

Community Action at Work

From the Executive Director

Julie Hoxsie



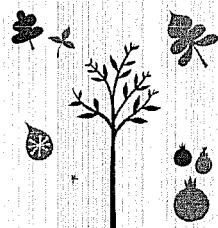
The Saratoga County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. (EOC) is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to assist individuals and families with low incomes to access the services they need to meet their basic needs and to obtain the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to work towards self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

Saratoga County Poverty Rate Increases

An article in the Saratogian in September announced that Saratoga County EOC would receive \$360,000 in stimulus money to be used for employment classes for the unemployed and underemployed, and services including English as a Second Language for limited English proficient speakers. Shortly thereafter comments were published in the *Sound Off* section of the newspaper about our new grant. It was stated in *Sound Off* that it is an absurd waste of tax payer money that Saratoga County EOC is receiving \$360,000 from the federal government to help the poor, as Saratoga Springs is one of the wealthiest cities in New York. Shortly thereafter, the Saratogian ran a report on the front page; the headline, 'Survey shows less poverty in Saratoga County'. While Saratoga County does have less poverty than surrounding counties (which was the point of the article) the article did not state that the percentage of those living below the federal poverty level grew in Saratoga County from 6.6% in 2006 to 6.9% in 2007 and further to 7.6% in 2008. While this may not be statistically significant, it indicates growth in poverty numbers rather than decline. The federal poverty level was less than \$21,200 for a family of four in 2008. Very tough for a family of four to make ends meet at that income level. One source estimates that one third of the adults in the City of Saratoga Springs living at or below the poverty level are disabled.

People often tell me that they can't believe that there's any poverty in Saratoga County. Headlines such as 'Survey shows less poverty in Saratoga County' may reinforce such thoughts. Or, without reading the body of the article, one might think that poverty has declined in our county.

Saratoga County EOC serves the entire county of Saratoga with the mission of helping low income individuals and families work toward self sufficiency. The income guidelines for our various programs differ; some are 100% of the poverty level, some 185% and some have been raised to 200%. The American Community Survey estimates that in 2008, 20% of Saratoga County's population or 42,080 Saratoga County residents live in households with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level. This would equate to a family income below \$ 42,400 for a family of four. We help an average of just under 250 families each month in our emergency food pantry. While we serve the entire county, 30% of the families we help with emergency food are from Saratoga Springs! There are an estimated 2000 children in Saratoga County without any health insurance.



SCEOC screens its customers to make sure we are using all federal dollars wisely and in places where they can do the most good for our community. All of the federal money we receive is put back into our local economy in one way or another. Whether we are buying products from local businesses, providing relief to the needy, or supporting local residents with jobs - we are helping to contribute to the overall economic well-being of the entire county. That's money well spent.

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Community Services

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.

Community Services has been very busy these past few months. We have finished the 1st complete season of backstretch community dinners. We served 4149 meals for both sessions combined. This breaks down to 1970 meals served the first session, April 16 thru May 19 and 2179 meals served September 24 thru November 13. We would like to thank the volunteers that came out to help serve even in the cold, the meals were definitely needed and appreciated by the workers. We would also like to thank Steve Sullivan and his staff of The Olde Bryan Inn for preparing the meals on Thursday evenings and Longfellow's Restaurant staff for preparing the Friday night meals; they were great!



Backstretch workers enjoy their meal

We received federal stimulus funding to start three new employment initiatives. The first program is the Family Development Weatherization Outreach program. This program sends a family development case manager to the homes of our Saratoga County Weatherization Assistance Program customers to assess need and inform them of other services for which they may be eligible. Many of these customers are elderly or disabled and may be unaware of these programs.

The second program is Workforce Readiness Classes. These are classes structured to meet the needs of low income residents of Saratoga County who are unemployed or underemployed. Participants attend 3 hour instructional sessions for 6 weeks and benefit from instruction on job seeking and retention skills. Topics include job applications, cover letters, resumes, interviewing, job retention, on the job problem solving, budgeting the paycheck, and coping with work and home life. Stipends are paid to individuals who attend the classes with a bonus for attending all 6 sessions consecutively.

The third initiative is an Employment and Training coordinator. This position will assist volunteers and interns who come to EOC with proper placement and on the job training skills both within EOC and outside agencies. All three programs will refer to one another to ensure the success of the customers and these temporary programs.



Backstretch workers line up for dinner

Thanksgiving has proven to be another new record for EOC. We have received applications for 980 Thanksgiving baskets. This is up by 205 from last year. We are anticipating another record of meals served at the Soup Kitchen on Thanksgiving day as well. Watch for our next newsletter to see how many meals were served and upcoming events in the Community Services Department.

Autumn at Head Start

by Pam Dray

Autumn brings those crisp, sunny days with vibrant leaves and blue, blue skies. For children it is a time of new adventures, starting school. It could be a new school or a new grade but a whole new adventure lies before them. For teachers it is a beginning, as well. There are new students to welcome and old friends to welcome back.

This has been an exciting year for Head Start children returning to classrooms or joining them for the first time. In Corinth, we are able to offer 17 more students a center base experience. The Corinth school district graciously offered us an additional classroom in their elementary school. We once again partnered with Beginnings Preschool to offer an additional integrated classroom in that community. We are now able to serve a total of 10 children with special needs in those classrooms, in addition to 24 typically developing children.

