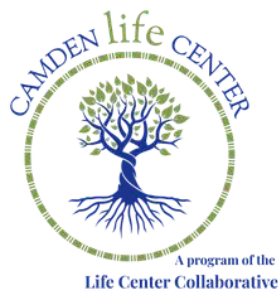




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## A collaborative endeavor to serve the Camden community providing the services you need, in one location

From the Director's Desk - Our 40th Edition!

Forty editions! Can you believe it? As we share our final newsletter of 2026, I can't help but look back at how far we've come. We've already been busy dreaming, planning, and building some really exciting things for 2027. If you know me personally, you know I'm absolutely terrible at giving gifts. I'm the one who gives you your present early or gets so excited that I tell you all about it before you even open it. 😊 Well, that's exactly how I'm feeling about 2027! There are some wonderful things ahead, and it's taking everything in me not to share them all right now. Stay tuned!

In the meantime, there's plenty happening as we head into the holiday season. Fall is always a busy time at the Life Center as neighbors navigate Medicare decisions, heating assistance, and holiday programs. HEAP opens in November, and we're grateful for our ongoing partnership with Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency (MVCAA) to help connect families with resources to keep their homes warm this winter. You'll find HEAP information on page 2, along with details about the Rotary Christmas Basket and Toys for Tots sign-ups on page 5. These programs are wonderful examples of what happens when our community comes together to take care of one another.

Speaking of coming together, mark your calendars for Friday, December 11, for one of our favorite events of the season—the Holiday Stroll! There's something special about seeing our community gather during the holiday season, and we can't wait to celebrate with you. This year, we're also introducing a Donor Reception during the event, creating an opportunity to personally thank some of the people who make our work possible. Check out page 2 for all the details!

And now, I have one more exciting thing I can tell you about! Have you ever seen something fun happening in our community on Facebook, thought, "Oh, we should definitely go to that!" and then spent the next two weeks scrolling endlessly trying to find the post again—only to discover the event already happened? Please tell me I'm not the only one! Well, that frustration helped inspire something new: the Blue Devil Community Calendar!

The Camden Life Center (with the help of our interns) has helped create a place where you can find the wonderful things happening throughout our community, all in one spot. From school events and fundraisers to family activities, community meals, and local celebrations, we want to make it easier for everyone to find opportunities to get out, get involved, and connect. But here's the important part: we need YOU to help make it work! Know about a great event? Hosting something that brings people together? Send us the information so we can add it to the calendar.

Imagine how much stronger our community connections could be if more people knew about—and showed up for—all the great things happening around us. More people through the doors of local events, more support for community organizations, and more opportunities to make memories together. Winter blues and isolation, be gone! We've got a community full of reasons to get out and connect!

As we wrap up our 40th newsletter and another remarkable year, I want to say thank you. To our volunteers, donors, community partners, businesses, funders, and every neighbor who has walked through our doors, shared an idea, asked for help, or offered a helping hand—you are the reason the Life Center continues to grow. Now, if I can just keep those 2027 surprises to myself a little longer...

Wishing you and yours a holiday season filled with connection, laughter, and moments worth slowing down for.  
Jessica Perusse, Executive Director

### **Upcoming Office Closures:**

Wednesday, November 11th - Veteran's Day  
Thursday, November 26th - Thanksgiving Day  
Friday, December 25th - Christmas Day  
Friday, January 1st, 2027 - News Year's Day

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# Growing Stronger Together

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## HEAP Outreach & Application Assistance

Need help with heating costs this winter? Our partners at Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency (MVCAA) will be at the Camden Life Center to assist individuals and families with Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) applications.

Upcoming HEAP Outreach Dates:

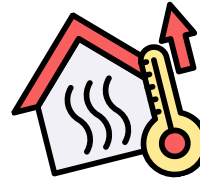
- Tuesday, November 17th | 9 AM–6 PM
- Tuesday, December 15th | 9 AM–6 PM



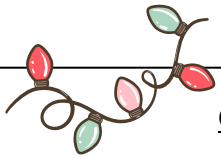
Appointments are strongly encouraged! Call the Camden Life Center at (315) 820-2638 and speak with a staff member who can schedule your appointment.

What to Bring to Your Appointment:

- Proof of residence
- Social Security numbers for all household members
- Proof of citizenship
- Proof of household income
- Current utility or fuel bill (vendor relationship)
- Proof of identity and age (driver's license or birth certificate)
- Proof of disability, if applicable (SSA award letter or written statement of benefit eligibility)



Don't wait until the cold weather arrives! Contact us to schedule your appointment and get assistance with your HEAP application this winter.



