

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.

As we turn our calendars from 2008 to 2009, we think about the passage of time and goals for the New Year. We have recognized for a few years now that Saratoga County Economic Opportunity Council (EOC) needs additional space. In 2001, Saratoga County EOC moved from a very cramped office on the second floor of the Algonquin Building on Broadway in Saratoga Springs, to our rehabbed and expanded building at 40 New Street. The 'new' location, also in Saratoga Springs, is about a mile off of Broadway. At the time of the move, in 2001, we had plenty of room in our new building. We built a storage building later that year on the grounds of the new building. In the storage building, we keep weatherization materials and have a small heated section for food storage. We eventually built a mezzanine for needed file storage.

Since that time, Saratoga EOC has grown in size. In 2005, we applied for and were awarded the Head Start grant. Serving 434 children all over Saratoga County, we crowded three Head Start fiscal and human resource staff into our existing offices at 40 New Street, but had no room for our six Head Start managers. Fortunately, we found space for them at St. Peters in Saratoga Springs, not far away, but not the same as being in one central location. Also in 2005, EOC began our Latino Community Advocacy Program (LCAP). Currently the LCAP coordinator has a small area within the Weatherization section of our offices at 40 New Street. We need space for a full time Coordinator and a part time English as a Second Language Coordinator. They both need space to see customers with some privacy. The current area can only accommodate one small desk and has no privacy. On a temporary basis, the Presbyterian New England Congregational Church is going to provide the LCAP space in the basement of its rectory. In the very near future, we will need additional office space for the Weatherization Program. The Weatherization allocation for 2009 has almost doubled!

Additionally in the last year, the number of customers using the food pantry here at New Street has grown 32%. The waiting room is often extremely crowded. We don't have enough food storage space. We don't have enough parking spaces for our customers. At times the customers double park behind others, creating a very dangerous situation in our parking lot for customers and automobiles.

Our challenge in the future is affording and securing more space. Ideally we would like to stay here in Saratoga Springs, which is centrally located within Saratoga County.

In the near future we will be recruiting more members on our space committee and starting to strategize a capital campaign. If you have some expertise in either of these areas and would like to be involved, we need your help!

More Money for Weatherization Services

By Mike Seeley

The Saratoga County EOC Weatherization Assistance program reduces energy costs for low-income families by improving the energy efficiency of their homes while ensuring their health and safety.

We are going to receive a large increase in funding! Our contract that begins April 1, 2009 will be a 15 month contract and the funding level will be \$1,453,000. We will complete 260 units in that 15 month period. This represents a significant increase in funding and production schedule for us. We will be completing about 100 more units in Saratoga and Schenectady Counties. For more information our Weatherization & Empower programs feel free to call us at 518-587-3158. Reducing your energy cost is our program's main goal and most importantly, the cost to the income eligible homeowner is zero! You have nothing to lose except high energy bills!

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A Head Start on Picturing America

By Pam Dray

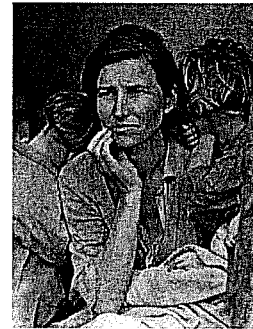
A comprehensive child development program, Saratoga County EOC Head Start serves children from birth to age 5, pregnant women, and their families with the overall goal of increasing school readiness and fostering healthy development in young children of low-income families.

Picturing America is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities which offers a set of 40 high-quality, color reproductions of American art that range from paintings, sculpture, photographs, and architecture to book arts, decorative arts, and fine crafts. The project was designed to provide kindergarten through twelfth grade students and adults with an opportunity to learn about the art and history of America. For younger children, their families, and their communities, the project has expanded to include developmentally appropriate learning experiences and resources. *A Head Start on Picturing America* the resource guide that accompanies the artwork, offers a flexible blueprint to guide and enhance interaction with the art. Our pre-school curriculum will be enriched by using the artworks in a way that engages children and adds excitement to their learning. This resource guide was developed to assist Head Start staff and parents share the world of art with children. *Picturing America* offers opportunities to address children's school readiness, family literacy and parent involvement goals.

The Office of Head Start will provide *Picturing America* works of art, and print and distribute *A Head Start on Picturing America* to all Head Start programs across the nation. Saratoga County EOC Head Start is very excited to add this new project to our pre school curriculum. Once we receive the artworks and accompanying manual, we will be planning many activities for the children around the art work to enhance our existing curriculum and "Family Night at the Museum" to involve parents in this new initiative.

Exposure to this art work will enhance the children's learning on many levels. Language and literacy will be improved as children understand and use more complex and varied vocabulary by expressing opinions, feelings, and ideas and have more exposure to a variety of books. Mathematics and science will be enhanced by comparing sizes, by finding interesting ways to measure and by identifying patterns. The children will also learn to discuss observations, predict, generalize, and develop explanations of things they see. When children are engaged in experiences related to their interests, their attention span increases, problem solving strategies expand, curiosity and initiative increase, reasoning and problem solving develop and concentration, persistence and engagement improve.

We are looking forward to adding this important initiative to our curriculum. It will be a family focused experience designed to give parents and children the opportunity to discover the artworks through conversation, creativity, and sensory experience.



