Camden Life Center Newsletter

JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2026
EDITION #35

20 MAIN STREET, CAMDEN NY | 315-820-2638

A collaborative endeavor to serve the Camden community providing the services you need, in one location

From the Director's Desk

As we welcome a new year, January invites us to pause and reflect—on where we've been and where we're headed. This season often comes with talk of resolutions and big goals, but here at the Camden Life Center, our January theme gently invites something more sustainable: new beginnings and shared belonging. Rather than focusing on major changes, we encourage small, meaningful steps. (Learn more on page 3.)

This is also a wonderful time to **welcome new members to Recovery Café Camden**. The Café offers a supportive, welcoming space to build genuine connections and friendships—relationships that can help you move toward all you hope for in 2026, one step at a time.

As we move into February, we'll focus on Community in Action while recognizing National Parenting Month (page 4). We invite you to join us for Random Acts of Kindness Week, February 8–14, as we intentionally look for ways—big and small—to care for one another and strengthen our community.

Also new for 2026, we've also **streamlined our ongoing events schedule** to make it easier to plan ahead:
·Youth Event: First Tuesday of the month @ 6:00 PM
·Youth Advisory Council: Third Tuesday of the month @ 6:00 PM
·Let's Eat (Culinary Classes & Workshops): Third Wednesday of the month @ 5:30 PM
·School of Recovery: First Friday of the month @ 2:00 PM
·Chair Yoga: Second and fourth Thursdays @ 12:00 PM

We also want to share an important program update. Due to recent funding cuts, the **Camden Life Center will no longer be able to offer daily walk-in case management services**. This change reflects the reality many community organizations are facing and was not an easy decision. We are incredibly grateful to **Frankie Mangona** for her two years of dedication, compassion, and willingness to travel to Camden to serve our community. Frankie's presence and commitment will be deeply missed. As we work to establish a new system for requesting services, we **ask for your patience and understanding**. Our commitment to supporting our community remains strong, and we are actively working to ensure continued access to care in new and sustainable ways.

Finally, this issue marks the **last Camden Life Center newsletter printed in the Queen Central News**. We are deeply thankful to Doug, Amber, and the entire Queen Central News team for their support in making a printed newsletter possible. Unfortunately, due to limited funding, we are unable to continue printing the newsletter moving forward. You can continue to find our newsletter on our ***updated*** website at our **CamdenLifeCenter.com**, and we invite you to sign up to have it **delivered directly to your inbox**. Thank you for being part of the Camden Life Center—by showing up, supporting, sharing, and walking alongside us as we continue this work together.

With gratitude,
Jessica Perusse

Camden Life Center Daily Partners

Come to the Table Counseling (CttT)

CttT offers behavioral health treatment for teens and adults both in person and TeleHealth. Self-pay and insurance options available. Call (315) 533-2570 or visit www.cometothetablecounseling.com

Helio Health in Camden NY

Helio Health offers a wide range of treatment, counseling, and support programs for mental health and addiction. Visit our website www.helio.health

Camden Life Center Visiting Partners

Willow Network

Willow Network offers free services including pregnancy testing, ultrasounds, parenting classes, pregnancy loss support, as well as baby items. Contact Willow Network, Camden at (315) 245-2364 or check our Willow Network's website: www.willownetwork.org
Office Hours Thursdays 10:00am-4:30pm

National Grid Consumer Advocate

Are you finding yourself overdue on your energy bill? Does it seem that everything that you are doing isn't moving the balance? Curious about cutting costs? National Grid is on site 10am-4pm Tuesday, January 20th & Tuesday, February 10th

Tri-County WIC @ the CLC

WIC supports pregnant women, new moms, and kids under 5 with nutrition education and healthy foods. Many working families qualify and don't realize it. WIC will be on-site the first Thursday of the month from 9:30-3:00pm. WIC will be in Camden on Thursday, January 8th & Thursday, February 5th.

Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency (MVCAA)

MVCAA brings a wide range of services to our community including Section 8, HEAP, and all the other programs that MVCAA offers. Mark your calendar for Thursday, January 8th & Tuesday, January 20th, Tuesday, February 5th & Tuesday, February 10th from 9am-3pm.

