

Debut Newsletter, Fall 2008

## VANTAGE POINT: VIEW FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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Dear friends,

You are invited to get involved!

You can be part of an organization where extraordinary things are happening. As a non-profit agency providing educational programs that prepare people for employment and self-sufficiency, Chester County OIC offers numerous opportunities for you to get involved.

Read this debut issue of *OIC Works* to learn about our triumphs and become part of our achievements. Volunteer now and become a Workforce Literacy tutor. Or refer a neighbor in need to our General Education Development program. Visit our web site at [www.cc-oic.org](http://www.cc-oic.org). Make a financial donation to support CC-OIC.

Our theme this year is "The Difference of One ... Miracles at Work." Just one person, through one

act of kindness, can help us put an unemployed neighbor back to work. Just one organization, through an act of generosity, can help an underemployed and undereducated portion of our population lift its circumstances.

For example:

- After learning how to write a check in one of CC-OIC's ESL classes, a student named Lisa wrote her first check—a donation to support our organization.
- Moe Comeau, a systems engineer at Lockheed Martin, finds time in his hectic work and travel schedule to voluntarily update and maintain our Web site, where visitors can check out our programs.
- Barclay Friends, through its partnership with our Certified Nurse Assistant program, provides the opportunity for our students to gain supervised, practical training with residents at the senior living center.

There are all sorts of ways you, too, can contribute to and share in our success.

Great things are happening at CC-OIC. Please join us.

*Joyce Chester*

Joyce Chester, Executive Director

## OH, I SEE!

A young woman named Lisa faithfully attended English as a Second Language (ESL) classes after moving from China to the United States in January. In the second-level course taught by Maryann Mann, Lisa learned practical life skills, as well as the English language, including how to address an envelope and schedule a doctor appointment by phone.

One day in class, Lisa learned how to write a check. She wrote her first check to CC-OIC. "I wanted to help," she said.

Later she also learned the English vocabulary for an action she already understood — "giving back."

*Lisa, a donor and an ESL student, works with teacher Maryann Mann. After learning to write a check, she wrote her very first one as a donation to CC-OIC.*



# MAKE A DIFFERENCE

## WISH LIST—URGENT NEEDS

- New telephone system for 15 lines (including fax machine)
- Upgraded Microsoft Office Software—12 workstation licenses for West Chester; 8 for Phoenixville

## WHAT YOUR FINANCIAL DONATIONS CAN BUY

- \$1 per week—(\$52 per year)—Bus tokens for one young adult to participate in life skills/job skills program for 12 weeks
- \$5 per week—(\$260 per year)—10 GED preparation books for young adults preparing for GED exam
- \$10 per week—(\$520 per year)—Furnishes 18 Nurse Aide trainees with their own stethoscope and blood pressure kit
- \$20 per week—(\$1040 per year)—Purchases a software program on training and employability for 200 clients a year

To send a contribution to CC-OIC, please log onto [www.cc-oic.org](http://www.cc-oic.org) and click on "Donate On-line," or send a check (an envelope has been provided for your convenience) to:

Chester County OIC  
790 E. Market Street, Suite 100  
West Chester, PA 19382

## NEW PROGRAM NEW JOB NEW HOME NEW LIFE

Five years ago, Toma Okeme was homeless and nearly penniless. An immigrant to the U.S. from Africa, Toma worked as a housekeeper. She and her infant daughter Emma lived in a shelter. "It was difficult," said Toma. Even the American coins she used to pay for bus fare mystified her.

"I cried," Toma said. "I looked in the mirror and didn't like what I saw. A friend told me life wouldn't always be that way, but I didn't know where



Emma and Toma Okeme

I would find a better opportunity."

Then Toma heard about CC-OIC's new Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) program. And, as her friend had reassured her, her life began to change. She completed the ten-week course, graduating with CC-OIC's first CNA class and worked as a nurse's aide for a year-and-a-half. Enjoying her work and striving for higher goals, Toma returned to school, with CC-OIC as a support system, and earned a Licensed Practical Nurse degree.

Today, Toma is a nurse at the Pocopson Home for the Aged and she recently bought her first home. The house—with three bedrooms, a garden filled with roses and a garage that holds the car she now owns—is on a quiet street where Emma, now a five-year-old, plays with friends.

"Going to the nurse aide training program was like seeing a door open," said Toma.

Thanks to CC-OIC, more than 70 people have completed the CNA program and are filling employment needs in the healthcare profession in Chester County.

