

Building Community Partnerships....



2008 OCO Annual Report

Working with community partners is a key to OCO's success. OCO's Supervised Visitation Program opened its second location on April 1st 2008, at Rural and Migrant Ministry of Oswego County, in Richland. This new site has worked with 17 families. The Richland location has provided individuals who reside in the rural northeast corner of the county easier access to Visitation Services. The Visitation Center provides a safe, comfortable visiting environment for children and non-custodial parents.



Partnerships made the first Playing for Poverty Benefit in September a success. The fundraiser was held to benefit local food pantries. OCO's ACT for Youth and Street Outreach Services collaborated with Fulton businesses and community members. Space was donated by the city of Fulton and music was provided by: Marc Warner,

The Cortini Brothers, The Swivel Rockers, Rubber Ducky Revenge and the Magical Mystery Tour. Local businesses donated food and supplies and many individuals volunteered time. Funds raised and food donated was given to Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, and OCO Youth Emergency Services. This project was supported by the *Fulton Collaboration*

for Community Change consisting of city government, school, and non-profit and county agencies.

Our Mission

"OCO Inc. builds partnerships that improve the quality of life and create successful communities."

From the Executive Director and Board President...



Over the past year, OCO saw an increase in new faces coming to our agency, resulting in increased service requests. We also saw families we work with on a regular basis struggling with the loss of jobs, homes, health care, food and rising utility costs. The economic crisis that became critical in 2008 significantly impacted this county and the nation. OCO was there to serve almost 25,000 individuals who needed health care, housing, child care, food, safety and transportation. What is even more impressive than this number is the impact the agency had on helping people and changing lives.



OCO impacts lives by opening doors and providing access to the opportunities people need to improve their lives, and to help themselves and each other. We also turn hope into reality by collaborating with others to improve life for everyone. We give voice to the poor, disenfranchised and those who feel powerless. The articles contained in this report provide just a few examples of the impact OCO had during the past year.

As we move forward into 2009, OCO pledges to embrace the promise of community action by "changing lives, embodying the spirit of hope, improving communities and making America a better place to live. We care about the entire community and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other." *

Diane Cooper-Currier
OCO Executive Director

Terry Bennett
OCO Board President

* excerpt from Community Action Partnership's *National Community Action Promise*

OCO Services Make a Difference.....

In 2008, Oswego County Opportunities served **24,584** people through a wide range of services. OCO also partnered with over 30 other agencies and institutions in Oswego County. OCO's vision is to collaborate with a diverse group of community stakeholders to assure people thrive in a healthy, safe community where opportunities abound to improve and enhance lives. Below is a snapshot of 2008 service activities that helped OCO achieve this vision.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

OCO Helps Connect People to Services:

In 2008, OCO programs provided 1,750 outreach and educational sessions and assisted 4,293 people to connect to additional services.

OCO Transportation excels at connecting people to services. Transit services provided transportation to 3,139 people. A new Travel Training video and pocket guide was developed to teach people how to use public transportation.

OCO was awarded four new buses that will have a new image to assist in the marketing and education of OCO's Oswego County Public Transit (OPT services).

OCO Provides Crisis & Homeless Services:

In 2008, OCO saw an increase in people requesting crisis and housing assistance. The agency answered 3,022 crisis calls. 609 people received emergency services to meet basic needs while 324 people were assisted in transitioning to safe and affordable housing. The SAF Shelter served more families during the last three months of 2008 than they did throughout all of 2007.

As a result of the increased use of crisis services, OCO Youth Services received a \$100,000 grant to expand Host Home Shelter services to runaway and homeless youth and the Homeless Intervention Program received increased funding from the NYS Homeless Assistance Program.

Learning & Development Opportunities:

In 2008, 1500 youth participated in OCO After School Activities. As a result, 427 youth improved their school grades. The After School program also expanded programming as a result of a new 5-year grant from the NYS Education Dept..

In 2008, 388 children participated in OCO early childhood education and 274 pre-school children were ready to advance to the next educational level. UPK collaborations were expanded in Phoenix and Fulton Schools so more children could be served by OCO.

Discovery Day Care provided scholarships to low-income families struggling to afford day care as a result of new funding from NYS Dept. of State/CSBG .

HEALTH AND NUTRITION SERVICES

OCO Provides Health Services:

OCO plays a significant role in helping people obtain health care. In 2008, 12,478 people obtained Health Care at OCO Health Centers and 3,108 received Family Planning care. Facilitated Enrollment assisted 3,037 in obtaining health insurance.

OCO increased medical providers and assumed the lead of the Rural Health Network.

Cancer Services partnered with Kinney Drugs to raise awareness about breast and colorectal cancer. OCO Facilitated Enrollment partnered with Oswego Health and Pulaski Health Center to provide a "Cover the Uninsured Information Fair". Free health screenings were provided to over 100 people.

OCO Nutrition Services:



OCO Nutrition Services help people maintain health and independence. In 2008, 6,123 children, adults and seniors received nutritional meals, including 3,567 women and children and 1,651 seniors.

OCO WIC began a Peer Counseling Program consumers provided support to breast-feeding moms.

Sr. Nutrition Services partnered with Oswego County Planning & Development to secure funding from the NYS to renovate an OCO building in Mexico. This site will host OCO's Sr. Nutrition Services and will expand to house OCO services for children, youth and families.