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Weatherization Facts

- Weatherization measures reduce national energy demand by the equivalent of 18 million barrels of oil per year.
- Low income families will save an average of \$413 in reduced first-year energy costs, at current prices. (this is a national average-here in upstate New York, our energy savings should be much higher)
- Weatherization saves an average of 32% in gas space heating. This comprises a total fuel consumption reduction of 23%. Net savings for each home weatherized average 30.5 MBtu/year.
- Reducing energy demand decreases the environmental impacts of energy production. Weatherization mitigates approximately 1.61 metric tons of carbon dioxide per year in a home heated primarily with natural gas and even more for homes heated with fuel oil. Weatherization also reduces emissions of methane and nitrous oxide.

New Food Packages for WIC Participants!

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.



The new WIC food packages finally arrived on January 5, 2009! The much anticipated changes to the WIC food packages are the culmination of years of studies, nutrient recommendations, changes in dietary guidelines and the changing food supply. Food supply availability has dramatically increased over the past 30 years; there is a wider variety of fresh produce available at reasonable prices and in more locations. The way we, as a nation, choose to eat and spend our food dollars has also changed. We are seeing an epidemic of overweight and obese children and adults. There is an increase in the incidence of health related problems such as diabetes and heart disease. The new Federal regulations must be implemented by October 2009; New York State is in the forefront and blazing the trail for other states, as we implemented the new food packages a full 10 months ahead of the deadline.

Highlights of the changes include a decrease in the amount of milk provided and a limit on the amount of cheese that can be issued. There are additional choices for women who may not drink much milk, such as substitution of tofu. Canned beans (such as kidney beans, black beans, lentils) are now offered as a choice in place of peanut butter or dried beans. Eggs are now limited to one dozen for most women and children. Juice amounts have been decreased, and there is a wider variety of juice choices available. The vegetable and fruit checks have increased in value. Baby food vegetables and fruits are now offered when the infant turns 6 months old, and formula amounts will vary slightly depending on the age of the infant. Exclusively breastfed infants will receive baby food meat beginning at 6 months of age, as well as baby food vegetables and fruits. Whole grain bread and/or brown rice is now available for pregnant and breastfeeding moms, as well as for all children.

The changes to the WIC Acceptable Foods have been very well received by clients and staff alike and are very much in line with the vision of the NYS WIC Program: "Healthy food; healthy families; healthy future."

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



EOC's 2008 Accomplishments

- Head Start served 434 families daily.
- WIC served 1954 participants each month.
- Latino Community Advocacy graduated 170 students from ESL classes and responded to nearly 200 advocacy calls.
- Wheels to Work provided 26 families with reliable transportation.
- Weatherization Assistance and Empower NY provided home energy reduction services to 240 families.
- Community Lunch Program served 26,073 lunches.
- Rural Food Delivery delivered 716 food packages to disabled and elderly homebound residents.
- Extra Helpings sold 1902 units of steeply discounted food.
- Adopt-A-Family distributed 775 Thanksgivings baskets to families and served 537 prepared Thanksgiving meals.
- Family Development services were provided to 415 families.
- Crisis Intervention responded to 1460 calls for assistance.
- Summer Lunch provided 1193 lunches to low-income children.

20th Annual May Day Spring Fling

By Theresa Piekarz

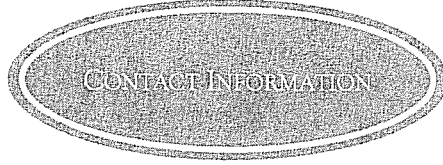
With food and drink donated by Longfellows Restaurant, Hotel & Conference Center and The Olde Bryan Inn, May Day promises to be an especially fun-filled event and will include a seated dinner and a wine/beer open bar. Add to that a spectacular live and silent auction organized by community volunteers, and you have a fundraising event that puts 88 cents of every dollar raised directly to programming!

At this year's event, EOC will be honoring Ms. Linda Toohey, Vice President, Leadership Saratoga, at the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce. In the belief that the quality of life in a community depends heavily on the quality of local leadership, Ms. Toohey has led the way to enrich the county with a diverse group of promising leaders. Committed to a better tomorrow, her community philanthropy efforts inspire others to reach out and make a difference. Join us as we recognize her unwavering commitment to making a positive impact on our community.

The 20th annual May Day Spring Fling will be held on Wednesday, May 13, 2009 from 6-9 p.m. at the Canfield Casino in Saratoga Springs.

SARATOGA COUNTY ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY COUNCIL, INC.

Helping People to Help Themselves



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Thanks to Volunteers and Donors

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.

Thanksgiving was a busy time of year in the Community Services Department. We distributed 775 Thanksgiving baskets this year to low income individuals in Saratoga County. This number is up from last year when we distributed 636. With this increased number we also worked more closely with other agencies to ensure that there were no duplications amongst the different programs. At the soup kitchen we both served and delivered about 500 meals in total. We had wonderful volunteers including the amazing Steve Sullivan and Alan Murawski, both with their friends and family, as well as great support from the community. This is a huge undertaking, and gets better every year!



EOC would like to thank all of our volunteers for all their hard work. We have the best volunteers around. Whether you volunteer at the soup kitchen, food pantry, RFD, house to home or many other opportunities, we want you to know how grateful we are to have you. Only with your support, are we able to do everything that we do for families.

We would also like to thank the donors. With the economy as it is and funding being cut or staying level, we continue to run our programs without interruption. It is with your generous giving that the food pantry has been able to continue serving the large increase of customers without cutting back on anything, and the soup kitchen continues to have plenty of food daily.

Thank you to both volunteers and donors for everything that you do.

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



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