## Camden Holiday Stroll – A Magical Night at the Life Center!

Get ready for an evening filled with holiday magic! Join us on Friday, December 11th, from 5–8 PM as the Camden Life Center transforms into a festive Christmas wonderland for the whole family!

Step inside and experience the holiday spirit throughout our building! Our partner agencies will be on-site spreading holiday cheer, and we'll have plenty of arts, crafts, and fun activities for the kiddos to enjoy.

We're excited to once again participate in Main Street Business Bingo, so be sure to stop by and include us in your stroll through Camden! Plus, our Door Decorating Contest is BACK! Explore our creatively decorated doors and see how our team brings a little extra Christmas magic to the Life Center!

✨ **NEW THIS YEAR – Donor Reception!** Our conference room will transform into a festive reception space dedicated to celebrating and thanking our generous donors. Want to be part of this special holiday experience? Make a donation today to be added to our donor reception guest list!

And the holiday fun doesn't stop there! We're still planning even more exciting activities and surprises for the evening. Be sure to follow our social media pages for updates as we get closer to the big night!

Bring your family, invite your friends, and make the Camden Life Center one of your must-visit stops during the Holiday Stroll. We can't wait to celebrate the season with you! 🎅📺



# Merry Christmas



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# Camden Life Center Partners

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## Daily On-site Partners

### **Come to the Table Counseling (CttT)**

Behavioral health counseling for teens and adults, available in-person and through TeleHealth. Self-pay and insurance options available. Call (315) 533-2570 or visit their website: [www.cometothetablecounseling.com](http://www.cometothetablecounseling.com). On site daily at the CLC.

### **Helio Health in Camden NY**

Mental health and substance use treatment, counseling, and recovery support services available right here in Camden. Visit their website for more information [www.helio.health](http://www.helio.health). On Site Daily at the CLC.

## 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](http://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, November 17th & Tuesday, December 15th.

### **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 in Camden on Thursday, November 5th & Thursday, December 3rd from 9:30am-3:30pm.

### **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, November 5th & Tuesday, November 17th, Thursday, December 3rd & Tuesday, December 15th from 9am-3pm.

### **Fidelis Care**

A Fidelis Care Support Navigator is available to help with health insurance enrollment, paperwork updates, and coverage renewals—helping community members stay connected to affordable health care. Mark your calendar for Monday, November 2nd & Thursday, November 19th, Monday December 7th & Thursday, December 17th from 9am-11:30m.

### **Excellus BlueCross BlueShield**

An Excellus Enrollment Specialist is available to help with health insurance enrollment, paperwork updates, and coverage renewals, helping individuals stay connected to affordable health care. Tuesday, November 3rd & Tuesday, December 1st from 10am-1pm.

### **NYS Department of Veterans' Services**

Veterans Services advisors assists Veterans access a wide variety of free federal, state, and local benefits. Stay tuned on our social media pages for the next outreach dates!

### **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.

### **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. Visit their website [www.whenthereshelpthereshope.com](http://www.whenthereshelpthereshope.com)

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# Monthly Focus

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## **November: Hope Starts Here**

**Building a stronger community through compassion, connection, and action.**

November is a time to reflect on the power of kindness, empathy, and the difference we can make when we come together. This month, our theme, "Hope Starts Here," encourages us to recognize the challenges others may be facing and explore how small acts of compassion can create meaningful change.

Poverty and homelessness affect individuals and families in many ways. From struggling to afford groceries and household expenses to finding stable housing, these challenges are not always visible. This reminds us of the importance of approaching others with understanding rather than judgment.

Creating change begins with awareness, but it grows through action. Whether it's volunteering, donating essential items, supporting local programs, or simply taking the time to listen, every act of kindness helps strengthen our community. At the Camden Life Center, we believe everyone deserves to feel seen, supported, and valued. Through community partnerships, essential resources, and opportunities for connection, we strive to create a welcoming space where individuals and families can find support.

As we move through November, we encourage you to find small ways to make a difference. Reach out to a neighbor, lend a helping hand, or support a local initiative.

Hope doesn't always begin with something big. Sometimes, it starts with one act of kindness, one meaningful connection, or one person choosing to care.

**Together, we can build a stronger, more compassionate community. Because hope starts here—with each of us.**

## **December: Stress-Free Family Fun**



**Peaceful Moments, Joyful Memories**

The holiday season is often filled with excitement, traditions, and time spent with loved ones. But between busy schedules, financial pressures, and the expectations that come with the holidays, it can also become a stressful time. This December, we're focusing on slowing down, finding balance, and remembering what truly matters.