Clear Path for Veterans

Meet with a Clear Path team member to learn about peer services and resources available to veterans and military families. This is a great first step for those looking to connect with support—especially in our rural communities. Stay posted for on-site dates coming soon!

Coordinated Entry

Coordinated Entry, part of the Mohawk Valley Housing and Homeless Coalition, offers a streamlined process to access resources in the homeless crisis response system. It prioritizes the highest-need, most vulnerable households and ensures housing and supportive services are used effectively. The coalition serves Madison and Oneida Counties. Office Hours Thursdays 9:00am-2:00pm.

Center for Family Life and Recovery

Center for Family Life and Recovery supports individuals struggling with addiction, mental health & behavioral issues through a variety of services. Call (315) 820-2638 or go to our website www.whenthereshelpthereshope.com

🌟 January Theme: New Beginnings, Shared Belongings 🌟

January offers a fresh start — a chance to reset, refocus, and step into the new year with hope. It's a month to celebrate the courage to begin again and the comfort that comes from belonging to a caring community.

New beginnings don't have to be big.
Sometimes it's a small goal, a new routine, or simply giving yourself permission to grow. Every step forward, no matter the size, builds momentum.

Belonging makes those steps easier.
When we feel supported and connected, starting fresh becomes less overwhelming. At the Camden Life Center, we see this every day — people encouraging one another, sharing space, and reminding each other that no one has to begin again alone.

This month, consider one simple way to embrace the theme:

- Take one step toward something new.
- Reconnect with someone who brings positivity into your life.
- Offer kindness or support to someone who might need a fresh start too.
- Explore a program or resource that could help you grow.

As we begin this year together, may you find hope in new beginnings and comfort in the community that surrounds you.

Leadership Circle Recognition

The Camden Life Center is proud to recognize our Leadership Circle—a dedicated group of individuals and local businesses who have invested $1,000 or more in support of our mission. Their generosity and commitment continue to inspire meaningful impact throughout our community.

Current Leadership Circle Members:
Hill Insurance Agency, Nate Skinner, Teresa Farnsworth, Coffee Culture Revival, Tappet Twirlers, Mark Fox, Arlene Phelps Foundation, In memory of Anthony Michael Rose, Mystic Stamp Company, DNC Landscaping, Helio Health, Geoffery Kent, Christmas & Associates, Burlap & Lace

New Members Added for 2025:
Highstreet Insurance, Heartfelt Helping Hands, Utica Gas and Electric Federal Credit Union, Patrick & Karen Regan, Miles Lewis, Steve Beyers

Because of the generosity of our 2025 Leadership Circle members, the Camden Life Center was able to host welcoming community events, provide walk-in support for individuals and families seeking resources, and create safe, supportive spaces where people could connect, learn, and receive help when they needed it most. From community gatherings to everyday moments of walk-in assistance, Leadership Circle support helps turn compassion into action.

We are deeply grateful for the collaborative support of our Leadership Circle members. Their investment helps ensure the Camden Life Center can continue serving and strengthening our community.

The Camden Life Center invites others to join this inspiring group of changemakers by becoming members of the Leadership Circle. To learn more, contact us at info@camdenlifecenter.com or 315-820-2638.

💙 February Theme: Community in Action & National Parenting Month

February invites us to celebrate two powerful forces that shape our community: the compassion we show through service and the dedication of the parents who nurture the next generation.

Community in Action Month reminds us that meaningful change begins with simple acts of kindness. When we show up for one another — whether by volunteering, offering support, or lending a helping hand — we turn compassion into action. These everyday gestures, big and small, strengthen our community and create lasting impact.

At the same time, National Parenting Month honors the commitment, love, and resilience that parents pour into their families. Parents lead by example, demonstrating what it means to care, to serve, and to build a strong foundation for the future. Their daily efforts reflect the same spirit of community action that keeps us connected and growing.

As we celebrate both themes, here are a few steps we can take to increase our community action this month:

- Volunteer your time — even one hour can make a difference for a neighbor or local program.
- Offer support to parents — a kind word, a meal, or a moment of understanding can go a long way.
- Participate in local events that bring people together and strengthen community ties.
- Share resources by donating gently used items, food, or supplies to families in need.
- Check in on someone who may be struggling and remind them they're not alone.
- Model kindness for children at home and in the community — small actions teach big lessons.