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

OCO maintains 151 beds in certified community residences, apartments and shared living situations. In 2008, a total of 239 people with physical, mental chemical addictions or developmental disabilities and foster care youth received residential services. The need for housing for special needs populations was in demand more than ever. Referrals to Arbor House increased to 140 in 2008, the highest ever. Utilization of the Respite Program for adults & children with disabilities increased in 2008 and as result, OCO submitted a proposal to expand services.

Occupancy was also a challenge including at the chemical dependency Supportive Living Program which saw a steep decline prompting changes to the program, including reducing to 10 beds from twelve.

Housing Development:

In 2008, significant activity was underway to increase housing options for varied populations. OCO obtained approval from NYS OMRDD for a new 5 bedroom home and an 8 bed supervised apartment program for adults with disabilities. Unfortunately, NYS OMRDD put all development on hold late in the fall of 2008 due to the state fiscal crisis. By the end of 2008, OCO still had not heard if it could move forward with the project. Fortunately, approval came early in 2009 and construction is expected to be completed by July, 2009.

As part of the above development project, OCO is to renovate a former MRDD residence to serve homeless youth with funding from NYS Homeless Housing and Assistance Program. Planning for this project came to a standstill when the OMRDD project was stalled. We remain optimistic this project will come to fruition in 2009.



Improving Lives.....

OCO Youth Services Campout Experience

Each year, OCO works with young people to provide an overnight camp out experience. The activities and menu are developed in partnership with youth. All who attend (youth and staff alike) participate in activities together, including cooking and cleaning! In 2008, 44 youth attended the annual campout at Camp Hollis and participated in activities such as swimming, hiking, building a campfire, creating arts and crafts, playing cooperative games and many other team activities. Pictured below is one of the favorite activities - swimming!



OCO Mental Hygiene goes to Disney

Five individuals from the MR/DD residential programs had the opportunity to take an exciting trip to Disney World in October 2008. For most of the travelers, it was their first time on an airplane, which they all found to be very exciting!

The five individuals were accompanied by 4 staff and stayed at a Disney resort and enjoyed special treats and excursions. Magic Kingdom was as magical as they expected! Everyone was thrilled to meet princesses, Disney characters and to see the parades and fire works. Overall it was a trip to remember!



Staff Development...

In 2008, OCO programs provided many opportunities for staff growth and development. OCO Mental Hygiene secured funding for staff to participate in the online College of Direct Support course sponsored by NYS Association of Community and Residential Agencies. OCO Children's Services obtained funding to enable staff to complete their Bachelor's Degree. OCO Youth Services provided Advancing Youth Development courses to staff and the community to help attendees build youth development skills. OCO Transportation provided presentations to staff entitled "Know Your Division, Know Your Agency" to educate Transportation staff of OCO internal and agency wide services. OCO continued to provide Cornell University's Family Development Credentialing (FDC) training. OCO had 8 FDC graduates in 2008!

OCO Plans for the Future...

OCO Strategic Planning was conducted in 2008. On August 19 & September 17, many employees and the OCO Board of Directors reviewed data gathered from focus groups and community assessments and developed strategic goals for OCO. These strategic goals mapped out where OCO will travel over the next 3-5 years, identifying what new ventures OCO will focus on. Previous strategic goals have resulted in the development of OCO's Training Dept.; the annual Employee of the Year award and Homeless Intervention Program and Back Street Apartments. Activities to implement our new Strategic Plan are underway in 2009.

OCO Service Delivery and Data Base Systems. The OCO Service Delivery Task Force, consisting of employees from across the agency, is developing a comprehensive service system for OCO. Feedback from consumers, employees and partner agencies indicate it is sometimes difficult to access an OCO service or find out what we have to offer, unless you know the specific program or person to call. In 2008, Work Groups were formed, involving 40 employees from all divisions, to accomplish tasks in 3 areas of the Services Delivery system: Prevention & Early Intervention, Initial Contact & Intake and Care Provision and Management. Each Work Group is developing shared definitions, best practices and minimum procedures for each service area.

While the Service Delivery Task Force moves forward, the Data Base Task Force continues to work on plans to prepare OCO for implementing a universal data base. They are developing procedures for the data base system, identifying how people will use it, how we will assure security of the system and, how it will get paid for, among other critical things.



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***Helping People, Supporting
Communities, Changing Lives***

OCO, Inc. was incorporated in 1966 and was designated as Oswego County's Community Action Agency with an original intent to alleviate the effects of poverty for individuals. The agency was in a state of flux until 1970 when a group of original OCO board members began to seek grants to provide poverty-related services in the County. In 1971, the agency was successful in obtaining its first grant for services to the migrant population, which included day care, health services and general support services. In 1972, OCO acquired Head Start funding and from there, the agency grew with more varied services designed to address the needs of those living in poverty.

In 2008, OCO, Inc. was the 6th largest private employer in Oswego County with a workforce of over 600 employees and 1087 volunteers. The agency is funded by federal, state and local grants and contracts as well as fee for service revenues.

OCO, Inc. provides over 50 programs in over 80 locations throughout Oswego County and serves 25,000 individuals annually through educational, health, nutrition, crisis intervention, housing, and transportation programs. OCO's mission is to "build partnerships that improve the quality of life and create successful communities."

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