The most meaningful holiday memories don't have to come from perfect plans, expensive gifts, or elaborate celebrations. Sometimes, the greatest joy comes from simple moments—sharing a meal, enjoying a favorite tradition, spending time together, or offering a little kindness to someone who needs it.

The holidays can also bring feelings of grief, loneliness, or uncertainty. It's important to remember that everyone's experience of this season looks different. By approaching ourselves and others with patience, compassion, and understanding, we can help create a more welcoming and supportive community.

At the Camden Life Center, we believe connection and community are at the heart of the holiday season. Whether it's finding support, sharing resources, or simply having a place where you feel welcomed, no one should have to navigate life's challenges alone.

As we close out the year, we encourage you to give yourself permission to slow down, embrace the little moments, and focus on the people and experiences that bring you joy.

**Peace begins when we choose presence over perfection.** This holiday season, let's create memories filled with kindness, connection, and moments that truly matter.

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# Program Updates

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## Recovery Cafe Camden

A Place for Connection, Healing, and Hope 🍂

As the leaves begin to change and the temperatures start to fall, the new season reminds us that change is a natural part of life—and we don't have to navigate it alone.

Recovery Café Camden is a welcoming community for anyone seeking support, connection, and belonging. Whether you're navigating recovery, grief, mental health challenges, life changes, or simply looking for a supportive community, there is a place for you here.

Built on love, belonging, and compassionate accountability, the Café provides a safe space to connect, grow through life's challenges, and support others along the way.

What to Expect:

Each gathering begins with a warm, shared meal and conversation, followed by supportive Recovery Circles where we check in, share our highs and lows, and encourage one another.

🍂 Mondays | 10:00 AM–12:00 PM  
🍂 Thursdays | 5:00–7:00 PM



As the weather gets cooler, come inside and find some warmth, connection, and community with us. Come as our guest—there's always a place for you at the table.

## Rotary Christmas Baskets & Toys for Tots

### Sign-Ups 🎄🎁

The holiday season is approaching! The Camden Life Center will be hosting sign-ups for Rotary Christmas Baskets and Toys for Tots to help support local individuals and families during the holidays.

📅 Sign-Up Dates:  
Thursday, November 5th  
Thursday, December 3rd  
🕒 9 AM–4 PM  
📍 Camden Life Center



What to Bring: Proof of residency within the Camden Central School District.

Stop by during the listed dates to sign up and help make the holiday season a little brighter for your family!

## 🧘 Chair Yoga 🧘

Chair Yoga at the Camden Life Center! Join us for gentle movement, mindfulness, and connection in a comfortable and supportive environment. Chair Yoga is accessible for all abilities, and no prior experience is needed.

📅 Upcoming Dates:  
November: 12th & 19th  
December: 17th  
🕒 11:15 AM – 12:15 PM  
📍 Camden Life Center



No sign-up required—just wear comfortable clothes and stop in! Come as you are and enjoy an opportunity to move, relax, and support your overall well-being.

## Introducing the Blue Devil Community Calendar! 📅❤️

Looking for an easy way to stay connected and see what's happening in Camden?

We're excited to announce the launch of our Blue Devil Community Calendar, a new resource designed to bring local events and activities together in one convenient place!

From family-friendly activities, fundraisers, arts and crafts, and holiday celebrations to sports, faith-based events, and educational opportunities, our calendar helps keep our community informed and connected.

Have an event you'd like to share? We want to hear about it! Community members, organizations, and local businesses are encouraged to submit their upcoming events to be featured on the calendar.

Check out the QR codes down below to explore upcoming events or submit your own. Let's work together to keep Camden connected and make sure no one misses out on the fun!

Scan here to view  
the calendar!



Scan here to submit  
an event to the  
calendar!



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# Let's Eat Program

NOVEMBER &  
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UPDATE

## Food \$en\$e

Looking for a way to stretch your grocery budget? Food \$en\$e is a monthly food-buying co-op available to everyone, regardless of income! This program helps individuals and families save money on groceries while enjoying a variety of food items each month.

For just \$20.50, participants can purchase a monthly food package. Additional monthly specials are also available for purchase, allowing you to add extra items to your order.