Together, these themes highlight what makes February special: a celebration of people who lift others up, whether at home or throughout the community.

💛 Random Acts of Kindness Week February 8–14

February 8–14 is Random Acts of Kindness Week, a perfect opportunity to slow down, look around, and make someone's day a little brighter. Acts of kindness don't have to be big or expensive—often, the smallest gestures can have the greatest impact.

Here are a few simple ways you can spread kindness throughout the week:

💬 **Share Kind Words**
Send an encouraging text, leave a positive note for a coworker, or thank someone who often goes unnoticed. A few heartfelt words can go a long way.

☕ **Pay It Forward**
Cover the coffee for the person behind you, bring a treat to share, or surprise a neighbor with a homemade meal.

🤝 **Lend a Hand**
Offer to help someone carry groceries, shovel snow, run an errand, or babysit. Practical kindness can mean everything to someone who's overwhelmed.

💙 **Check In**
Reach out to someone you haven't talked to in a while. A simple "thinking of you" can remind someone they're not alone.

🌱 **Give Back**
Volunteer your time, donate items, or support a local organization doing good work in the community.

Kindness is contagious—and when we practice it together, it strengthens our entire community. Let's use Random Acts of Kindness Week to create moments of connection, compassion, and hope that last far beyond February 14.

✨ Small acts. Big impact. Together. ✨

🎉 New Year. New Events. New Vibes! 🎉

We're kicking off 2026 with something exciting for our youth!

✨ Every FIRST week of the month will feature a FREE, fun-filled youth event, games, food, creativity, friends, and prizes included!
🧠 Every THIRD week of the month will be our Youth Advisory Council (YAC) meeting, also FREE, with a focus on leadership, learning, and having a real voice in shaping youth programs.

📅 Here's what's coming up to start the year:

🎪 New Year, New Friends Mixer
🗓️ January 6 | 6:00–7:30 PM
Join us for food, games, prizes, and a great chance to meet new friends!

🧠 YAC Meeting
🗓️ January 20 | 6:00–7:00 PM

🍕Pizza and Picassos
🗓️ February 3 | 6:00–7:30 PM

🧠 YAC Meeting
🗓️ February 17 | 6:00–7:00 PM

Whether you're here for the fun, the growth, or both, there's something for everyone. All events are FREE and open to any CCSD student grades 7th-12th! Stay tuned for more monthly details.

NEW Let's Eat Events

🥗 **Let's Eat! Winter Nourishment Cooking Class**

📅 Wednesday, January 21
⏰ 5:30–7:00 PM
📍 The Camden Life Center

Winter is the season to slow down, warm up, and return to the basics that truly nourish us. In this hands-on Winter Nourishment Cooking Class, we'll focus on building comforting, budget-friendly meals using simple pantry staples—perfect for cold nights and busy weeks. Come cook, learn, and enjoy the warmth of good food and great company.

❤️ **Let's Eat! Heart Healthy Meal: The Lonely-Hearts Club**

📅 Tuesday, February 18
⏰ 5:30–7:00 PM
📍 The Camden Life Center

February can be a tender month—especially when it comes to matters of the heart. This special Heart Healthy Cooking Class invites you to nourish both your physical heart and your need for connection through shared food, meaningful conversation, and community. Because good food tastes even better when it's shared.

✨ New School of Recovery Group: Build Confidence From the Inside Out ✨

The Camden Life Center is excited to welcome a new recovery support group focused on self-esteem, confidence, and healthy connections. This group is designed for adults who are on a journey of personal growth, emotional wellness, and recovery—and who are ready to reconnect with their inner strength.

Through guided conversations, reflective activities, and peer support, participants will explore topics like self-worth, boundaries, communication, coping skills, and learning to believe in themselves again. The group offers a safe, respectful, and confidential space where individuals can share openly, grow at their own pace, and feel supported every step of the way.

