

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.



Alfred Z. Solomon Award Announced

We are thrilled to announce a grant from the Alfred Z. Solomon trust for \$ 35,000! The grant was given to Saratoga County EOC for food and food related expenses for both the soup kitchen run by EOC at the Presbyterian New England Congregational Church and the food pantry located at the EOC building on 40 New Street.

We will use a portion of the grant to purchase a much needed cooler for the soup kitchen for milk and juice used during the lunch hour. For the food pantry, we will purchase an energy efficient freezer and two commercial combination refrigerator/freezers to replace older models, which have required frequent repairs and are not energy efficient. Equipment at the soup kitchen will be professionally cleaned and calibrated. We will replace old and tattered tables at the soup kitchen, as well as some pots and pans.

Food need has increased significantly in the past two years due to the recession and increases in the price of fuel and food. In the first quarter of 2009, we have had a 18 % increase in food pantry customers from the first quarter of 2008. When comparing the first quarter of 2009 to the first quarter of 2007, the increase is a whopping 58%! The Solomon grant will go a long way to helping us meet the need this year.

Many of the folks seeking our help have dietary restrictions. The incidence of diabetes and hypertension among low income individuals is much higher than the general population. Sugar free and low sodium food is typically more costly than food containing sugar and salt. Besides providing the most nutritious and least costly food for our customers, we will be purchasing sugar free and low salt products for customers needing these products.

We are most grateful to receive this grant at a time when the numbers of those in need has increased more than any time in our 36 years of helping low income individuals and families of Saratoga County!

Five individuals and one organization receive Community Action Awards

On May 29, 2009, Saratoga County EOC held a Community Action Awards breakfast, presenting awards to Dr. Laura LeCours, Jim Mhuta, Peter Brock, Miles Cornthwaite, Sue Kowaleski and Saratoga Springs Target store. The award honors individuals or organizations that have demonstrated outstanding contributions to our mission.

Dr. Laura LeCours has provided free well child checks and immunizations to Head Start children. Jim Mhuta picks up rescued food items from area stores every week, as well as picking apples and traveling out to Schoharie County to pick up carrots for our Thanksgiving Baskets. Peter Brock, a Skidmore College student, first helped our Latino Community Advocacy Program as a volunteer intern. This past academic year, Peter led a team of student researchers and developed a 'Health Needs Assessment' of the Latino population in Saratoga County. Miles Cornthwaite owns Spa Cleaners and has graciously volunteered to dry clean many outfits for our Dress to Succeed program. Miles also voluntarily cleans coats for the Coats for Kids Program. Sue Kowaleski has served on our Head Start Policy Council for three years, rarely ever missing a meeting and made many contributions to our Child Health and Development Service Area plan. The Saratoga Springs Target store's employees have volunteered in our House to Home program, helped sort food and pack baskets for Thanksgiving and helped at our major fundraiser, Mayday Spring Fling.

Congratulations to all our awardees; EOC could not do all that we do without the help of many volunteers!

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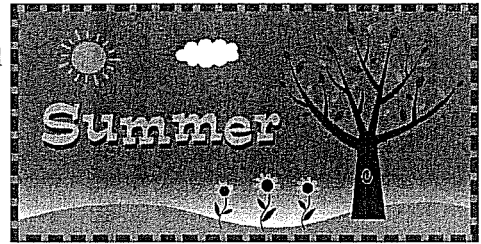


Summer at Head Start

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.

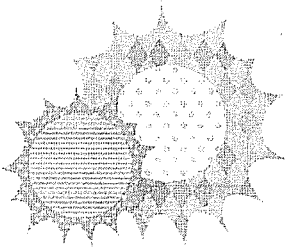
Summer is anything but quiet at Head Start! Summer preschool classes, home visits, field trips, parents and children together (PACTs) times, parenting programs, health and disabilities screenings, family committee, policy council, new family recruitment and orientation, and family fun nights keep families and staff busy! One program year is finishing and another is getting ready to start. At the end of summer, some children head off to kindergarten while others plan to stay for another year full of opportunity to learn and grow.



All Head Start programs are required to be fully enrolled on the first day classes in September. Rightfully so, as our time with children is relatively short and we want them to reap the maximum benefit of Head Start services. For SCEOC this means that 310 Head Start children and 124 Early Head Start children/pregnant women must have completed all the appropriate entry paperwork, have a current physical exam and be up to date on immunizations to start programming.