**Ordering & Pickup Location:** 20 Main Street, Camden

### November Food \$en\$e Information:

Order Dates - Friday, October 30th (1:30-3pm), Monday, November 2nd & Monday November 9th (10am-12pm)

Order Online by - Monday, November 9th at midnight

Pick up - Friday, November 20th 1:30-3pm

### December Food \$en\$e Information:

Order Dates - Friday, November 20th (1:30-3pm), Monday, November 30th & December 7th (10am-12pm)

Order Online by: Monday, December 7th at midnight

Pick up - Friday, December 18th 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 **Thursday, November 19th at 3pm. The October 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 2pm. You will be asked to move.

Location: 86 Mexico Street, Camden



## Outdoor Fridge & Sharing Shelf

### Winter Update ❄️

Our Outdoor Fridge has been put away for the winter season, but our Outdoor Sharing Shelf remains available for community members to give and take items as needed!

As temperatures begin to drop, we ask everyone to be mindful of the items being placed on the Sharing Shelf. Please do not leave refrigerated or perishable food items outside. Instead, bring these items inside the Camden Life Center, where our staff can help distribute them to families in need.

We also ask that you avoid leaving glass jars, canned goods, or other containers that could freeze, crack, or break in the colder temperatures.

Thank you for helping us keep our Sharing Shelf safe, accessible, and stocked with appropriate items throughout the winter months. Your generosity continues to make a difference in our community!

## Let's Eat Cooking Classes Are Back! 🍴

We're excited to bring Let's Eat Cooking Classes back to the Camden Life Center! We recently kicked things off with a Chili Cooking Class on a Budget, exploring how to make delicious, affordable meals without breaking the bank!

We're exploring new ideas and opportunities to continue offering fun, hands-on cooking experiences for our community.

Stay tuned and follow our Facebook page for upcoming classes, new recipes, and exciting updates as we continue bringing Let's Eat back to life!



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# Youth Programs

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## **Borrow & Play Sports Shed FAQ**

We've received some great questions about the new Borrow & Play Sports Shed! Here are a few things to know before you borrow:

### ? **What is Borrow & Play, and how does it work?**

Think of it like a library—but instead of books, you check out sports equipment, outdoor games, and recreational items! Stop into the Camden Life Center to create an account, complete a liability waiver, and receive your Borrow & Play ID card. Items are free to borrow for up to 7 days and can be returned so you can check out something new!

### ? **What can I borrow?**

We have equipment for every season, including baseball and soccer equipment, pickleball sets, yard games, sleds, skis, snowshoes, and much more!

### ? **Can I donate or exchange used equipment?**

Borrow & Play is not a donation program or equipment swap. Equipment in the shed was purchased specifically for lending through generous funding from The Edwin J. Wadas Foundation, Inc. We do not have the space or staffing to receive, sort, store, and redistribute donated equipment, so please do not drop off donations at the Camden Life Center.

### ? **What about sports clothing, shoes, or cleats?**

Borrow & Play focuses on equipment, so we do not accept or lend clothing, uniforms, shoes, or cleats. Fortunately, other resources in our community may be able to help! Consider reaching out directly to Leslie's Laundry, Cluster 13, local AYSO, Little League and Pop Warner programs, or Modified, JV, and Varsity sports teams to see what they are currently accepting or have available.

Still have questions? Send us a message or stop into the Camden Life Center—we're happy to help!

A special thank-you to **The Edwin J. Wadas Foundation, Inc.** for making the Borrow & Play Sports Shed possible!

## **A message from our Youth Engagement Coordinator**

At the Camden Life Center, we believe that connection, creativity, and fun are important for youth and families in our community! Whether it's spending time with friends at Youth Open Door or borrowing equipment from our Borrow & Play Sports Shed, we want to make it easy for everyone to get involved, try something new, and enjoy time together. Our goal is to create welcoming opportunities where youth can build friendships, explore their interests, and feel a sense of belonging. We're excited to continue growing these programs and finding new ways to bring our community together!

— Alex VanPelt, Youth Engagement Coordinator

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# School of Recovery Programs

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## **Tech Drop-In with Barb**

Need help with your computer, smartphone, tablet, email, or other technology questions? Stop by Tech Drop-In with Barb every Wednesday from 9:00 AM–12:00 PM at the Camden Life Center!

Barb, one of our wonderful volunteers and a former IT professional, brings years of experience and knowledge to help you navigate technology with confidence. Whether you're troubleshooting a device, learning a new skill, or just have a tech question, Barb is happy to help to the best of her ability.

No appointment necessary—just drop in with your questions!