## SHINING STARS

Did you ever notice on a dark night how much of a difference even a few stars can make? Like beacons, they light up the darkness and guide our way. At a banquet on Oct. 24, CC-OIC honored two such shining stars—Moe Comeau and Barclay Friends.

✦ Because of "Webbie" Moe Comeau, hundreds of people can easily find what programs are available through CC-OIC, when and where classes or fundraising events are taking place, and how they can donate to CC-OIC online. Nearly four years ago, Moe responded to CC-OIC's request for help through NOVA, Lockheed Martin Corporation's Network of Volunteer Associates. Dozens of web pages and hundreds of updates later, Moe is still maintaining CC-OIC's website—coordinating information, and creating and testing web pages. According to Moe, he manages his volunteer assignment around a busy work travel schedule and gets a sense of pride in his accomplishments for CC-OIC.

✦ For nearly five years, senior living community Barclay Friends in West Chester has partnered with CC-OIC's Certified Nurse Assistant and other professional development programs. Through its generous partnership, Barclay provides the opportunity for students to apply their theoretical knowledge to a firsthand, supervised experience with patients—helping bathe and feed residents, and learning how to use a special lift to help them in and out of bed. It also gives students the chance to experience a well-run, well-funded and compassionate facility.

According to Gina Venuti, deputy director at CC-OIC, the practical experience is invaluable. Barclay Friends also hires some of the program's graduates, a benefit of the partnership for both organizations. Ultimately, the entire community benefits from more experienced healthcare professionals and better care.



## LETTER FROM OUR CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Chester County OIC has been an important part of our community for the past 29 years. As president of its board for ten years, I am proud of our track record of working with clients over long periods of time to fulfill our mission of "putting people to work." We work beyond "band-aid solutions" for long-term success.

Last year alone, 80% of CC-OIC program graduates either obtained

jobs or moved up to better positions. Those 2007 graduates are now generating approximately \$8 million in our local economy.

In today's challenging economic climate, CC-OIC's work is more vital to our county than ever. By providing general literacy-based education, workforce readiness programs and specific on-the-job training, CC-OIC is helping build a stronger community. It is helping our neighbors become self-sufficient, contributing members of our society.

Serving on CC-OIC's board of directors since 1996 has provided me a unique opportunity to give back to our community. I encourage you to do the same—to give back, to lend a hand to the many people who need help and to watch as your efforts help our corner of the world thrive.

Thank you for making a difference!

*John S. Thompson*

John S. Thompson,  
Chairman of the Board

## THE LATEST WORD:

### ADVANCED OFFICE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

Dr. Angela Tekely, assistant dean in Immaculata University's College of Lifelong Learning, first read about the work of CC-OIC from a newspaper ad. Realizing that the university and the non-profit organization shared a commitment to lifelong learning and an educated workforce, she contacted staff members at CC-OIC to discuss common goals.

They discussed local needs and desired skill sets, and how Immaculata and CC-OIC could partner on projects. The result was the Advanced Office Technology program, a nine-week course that prepares people for better-paying

office positions. The curriculum prepares students for Microsoft Office Word Certification and training for other practical office skills including writing a business memo and résumé, answering phone calls and scheduling appointments.

Tuition fees and course materials, a \$7,000 value, are free to eligible students. Students who successfully complete the Advanced Office Technology course can earn five credits at Immaculata through the Credit for Prior Learning Program. For more information about enrolling in the program, please call CC-OIC at 610-692-2344.



*Volunteers and singers from Alice's Voices, Scott Middle School Gospel Choir and St. Paul's Baptist Church Inspirational Choir helped feed the body and spirit of festival-goers at CC-OIC's Spaghetti and Gospel Fest on Oct. 11, 2008. Proceeds from the event will support CC-OIC's educational programs.*



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*From left to right: Joyce Chester, CC-OIC, Nydia Han, master of ceremonies for the event and a consumer reporter at 6ABC Action News, and Julie Funk, Director of Community Outreach and Wellness Services at The Chester County Hospital.*

## A 2008 LITERACY HERO:

### CHESTER COUNTY OIC

In April, the West Chester Public Library honored Chester County OIC with the Literacy Heroes 2008 Community Impact Award. Executive Director Joyce Chester accepted the award at a ceremony at the Longwood Gardens Ballroom, where the event drew a standing-room only crowd.

CC-OIC received the award in recognition of its adult education and literacy programs' ongoing, positive impact on the local economy and the life-changing difference it is making for individuals throughout Chester County.



Chester County Opportunities Industrialization Center is a 501(c)3 organization providing free educational programs that prepare individuals for employment and self-sufficiency.



United Way  
of Chester County



*Putting People To Work*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Joyce Chester