularly the issues that can arise in a supervisory setting and how to work through different employee situations as a supervisor,” said Michele.

Now that she’s trained in this area, Michele may eventually present this workshop for the state to other clinical supervisors.

The Fund for Unity House is a new initiative that solicits financial gifts from loyal friends and donors on a yearly basis to support, in part, the general operations of the

agency. Help Unity House empower and enrich the lives of people in recovery, with a mental health illness, or with developmental disabilities. Your annual unrestricted gift to The Fund for Unity House has a direct impact on their quality of life. Thank you for your support. Unity House’s fund year ends December 31.



## Opt-In for Electronic Unity House News!

As environmentally conscious as we’d like to be, it has become clear that moving to electronic-only communications with our friends and supporters is not the way to go for Unity House – yet. We’ve gotten feedback from some of our most dedicated donors, saying they enjoy receiving the hard copy of the newsletter, and that many of them do not have easy access to the Internet and e-mail.

Even though we have reversed this strategic decision for the time being, we are still trying to grow our e-mail list and save trees and money by e-mailing agency messages to those who choose to receive them that way. Please “opt in” by sending your e-mail address to [kbuck@unityhouse.com](mailto:kbuck@unityhouse.com). Our printed publications are also available for viewing and download online anytime at [www.unityhouse.com/news-press.html](http://www.unityhouse.com/news-press.html). Thank you!



## It's Award Time

James Beaumont recognized as "Extraordinary Caregiver"



Unity House has another feather in its cap. Direct care provider James Beaumont at Ithaca day hab has been honored as an "Extraordinary Caregiver."

James was nominated for the 2011 award by his supervisor, Program Manager Kathy Marshall. In her nomination, Kathy stated: "James is an

extremely dedicated and caring staff member who has consistently put the needs of the consumers he works with above all else...He has been a tremendous support to them and has also been a strong advocate."

A former aid to individuals with traumatic brain injury in Rochester, James joined Unity House a year ago. Since arriving at the agency, he has excelled in his efforts to educate and empower consumers. James' hard work and attention to

detail earned him a recent promotion to the position of team leader at Ithaca day hab.

"James recently started a self-advocacy group within the day hab program which has received a great deal of interest and now has several attendees," continued Kathy's nomination. "He puts in extra hours to enable some of the young people he works with to socialize with one another on Friday nights over pizza and a movie. This is an opportunity they might not otherwise have."

According to Kathy, James makes a difference every day to the people he works with, and he exemplifies the term "extraordinary caregiver."

"It's nice to hear my supervisor say nice things about me and see her appreciation of the work I've done," James says. "It's neat to look back a year later and see all we've accomplished. Kathy had trust in me, and we introduced movie nights and the self-advocacy program. The teamwork of my peers really helped me too."

The Extraordinary Caregiver Recognition Program, sponsored by the School of Social Welfare at Stony Brook University, is designed to recognize and support caregivers who give hands-on care to individuals with developmental disabilities. According to the call for nominations, the Extraordinary Caregiver Program seeks to "retain a quality workforce, provide a path to increased compensation for the best workers, and encourage talented workers to improve their skills and educational opportunities."

## "Get Motivated!"

In July, Unity House directors took the opportunity to escape from their offices and attend together an all-day motivational seminar in Rochester. The purpose of the retreat was to rejuvenate and hear from such renowned speakers and business leaders as former NYC mayor Rudy Giuliani, General Colin Powell, football star Terry Bradshaw, actor and comedian Bill Cosby, and *Forbes* magazine publisher Steve Forbes.

"The seminar offered the directors and administrators an opportunity to be together outside of the office in a small group," said Executive Director Liz Werner. "It was nice to be inspired. There were so many high-level presenters – at least one really resonated

for each of us. It was a relaxing and invigorating day."

The nationally acclaimed "Get Motivated" business seminar presents forward-thinking positivity as the way

to winning in life. Topics included courage, leadership strength, humor in the workplace, rebounding from setbacks, achieving happiness, and personal growth and investment.



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## Volunteering For Good

Volunteerism is one of the agency's strategic planning elements, and a number of Unity House employees and their friends stepped up on behalf of the agency this summer.

For the second year in a row, Unity House worked with Watkins Glen International to provide staff volunteers for their annual Finger Lakes Wine Festival, which draws thousands of wine enthusiasts. Unity House sent sixteen volunteers to be greeters at the main entrance. In exchange, workers received free entrance to the festival, a "staff" t-shirt and wine tasting glass, and free camping.