Preparing for a new program year begins well before September. Family Advocates recruit year round to ensure adequate waitlists of eligible children, including children with disabilities. Recruitment strategies vary. Staff go door to door, hang posters in public locations, hand out applications at public schools, local food pantries, WIC clinics, medical offices and other events that target low income families. Advertisements are placed in local papers; parents are invited to recruit a friend and much, much more. Families that complete an application are placed on a waitlist. As per Head Start federal regulations, waitlists prioritize children according to family income and need. As vacancies occur, children with the lowest family income and highest need are offered services.

During the summer months, Family and Health Advocates work closely with parents to ensure that children meet the health exam and immunization requirements to begin Head Start or Early Head Start programming. Parents are offered support in obtaining medical insurance and making doctor's appointments. Transportation and interpreting assistance is available if needed, to eliminate obstacles to enrollment. Incoming children and their parents are also invited to participate in developmental screenings at Head Start. These screenings help to identify potential delays in speech and language development, fine and gross motor skills, cognitive processing and social/emotional development. The sooner a delay is identified, the sooner parents and staff can plan appropriate programming. In August, parents and children are invited to orientation at their Head Start site. This is an opportunity for families to complete enrollment paperwork, meet staff and become familiar with their child's new school.



Community Services – Another Great Success!

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 started a new program on April 16th - Backstretch Community Dinner. Wonderful volunteers and hard working staff pulled together and made this much needed program a great success. We cooked and served meals Monday - Friday from 4:30 until 6pm for the backstretch workers at the track. This program continued until May 13 when other food service became available at the track. We served a total of 1973 meals for the 17 days we were open. This program had the support of the Regional Food Bank and assistance from The Olde Bryan Inn/Longfellows restaurants. On behalf of EOC, I send a heart filled thank you to all volunteers and staff for their support, time and effort that went into making this new endeavor a huge success.

We will be opening this kitchen again at the end of the meet starting around October 15 and running through November 15th.

As of this writing in June, we are preparing for the start of our Summer Lunch Program. This year it will start July 6th and run through August 31st. We will be serving Monday thru Friday from 11:30am - 1:00pm. The lunch will be served outside of the William H. Ford Neighborhood Center (Jefferson/Vanderbilt Terrace) on East Fenlon St. Lunch is available for any child under the age of 18 years that lives in or around Jefferson/Vanderbilt Terrace. We have two student coordinators for the program. The coordinators will be creating menus, preparing and serving the lunch, and planning and scheduling activities for the kids. They will also be working with WIC nutritionists to ensure healthy and nutritious menus.

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WIC and the NYS Farmers Markets

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.

Saratoga County EOC - WIC is once again offering Farmers Market coupons to WIC families for the 2009 Farmers Market season. The Farmers Market Nutrition Program was established by Congress in July 1992, to help provide WIC families with fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables. Saratoga County EOC - WIC has participated in the Farmers Market coupon program from the very beginning, and it is something our clients look forward to every year!

Saratoga County EOC - WIC has received an allotment of 1000 Farmers Market coupon "sets". Each Farmers Market coupon set consists of six \$4.00 coupons that may be used at any authorized New York State Farmers Market to purchase locally grown fresh fruits or vegetables. Each WIC family that is interested in receiving the Farmers Market coupons will receive, and purchase at least \$24.00 worth of fresh, locally grown produce this summer! What a great way to introduce young families to local New York State Farmers Markets. The program not only encourages families to eat more fruits and vegetables but also to choose locally grown produce! What a great benefit to our local farmers as well. Because the number of Farmers Market coupon sets received by each WIC agency is limited, we strongly encourage WIC families to take the Farmers Market coupons only if they are fairly confident that they will use them.

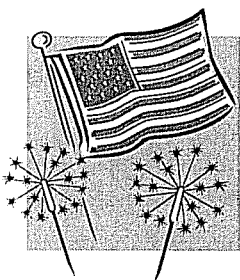
Farmers Market coupons can be used beginning July 1, 2009, and must be used no later than November 15, 2009. Last year, we ran out of Farmers Market coupons in early August, much earlier than in past years. We had many disappointed WIC families, but fortunately, received additional Farmers Market coupons thanks to reallocation! The New York State WIC Program will "reallocate" Farmers Market coupons between agencies in early to mid-August, and then one last time in early September. This mid-season reallocation helps redistribute the Farmers Market coupons from WIC agencies that may not be able to distribute all of the Farmers Market coupons they have been allocated to WIC agencies that have run out or are very close to running out of them. What a great program and great benefit to our WIC families!