South Glens Falls and Corinth home base children are also enjoying socializations at the Pine Knolls Alliance Church in South Glens Falls once a month. This partnership makes it much easier for the South Glens Falls families to join in the fun. This same group also meets once a month in Corinth at the Gateway Pentecostal Church to make it easier for the Corinth families. (continued on page 3)

WIC News: Watch us Grow!

by Cathy Valenty

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

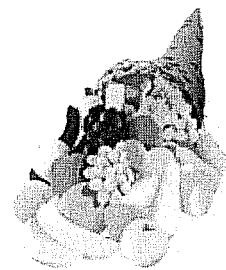
In mid-September, Saratoga County Economic Opportunity Council was awarded the contract to provide WIC services to the women, infants and children of Saratoga County and the surrounding areas for the next 5 years. Along with this news, came the challenge to "grow" our caseload from our current average of 2050 WIC participants monthly to 2800 participants monthly!

WIC's goal is to help keep pregnant and breastfeeding women and kids under age 5 healthy. Many people are not aware of all the benefits of participating in the WIC Program, and along with that, there are many people who may not realize that they are eligible to participate in the WIC program. To be eligible on the basis of income, applicants' gross income (i.e. before taxes are withheld) must fall at or below 185 percent of the U.S. Poverty Income Guidelines. Income guidelines are updated yearly, generally by April or May. A family of four, for example, could make up to \$40,793 annually or \$785 weekly.

Participation in the WIC Program provides many benefits. Benefits include saving money on groceries every month. WIC provides checks (or vouchers) for basic, healthy foods such as milk, cheese, eggs, juice, peanut butter, cereal, whole grain breads or brown rice, fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruits. The average monthly value of a fully breastfeeding woman's WIC food package is approximately \$100! The average value of a prenatal WIC food package is approximately \$77, and the average value of a children's WIC food package is approximately \$68. The money that you can save by participating in WIC can be used for so many other things. You can use the money you save on more groceries, housing and heating expenses, transportation expenses or clothes for your children.

Besides saving you money, WIC also provides personalized nutrition education, tips for eating well to improve health, breastfeeding promotion and support, access to certified lactation consultants, as well as referrals to other agencies, programs and services that can benefit the whole family.

WIC is for all kinds of families, you may know someone who is eligible. WIC offers convenient and flexible hours, and WIC offers services at various locations throughout Saratoga County. If you think that someone may be eligible for WIC, please pass along the word. Applying for WIC is quick and easy, call the SCEOC - WIC office at 518-587-8848 for more information or email me at c.valenty@saratogaecoc.org.

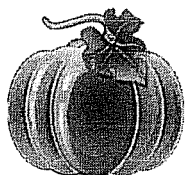


Head Start (continued from page 2)

We have also opened a new Infant Room at Saratoga High School. This class is designed for High School students with babies. The room serves 8 babies from 6 weeks to 18 months old. We hope to eliminate the roadblock of affordable child care for the students wanting to continue their high school education. The students are able to visit their babies during the day depending on their schedules. So far, babies, parents, Saratoga Springs High School staff and Head Start staff love the new addition.

We have a new home for our Saratoga home base socializations. We are using a beautiful room in the Franklin Community Center. We also have use of the kitchen and their meeting room, if needed. Franklin Community Center has been really supportive of our program. We are able to use their facility for our parenting sessions as well. This works out great because we can do childcare right there in the classroom and we have use of kitchen. Interestingly, about 20 or so years ago, Head Start used that very same room for a center base classroom. I feel like we have gone full circle.

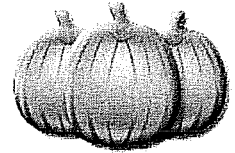
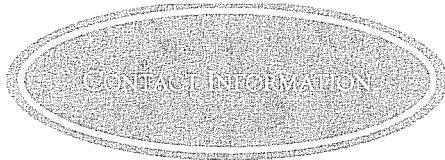
Our Mechanicville classroom has moved to the Stillwater Community Center. Now we have two classrooms at that location serving both Stillwater and Mechanicville families. It is a very positive move. The classroom is larger, so we are able to serve 2 additional children. We are once again partnering with Beginnings Preschool to offer two integrated classrooms to that community. One classroom is specifically for deaf and hard of hearing students. We are very excited about this collaboration. The office space is much larger than we had previously in Mechanicville. We also have a classroom for our home base socializations in the community center. It is great for families and staff to have the whole operation in one building.



We are looking forward to an exciting year in our new and old locations. We have lots of family activities planned and many educational opportunities for the parents.

SARATOGA COUNTY ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY COUNCIL, INC.

Community Action. Helping People. Changing Lives.



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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 Weatherization Assistance Program has been granted a large increase in funding to benefit low-income families within Saratoga and Schenectady County. This program offers energy saving measures designed to save homeowners money. EOC will provide a comprehensive energy audit on your home using sophisticated monitoring equipment designed to diagnose major areas of air infiltration and insulation voids within the structure. Infrared cameras are used to detect heat loss. We can actually see into walls, attics and basement cavities to make a determination without having to cut or drill holes. Other issues addressed are concerns of health and safety, heating systems, and electric consumption reduction measures.

Our program follows the 2009-2010 **HEAP** income guidelines for resident eligibility. You are eligible if your income falls at or below the following annual gross income listed for the family size. Best of all, there is no cost to you if you own and occupy your home. If you rent your home you can also qualify if the building owner is willing to participate.

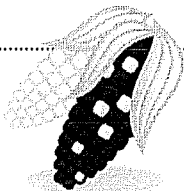
Household Size

Annual Gross Income



1	\$24,360
2	\$31,848
3	\$39,348
4	\$46,836
5	\$54,336
6	\$61,824

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



Saratoga County residents can call Luz French at 587-3158 ext. 17 and Schenectady County residents can call Matt Drouin at 374-2221 for more information or to have an application mailed to you. Both offices are open Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Visit us on the web
www.saratogaec.org