## **Crafts and Conversations**

Our Craft & Conversations Group is a welcoming space where self-expression meets community connection. 💬✨

Each session begins with a guided discussion, followed by a hands-on art activity—no experience needed and all materials are provided! This group is designed to help you explore creativity, reduce stress, process emotions, and build meaningful connections with others in a supportive environment.

 **When: Wednesdays, 12:00–3:00 PM**

 **Where: Camden Life Center**

✨ Upcoming Special Session:

### **Unwrapping Your Worth**

 **Wednesday, December 9th | 12:00–3:00 PM**

This season, unwrap the gift of recognizing your own worth! Join us for a meaningful conversation about self-love, personal growth, and discovering the strengths that make you who you are.

Come ready to create, connect, and leave feeling inspired! ☀️



## **School of Recovery Community Event Series**

Our School of Recovery is welcoming the new season with opportunities to connect, reflect, grow, and have a little fun! All events provide a welcoming and supportive environment where adults can build connections and explore new tools for their personal journey.

### **Letting Go & Moving Forward**

 **3rd Tuesday of the Month: November 17th & December 15th | 2:00–3:00 PM**

Learn how our past experiences can shape our thoughts, habits, and behaviors. Explore what may be holding you back and discover healthy ways to move forward.

### **Narcan Training**

 **Monday, November 2nd | 12:30 PM**

Join us to learn how to use Narcan and help save a life.

### **Fall Bingo Night**

 **Saturday, November 14th | 4:30–6 PM**

Crisp autumn air, cozy fall vibes and a little bingo fun! Join us for an evening full of laughs and good company!

### **Self Care Night**

 **Wednesday, November 18th | 4:30–6 PM**

Grab some cozy vibes and join us for a relaxing evening of self-care, laughter, and connection! Life can get busy, and sometimes we forget to take some time for us. Come enjoy a night where the focus is on YOU!

All events are free and open to adults ages 18 and older. Come as you are and discover opportunities for connection, growth, and support through the School of Recovery.

## **What do you want to see?**

We want to hear from YOU! As we continue to grow our School of Recovery program, we're looking for new ideas, activities, and learning opportunities that interest our community.

Whether it's life skills workshops, creative activities, wellness classes, or something completely different, your ideas matter! Our goal is to offer meaningful opportunities that encourage personal growth, connection, and support.

Have an idea for a class or event? Let us know! Share your suggestions with our staff at the Camden Life Center and help us shape the future of School of Recovery.

Your voice matters, and we can't wait to hear your ideas!

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# Give Backs

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## **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](https://store.masteryourimage.com/CLCPUB/shop/home)



## **Interested in Donating?**

Your gift to the Camden Life Center supports vital programs and services that strengthen individuals and families in our community.

Give today:  
<https://givebutter.com/camdenlifecenter>



## **Donations Needed**

Your generosity helps us keep our pantry stocked with essentials for individuals and families in need!

We're currently accepting:

- Breakfast: Cereal, oatmeal, pancake mix, syrup, shelf-stable milk
- Lunch & Easy Meals: Peanut butter, jelly, tuna, canned chicken, soups, ready-to-eat meals
- Dinner: Pasta, pasta sauce, mac & cheese, rice, canned fruits and vegetables
- Snacks: Granola bars, crackers, breakfast bars, Pop-Tarts
- Hygiene & Household: Shampoo, body wash, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, toilet paper

Donations can be dropped off during business hours or placed in our Outdoor Sharing Shelf. Please bring refrigerated items and anything that may freeze or break inside.

All donations must be unopened, unexpired, and in good condition. Thank you for supporting our community!



## **Volunteer Opportunities at the Camden Life Center!**

Make a difference right here in your community! Whether you enjoy helping others, supporting events, or sharing your skills, there's a place for you at the Camden Life Center!

Current Opportunities:

- Front Desk: 9 AM–12 PM, 12–3 PM, or 3–6 PM
- Special Events: Holiday Stroll and community activities
- Youth Programs: Support Open Door and youth activities
- Community Projects: Riverwalk displays and building improvements
- Community Outreach: Distribute monthly flyers
- Food Programs: Food \$en\$e, Mobile Food Pantry, and food donations

We need volunteers like YOU! Every hour makes a difference, and your community needs your support.

Ready to get involved? Stop by, call (315) 820-2638, or email [info@camdenlifecenter.com](mailto:info@camdenlifecenter.com) to join our team!



## **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:

- S.T.A.R (Mobile Crisis Program) -315-624-7575
- 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.



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