Save the Date for Visión

by Krystle Nowhitney

August 11th, 2009 from 5:30pm-8:00pm at the Saratoga Race Course

Saratoga County EOC will be hosting the 2nd Annual Visión, "a look at life behind the scenes", a reception and photography exhibit featuring black and white photographs taken by EOC's English as a Second Language students. Participants were mentored by photographer Skip Dickstein and then each documented their experiences using black and white disposable cameras. The exhibit offers unique insight into the lives of Latino immigrants who contribute so much to our community. All proceeds benefit the Latino Community Advocacy Program. \$45/person. For reservations please contact Theresa Piekarsz 587-3158 ext. 11.



Community Services continued from page 2

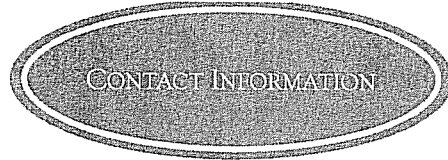
After a winter break, we have resumed working on our mobile home in Grange Road Mobile Home Park. EOC renovates donated mobile homes and sells them at a low cost to families in need of housing. Our volunteers are creating a work scope and plan for the mobile home. We could always use more help, if you are interested and able to volunteer. You don't need to be a carpenter, just an individual wanting to help and not worried about getting dirty!

NYRA's Open House is coming up quickly and we will again be holding a food drive located at both gates of the track on July 26th. New this year, we will also be running a fried dough food stand during the open house. Local non-profits are invited to sell a specific food or beverage item. We will be looking for volunteers to help at the food donation tables and some to assist with the fried dough.

If you are interested in volunteering to help EOC at the track open house or in helping renovate a mobile home, please contact Lillian McCarthy at 587-3158.

SARATOGA COUNTY ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY COUNCIL, INC.

Helping People to Help Themselves



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

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NEEDED!

Used Cars

Our Wheels for Work program provides reliable used cars to families in need of transportation to work. If you have a vehicle to donate, please call Lori Staigar at 587-3158.

Dress to Succeed Outfits

Our Dress to Succeed Program is especially in need of professional type clothes sizes 2, 4 and over size 20. We also welcome referrals to the Dress to Succeed program. The program provides individuals with professional outfits for job interviews or clothes for those already on the job, as well as suitable outfits for various occasions. Please call Sheila at 587-3158.

Bags for our Food Pantry

We are always in need of bags for the food pantry. We plan to start giving pantry food in reusable bags on a limited basis. One of our supporters has donated a small supply of reusable bags. We will, of course, encourage customers to bring back the reusable bags! Please bring bags, either disposable plastic or reusable to our pantry at 40 New Street, Saratoga Springs.

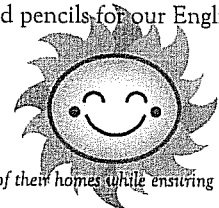
Bikes and notebooks

The Latino Community Advocacy Program (LCAP) has continued to work with the Healthy Transportation Network to recycle donated bicycles to needy individuals. Please contact Krystle Nowhitney at 937-7240 if you have a bike to donate. The LCAP could also use notebooks, pens and pencils for our English as a Second Language Classes.

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.



Weatherization has expanded in scope dramatically to provide services to more clients than in the history of the program! Our funding will enable us to weatherize in excess of 400 units in the next 12 month period. An additional feature added to the current contract is the amount which can be spent per unit. In the 08-09 contract the maximum amount we could spend on a unit was \$4,500.00. The current contract will enable us to spend \$6,500.00 per unit. Measures provided by our program include insulation of attics, walls, crawl spaces, band joist and knee wall areas. Heating system evaluations are performed, which include a comprehensive set of tests to determine the correct work scope to achieve the best efficiency possible. This may include replacement if warranted. Also addressed are health and safety issues which include installing smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to insure the safety of our clients. For more information on the Weatherization program and income guidelines call 587-3158 and ask for our Weatherization intake worker, Luz French at extension 17.

Visit us on the web
www.saratogaecoc.org