"We've enjoyed it both years – we camped the entire weekend last year," said Quality Assurance Specialist Tina Morrissey, who recruited her husband Bill and friends too. "The whole experience is really great. Not only are we raising money for Unity House, we get to enjoy and be a part of the festival, which promotes Finger Lakes tourism. Unity House

and the communities it serves sits in the midst of this beautiful region."

This year for the first time, The Glen also requested Unity House volunteers to help staff the gates for NASCAR as well. Fifteen agency employees responded, and helped make race weekend a success for The Glen. They too received complimentary entry into the races after their shifts.

The Glen makes a point of giving back to the non-profit agencies that assist them with their big event weekends. Thanks to their generosity and to the Unity House employees and friends who volunteered their time, The Glen made a donation to the agency of nearly \$1,000. It was a win-win situation for all!



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## Farewell to the Case Mansion

At the end of the summer, staff gathered at the Case Mansion on South Street in Auburn to reminisce and share stories about their time there. Unity House had its beginning at the Case Mansion in the 1970s, and now, nearly 35 years later, is moving on to a new Grant Avenue facility this fall. It is the end of an era, and many wanted to pay their respects. Organized by Independent Housing Senior Counselor Tim Laird, the "good bye party" was fun and poignant.

The intertwined history of 108 South Street and Unity House dates back nearly four decades. The Case Mansion was built in the 1930s as the home of Theodore Case, the man who put sound on film. It passed to the Carmelite monks in 1946, and then was a home for mentally ill war veterans in the 1970s.

At that time, the First Presbyterian Church, who owns the building, and a handful of community members saw a need and took action. The church provided the space and the staff volunteered their time to house and offer services to those with mental health issues. Finally, in 1977, it became Unity House. The agency has offered housing in the building for those with mental illnesses ever since.



*Executive Director Liz Werner, party coordinator Tim Laird, Mental Health Directors Susan Sloan and Sue Morley, and many others gather to say good-bye to the Case Mansion, where Unity House got its start in 1977.*

"I wonder if any of those pioneers could have envisioned what their grassroots movement would evolve into," said Tim. "We are now an agency spread out over six counties, offering ten different programs, employing over 300 staff, and serving about 700 consumers. We've come a long way!"

It is now time to start a new chapter in the life and history of Unity House. As we do so, it is important to honor the

staff and the building that gave birth to Unity House.

Tim agrees: "By bringing together the staff of Unity House to share our memories, we not only celebrated the history of the agency, we honored the essence of 108 South Street. Let us never forget that the heart and soul of 108 South Street has always been about meeting the needs of the people."



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## A New Place to Call Home

The much-anticipated move into Unity House's new supervised apartment building in Auburn has taken place. After years in the planning, residents from the Case Mansion have moved into their new home.

Unity House's newest addition at 56 Grant Avenue was fully renovated by Doug Wood LLC over the course of many months. The large, two-story house now boasts four single apartment units, two doubles, a first floor handicapped-accessible single apartment, and a respite unit, in addition to office space for twelve staff members. The facility also has off-street parking for eleven cars, a beautiful new laundry room with high-end washers and dryers, a wheelchair ramp, two-car garage, and intercom system.

The move came three weeks sooner than anticipated due to some unforeseeable events. The NYS Office of Mental Health promptly certified the new facility, and staff responded quickly and positively to relocate the nine residents.

"The move-in with consumers went incredibly smoothly," said Apartment Manager Mary Jo Norfolk. "With short notice, the staff packed up the consumers' personal items and maintenance moved it all from South Street to Grant Avenue with little trouble."

Mary Jo explained that the former living situation at the old Case Mansion was based on an outdated community residence model. While large group homes worked well in the past, it is no longer what most people are looking for.

Consumers don't want to live in a big house, sharing space with thirteen others.

"Here, we are able to offer the same services in

an independent apartment setting," Mary Jo continued. "This situation is more private and normal. And when our residents' mental health improves and they feel ready, it makes transitioning to a supportive apartment setting easier; it's the next natural step in their recovery."

During a tour of the beautiful new space, a resident shared her excitement: "I like my own space – there's peace and quiet. The staff has been remarkable in helping me move in. They are very nice and helpful. They are there for us 24/7, sometimes working 18 hour days. If it wasn't for them, I'd be in the hospital right now."

Mary Jo says others feel the same way: "There have been lots of positive comments today, the first morning in our new location. People slept well and are happy, and everyone's glad to be settling into their new home."

