

Community Action at Work



From the Executive Director

Julie Hoxsie

The Saratoga County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. (EOC) is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to assist individuals and families with low incomes to access the services they need to meet their basic needs and to obtain the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to work towards self sufficiency.



May is National Community Action month. But what is Community Action and what is Community Action month all about? "Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other." Community Action Agencies are nonprofit organizations which were established under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to fight America's War on Poverty. Today there are over 1,100 Community Action Agencies in the

United States which all strive to alleviate poverty and empower low-income families.

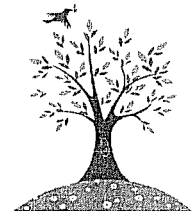
Community Action Agencies are not all alike, in that they may offer different services that meet the needs of their local community. The National Community Action Foundation states, "In general, CAAs (Community Action Agencies) prioritize prevention initiatives and provide extended involvement with clients to support the length of time and variety of assistance required to increase permanently their opportunity to be economically self-sufficient. When agencies provide crisis services or when they distribute food or goods, they seek to make those contacts with their clients an introduction to opportunities for moving the clients away from dependency on stop-gap aid." Unfortunately, our current economic climate has resulted in fewer opportunities available for those working towards self sufficiency. Additionally, many Americans have had to seek assistance for the first time in their lives due to unemployment, foreclosure and loss of health insurance.

Community Action Month celebrates and showcases community action. Originally created in May 1997 as 'National Community Action Week', in 1998 the week became 'National Community Action Month'. The designated month offers the network of Community Action Agencies the chance to spotlight the ways Community Action helps people to change their lives, to demonstrate our strength as a network, and to increase our visibility.

Saratoga County Economic Opportunity Council is planning their ceremony this May, to once again, recognize outstanding individuals or organizations that have gone 'above and beyond' in working to help improve and change the lives of the less fortunate in our community. Last year we recognized Robert D'Andrea, Dr. Stephen Dautel, Paul Phillips, Yvonne Sinamon and The New England Presbyterian Congregational Church for their contributions and outstanding service to individuals, families and our community.

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Volunteers needed for the Backstretch

by Krystle Nowhitney

The Saratoga County EOC Latino Community Advocacy Program is dedicated to meeting the special needs of the growing Spanish-speaking population in our county through ESL classes, direct services, advocacy and referrals.

As more horse trailers make their way down Union Avenue everyday, more workers are arriving on the Saratoga Race Course backstretch. Soon on bike and foot many workers will make their way down Fifth Ave twice a week for English as a Second Language classes. Last year, total enrollment exceeded 120 adult students. This year, we anticipate even more students, backstretch workers, as well as immigrants living and working year round in the Saratoga Springs area. We will also be beginning groups for children, as the number of families we are serving has increased and so the need for instruction for children as well. All students are taught in small groups by volunteer tutors. We need your help!

Classes begin May 11th and are Mondays and Wednesdays, 6:00-7:30pm at the United Methodist Church on the corner of Fifth Ave and Henning Rd. A dinner is served for students and tutors at 5:30pm. We will also be conducting supplemental lessons on the backstretch on Tuesday afternoons. To volunteer, please contact Krystle Nowhitney (518) 937-7240 or k.nowhitney@saratogaecoc.org.

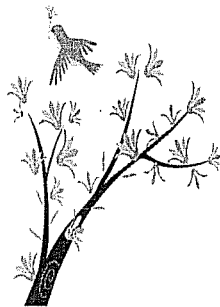
Dress to Succeed

Dress to Succeed is a special project to help provide appropriate work outfits to obtain or maintain employment.

The Dress to Succeed special project was created by an EOC board member who continues to coordinate this project. Originally, the mission of Dress to Succeed, was to provide FREE business style clothing to our clients for imminent job interviews. In light of our current economic recession, appropriate professional clothing is available for clients already "on the job" as well as any in need of suitable outfits for occasions. Many who just can't afford money for clothes, have happily found Dress to Succeed outfits to fill their needs.

Charles Wait, President of The Adirondack Trust Company, has generously given us 2nd floor space at the bank branch on South Broadway, where clothing donations are accepted and clients access a large selection of clothing.

We are extremely grateful to all who have donated clothes for this project. Please know that your donation has helped someone in need to make a great lasting impression on a future employer by feeling confident and having a terrific appearance. We hope you continue to remember this project when cleaning closets and changing sizes. Sizes 16 and over are especially welcome.



This service is by appointment only. Please call EOC at 587-3158 for additional information.

Energy Services

by Mike Seeley

The Saratoga County EOC Energy Services Department is focused on reducing energy costs for low-income families by improving the energy efficiency of their homes while ensuring their health and safety.

The Saratoga EOC Energy Service Department's Weatherization Assistance Program is growing dramatically and serves Saratoga and Schenectady County residents. Recently, the funding for our Weatherization program has doubled. As always, we offer low income residents the opportunity to receive energy saving services available to owner-occupied, single family, homeowners at No Cost. Also, the amount we are able to spend on a home has increased from \$4,500 in 2008 to \$6500 for 2009, so now is the time to apply.

President Obama has embraced the Weatherization program as he has heralded the energy saving potential of providing measures to decrease the energy consumption of homes that are poorly insulated, while targeting low income families that would normally not be able to afford these measures. Anyone interested in the Weatherization program for Saratoga and Schenectady County should contact us by calling 518-587-3158 and ask for our Weatherization intake worker, Monday - Friday, 8am-4pm. You can also stop into our office located at 40 New Street, Saratoga Springs, for an application during the hours mentioned above.

20th Annual May Day Spring Fling



By Theresa Piekarz

A special recognition to our sponsors,
Longfellows Hotel Restaurant & Conference
Center and The Olde Bryan Inn.

