

Woman of the Year 2024
CARAMIA BACCHIOCHI
Founder of Hope On A Mission, Inc



“To restore dignity with love and grace to homeless, addicted women and men, who are surviving on the streets of Poughkeepsie New York” is the mission statement of Hope on a Mission. This non-profit organization was initiated in 2015 by AAUW’s 2024 Woman of the Year, CaraMia Bacchiochi.

Every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evening, as well as Saturday mornings, volunteers bring hot food, beverages, personal hygiene items and seasonally appropriate clothing to Poughkeepsie’s city streets. Last year, Hope on a Mission served nearly 8,000 meals and provided over 1,000 “blessing bags” with socks, underwear, shoes, and winter clothes.

In addition to providing food and clothing, volunteers become advocates who listen, assist, and make referrals to community organizations, upon request. They help those struggling with addiction to get treatment and assure them that Hope on a Mission will be there when they finish treatment. They spend hours in emergency rooms waiting with clients for rehabilitation services, hold cookouts for holidays, and advocate for appropriate treatment. All this is made possible with support from individuals, community and civic organizations, as well as student organizations.

CaraMia Bacchiochi, AAUW’s 2024 Woman of the Year, founded Hope on a Mission at a time when she was at her lowest point in life. She dealt with alcoholism, step-families and multiple moves in her childhood and started using marijuana and alcohol in middle school. By high school, she was using cocaine and in subsequent jobs was surrounded by substance abuse, alcoholism and addiction. She made several attempts to continue her education and beat her addictions but had several relapses. After years of drug addiction, rehabilitation, jail, homelessness, hopelessness, and alcohol addiction, in 2013 Cara Mia found herself in jail again. Her children had been taken from her by CPS, and she was being evicted for non-payment of rent. It was then that CaraMia realized it takes a community of support and encouragement to help those with addiction problems. The idea for Hope on a Mission started in a jail cell and grew into the amazing non-profit ministry it is today. Cara Mia has become the woman she needed when she was homeless and addicted, and she has ambitious plans for the future of the organization should she obtain the funds to grow.