No matter where you are in your recovery journey, you are welcome here. If you're looking to strengthen positive self-talk, build confidence, and connect with others who truly understand, this group is for you.

🗓️ Friday, January 9
⏰ 2:00–3:30 PM
📍 The Camden Life Center
We hope you'll join us as we grow, learn, and build confidence—together.

Yoga Programs

At the CLC we offer two unique yoga opportunities designed to support your body, mind, and spirit—no experience needed!

Our **Chair Yoga** class offers gentle movement using a chair for support, making it accessible for all abilities. It's a great way to improve strength, flexibility, and balance while boosting overall well-being.
Join us on ****Thursday, January 8th & 22nd and Thursday, February 12th and 26th** at 12 PM** in the Conference Room. No sign-up required—just wear comfy clothes and stop in!

We're also excited to continue our relaxing **Mindful Movement** classes, led by certified instructor Colleen, who brings over 20 years of experience and specialized training in mindfulness and trauma-sensitive practices. This calming, supportive class helps reduce stress, foster resilience, and promote emotional healing.
Stay tuned for upcoming dates on our facebook page!

Come as you are and discover how yoga can help you heal, grow, and thrive.

Our Yoga programs are brought to you by a generous grant from the COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Crafts and Conversations

🎨 New at the Camden Life Center — Art & Conversations Group! 🖌️🗨️

Looking for a creative outlet and good conversation? Our Art & Conversations Group is a welcoming space where self-expression meets community connection. 💬✨

🗨️ Step 1: Each session starts with a guided group discussion on a theme or topic.
🎨 Step 2: We dive into a hands-on art activity — paint, draw, or experiment! No experience needed & all materials provided.

Why join?
💡 Explore your creativity
❤️‍🩹 Reduce stress & process emotions
🤝 Build connections with others
📆 When: Wednesdays, 12:00–3:00 PM
📍 Where: Camden Life Center

Come ready to chat, create, and leave feeling inspired! 🌟

You're Invited to Recovery Café Camden. A Place for Connection, Healing, and Hope

Recovery Café Camden is a welcoming community for anyone seeking support, connection, and purpose—whether you're navigating recovery, grief, mental health challenges, or simply want to be part of something meaningful.

Rooted in trauma-informed care and built on love, belonging, and compassionate accountability, the Café is a safe space to be your true self, grow through life's challenges, and support others doing the same.

What to Expect:
Each gathering begins with a shared meal and conversation, followed by small, supportive Recovery Circles where we check in, share highs and lows, and encourage one another.

- Mondays | 10 AM – 12 PM
- Thursdays | 5 PM – 7 PM

Come as our guest—no pressure, just a warm meal, genuine conversation, and a caring community ready to welcome you. Follow us on Facebook & Instagram for updates. We'd love to see you soon!

Food ene

Food ene is a monthly food buying co-op for anyone who wants to stretch their grocery dollars.
Monthly Package- $20.50
Monthly specials can be purchased in addition to the box.
Location: 20 Main Street, Camden

January Food ene Information:
Order Dates - Friday, December 19th (1:30-3pm), Monday, January 5th & 12th(9am-11am)
Order Online by - Monday, January 19th at midnight
Pick up - Friday, January 30th 1:30-3pm

February Food ene Information:
Order Dates - Friday, January 30th (1:30-3pm), Monday, February 2nd & 9th (9am-11am)
Order Online by: Monday, February 16th at midnight
Pick up - Friday, February 27th 1:30-3pm

In person sign ups accept Cash payments. Online orders accept EBT or credit/debit card - Want to order online? Visit: https://foodsense.foodbankcny.org/

Need more info?
Contact our office at (315) 820-2638.

Mobile Food Pantry

The Mobile Food Pantry of CNY Food Bank comes to Camden on Friday**, January 29th at 3pm. The February date will be posted on our Facebook page when released.**

There are no income requirements for families to receive food—available while supplies last.

Please note: To allow for other scheduled events and pantry set up, DO NOT LINE UP on the road or in the parking lot before 3pm. You will be asked to move.