Spring Fling was made possible with Corporate Underwriting provided by:

Platinum Plate Level

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Enhanced Peer Counseling Program arrives at Saratoga County EOC - WIC!

by Cathy Valenty

A supplemental food and nutrition education program for income eligible women, infants, and children. The Saratoga County EOC Women, Infants, and Children's (WIC) program is committed to promoting healthy food, healthy families and healthy lifestyles for area residents.



Saratoga County EOC - WIC is pleased to announce the arrival of an Enhanced Peer Counselor Program for our WIC participants. You may be asking yourself - what is an *Enhanced Peer Counselor Program*? It is a program that involves training WIC moms who have successfully breastfed to work with prenatal women enrolled in WIC who are considering breastfeeding. Breast milk is widely acknowledged to be the most complete form of nutrition for infants, with a range of benefits for infants' health, growth, immunity, and development.

The goals of the Enhanced Peer Counselor Program are to increase the number of WIC moms that choose to initiate breastfeeding, to increase the duration of breastfeeding among WIC moms and to help WIC moms have successful breastfeeding experiences. The Peer Counselors will be trained to provide support to WIC moms that are in the early days and weeks of breastfeeding. We have welcomed back Nealie Roy, BS and Certified Lactation Consultant, as our Peer Counselor Coordinator. Nealie (a former Nutritionist / Breastfeeding Coordinator with us) will be responsible for recruiting, hiring and training our peer counselors.

Some of the key Peer Counselor messages are:

Helping women feel comfortable with breastfeeding

Tips on how breastfeeding can work around a busy schedule

The importance of the involvement of family and friends in making breastfeeding a success

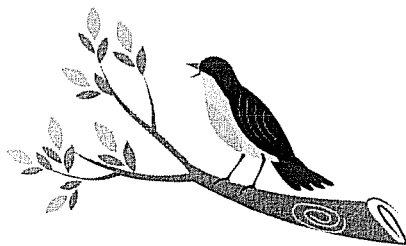
And probably the most important message: You're not alone!

Those early days and weeks of breastfeeding are crucial, and it is the hope of Saratoga EOC - WIC that our peer counselors can make a difference for our new breastfeeding moms. We are hopeful that with enthusiastic, experienced support, the number of moms choosing to breastfeed will grow, and the end result will be healthier moms and babies!

Head Start thanks Dr. Dautel

by Pam Dray

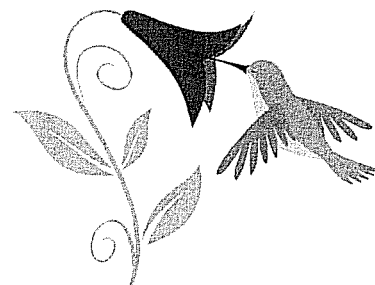
A comprehensive child development program, Saratoga County EOC Head Start serves children from birth to age 5, pregnant women, and their families with the overall goal of increasing school readiness and fostering healthy development in young children of low-income families.



Dr. Dautel is a dentist that has been involved in the community and in the Saratoga County EOC Head Start program in various ways for many years. In 2003, he recruited members of the Fourth District Dental Society of the State of New York to aid him in a commitment to the improvement the dental health of the children in our community through the "Children's Dental Access Program." This program has evolved and changed many times over the years to meet the needs of the Saratoga County EOC Head Start program.

Dr. Dautel comes to our sites and performs dental exams or arranges for another area dentist to come and perform exams on our children throughout the county. If children need follow-up and parents are unable to meet this need on their own or with the assistance of their Head Start Health Advocate, he will recruit a dentist close to where the child lives to see the child and perform work that is needed.

Saratoga County EOC Head Start is required to assist Head Start families with finding a 'dental home' as well as make sure our families have instruction on good dental health. Dr. Dautel has been very instrumental in ensuring that this happens for our children and families. Thank you Dr. Dautel.

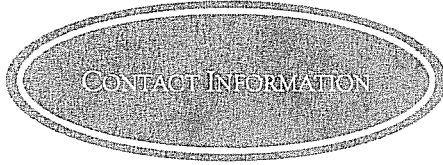


A typical WIC Food Package is valued between \$48 and \$152.



SARATOGA COUNTY ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY COUNCIL, INC.

Helping People to Help Themselves



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Back Stretch Kitchen a New Collaborative Initiative

by Lillian McCarthy

Guided by a strength based family development philosophy and the mission of the agency, the Saratoga County EOC Community Services Department provides essential programming to address the needs of low-income families.

The Saratoga County EOC Latino Community Advocacy Program is dedicated to meeting the special needs of the growing Spanish-speaking population in our county through ESL classes, direct services, advocacy and referrals.

The Saratoga County EOC Community Services Program is working collaboratively with the Saratoga County EOC Latino Community Advocacy Program (LCAP), The Saratoga County EOC - WIC Program, and backstretch agencies to provide a much needed backstretch community dinner to the backstretch employees that come up early to start the season and those who stay late into the fall.

EOC started the kitchen Thursday April 16 and will have it open through Friday May 15th. We will then reopen the kitchen at the end of the meet, from Thursday, October 15th thru Friday, November 13th.

Working with nutritionists from the Saratoga EOC WIC Program, meals have been designed to be healthy and nutritious, yet simple. Meals are served from 4:30pm to 5:30pm.

Volunteers are utilized for the preparation and serving of the meal. EOC is still looking for a few volunteers to assist with serving meals this spring or Monday thru Friday beginning again Thursday, October 15th. If you would be interested in volunteering for any part of the process please call Lillian McCarthy or Krystle Nowhitney at 587-3158. Thank you so much for your support and interest.



A special thank you to Skidmore College, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work for helping us print this newsletter!

Visit us on the web
www.saratogaecoc.org