Location: 86 Mexico Street, Camden

Let's Eat Update

As we head into 2026, Harvest & Hunt is gearing up for a year of practical, hands-on learning designed to strengthen our community's skills in the kitchen, garden, and outdoors. Our focus isn't on big resolutions or dramatic change—it's on steady progress. Small skills learned consistently can transform how we cook, grow, and source our food, and this year's workshops are built to support exactly that.

Each month, we'll offer clear, accessible opportunities to build confidence: winter planning and pantry staples, spring planting and simple fresh-cooking workshops, summer grilling, foraging, and introductory hunting and fishing education, and fall sessions focused on preserving, storing, and preparing for the colder months. Every workshop is designed to meet people where they are—whether they're planting their first seed or learning to prepare food they harvested themselves.

2026 will be a year of learning side-by-side, trying new things, and discovering what's possible when our community has the tools and encouragement to grow. We're excited to share these skills, strengthen food security, and keep building something meaningful—one practical step at a time.

let's eat

Nutrition Tip of the Month

As the new year begins, it's easy to feel pressure to overhaul everything at once—but real, lasting change usually comes from being gentle with ourselves. Instead of chasing perfection, we can focus on small, manageable shifts that give us room to grow. When we approach the year with patience and compassion, we create the conditions for genuine progress. One simple way to support that mindset is through H.O.P.E., a practical framework that encourages us to Honor our hunger, Offer ourselves grace, Pick nourishing foods when possible, and Enjoy what we eat. These small actions help build confidence, restore balance, and move us toward healthier habits one thoughtful step at a time.

NUTRITION

CLC Store

We're excited to announce that our Public Store is officially back open and ready for you!

Stop by online to grab your favorite Camden Life Center and Recovery Café gear and wear it with pride.

Shop now:
store.masteryourimage.com/CLCPUB/shop/home

Quote of the Month

"You can always, always give something, even if it is only kindness!"
-Anne Frank

"Try to be a rainbow in someone else's cloud."
-Maya Angelou

Donations Needed

The need for grocery basics is rising, and your generosity helps us keep our shelves stocked for neighbors in need.
We're currently collecting:

- Breakfast: cereal, shelf-stable milk, pancake mix, syrup, oatmeal
- Lunch: peanut butter, jelly, tuna, canned chicken, mayonnaise
- Dinner: Hormel Compleats, Chef Boyardee, boxed mac & cheese, canned fruits/vegetables
- Snacks: granola bars, breakfast bars, Pop-Tarts
- Hygiene essentials: deodorant, body wash, shampoo

Donations can be dropped off during business hours or placed anytime in our outdoor pantry.

Please check expiration dates, ensure packaging is in good condition, and donate only food or hygiene items to keep our pantry safe and welcoming for all.

Volunteer Opportunities at the Camden LIfe Center!

Looking for a meaningful way to give back? Whether you enjoy greeting visitors, lending a hand at special events, working directly with community projects, or sharing your skills for building improvements, there's a place for you at the Camden Life Center!

Current Opportunities:

- Front Desk Shifts: 9–12 PM or 12–3 PM
- Special Events: Spooktacular, Holiday Stroll, and more
- Youth Mentorship: Help guide and inspire local youth
- Riverwalk Display: Assist with updates and upkeep
- Community Outreach: Post flyers around town each month
- Food Programs: Assist with Food ene or the Mobile Food Pantry

Your time and talents can make a lasting difference for our neighbors. Stop by, call us, or email info@camdenlifecenter.com to learn how you can get involved!

Office Information:

All services at the Camden Life Center operate during traditional business hours - Monday-Thursday 8:30am-4pm, Friday 8:30am-12pm. For assistance outside this time, contact the following services:
Mental Health Emergency:

- MCAT - (315) 732-6228
- Crisis Life - 988 (press 1 for the Veterans Crisis Line)

Emergency Substance Treatment Services:

- Outreach and Engagement team - (315) 401-4288

Never Use Alone:

- 800-484-3731 or https://neverusealone.com

Social Services After-Hours Emergency

- Oneida County - (315) 736-0141

‼Camden Life Center Survey ‼

If you've used any of our services, please take a few minutes to complete our anonymous Camden Life Center survey. Your feedback helps us learn, grow, and continue improving our programs to better serve our community.