

Winter 2009

VANTAGE POINT: VIEW FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



COPYRIGHT 2008 VISUAL TECHNOLOGY

Dear Friends,

This newsletter marks the beginning of Chester County OIC's 30th anniversary—30 years of putting people to work! We've helped our neighbors throughout Chester County reach their goals of education, employment and self-sufficiency.

What a difference it makes to the future strength, economic stability and well-being of our county. Consider this:

- "Secure parental employment reduces the incidence of poverty and its related risks to children." *America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2008.*
- Children who do not live in poverty are less likely to experience learning disabilities and developmental delays (ratio of non-poor to poor children 6.1:8.3), spend half the number of days in the hospital, and

are half as likely to drop out of high school than those who live in poverty. *The Future of Children, 1997.*

The flip side is much darker:

- "On average, high school dropouts earn 27 percent less than high-school graduates, and 58 percent less than college graduates. ... The overall life expectancy of a high-school dropout is significantly shorter than that of a high-school graduate. ... These young people often leave behind their own young children who, without appropriate intervention, will face the same grim future." *A Collective Responsibility, A Collective Work, Center for Law and Social Policy, May 2008.*

Chester County OIC continues to offer programs that combat a lack of education, unemployment and the ensuing risks of poverty. We provide General Education Development (GED) classes in West Chester and tutoring sessions at the Chester County Library in Exton. We operate Move Up, a work-readiness and GED program in Coatesville for single parents under the age of 21. You can read more about these programs, as well as our recent triumphs, in this issue of OIC Works.

Joyce Chester, Executive Director

THE DIFFERENCE OF ONE...

Recently a young man, dressed in a smart business suit, entered my office. He asked if I recognized him. When I said no, he told me he had been a student in our I CAN program that teaches life skills and academic remediation for struggling youth. He said he is now employed and on his own; I CAN helped him to succeed.

He brought along a friend and referred her to CC-OIC's Certified Nurse Assistant program. She is now preparing to graduate from the program and move into the workforce. One thriving graduate can boost the life of another community member and the cycle can continue.

For 30 years, CC-OIC has been celebrating similar success stories. We look forward to continuing our service to the community in the future.

CC-OIC students practice CPR in preparation for becoming Certified Nurse Assistants. Four students completed the program Nov. 20, 2008, and eleven students are enrolled in the current class.



FROM STUDENT TO STAFFER: SUE SHIEH

by Cindy DeMoss, Adult Literacy Program Coordinator

"Coming to America from Taiwan, I was frustrated until I could speak enough English to express myself," said Sue (Shwuhwa) Shieh, program assistant for the CC-OIC Workforce Literacy Program. "Now I encourage our ESL students to try speaking English a lot, even if they make mistakes."



Sue entered the Literacy program as a student in 2002. She was tutored by volunteers and joined the English as a Second Language Conversation Group. Mythri Menon, the group leader, told them that "someday when you're able, you can help new immigrants," and in 2006 Sue volunteered to help with CC-OIC's literacy program. That success led to being hired as a part-time staffer for the very program that secured her English skills.

MOVING UP THROUGH TEAMWORK!

Step inside the Coatesville classroom of CC-OIC's Move Up program. Teachers Gail Holden and Claire Gavin greet students, whose snow-caked shoes show evidence of walking to class after a winter storm. Students, adults who are here to complete their high school education, listen to a motivational thought for the day, read books, solve math problems and study history lessons together around a long conference table.

After three hours of GED preparation and a short lunch, Move Up students head back to the classroom to practice interviewing and interpersonal communication skills and setting goals. The resolve of these students—single parents under the age of 21—to improve their lot in life is written on their faces.

Move Up is CC-OIC's work-readiness and GED program that is part of Chester County's Employment Advancement and Retention Network (EARN), and a joint initiative of the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Bureau of Adult Basic Literacy Education and the Department of Public Welfare. Also known as the Welfare to Work program, in addition to GED preparation it includes instruction in business math and writing, adult basic education and vocational counseling.

"This program is an important component in lifelong learning. It helps build a foundation of workplace knowledge, skills and employability," said Lila Singleton, program manager of the Chester County Department of Community Development that oversees EARN.

"These are some of the most amazing students you'll ever meet," said Holden. They take the motivational thoughts for the day to heart and put them into action. "Yesterday afternoon, two Move Up students were at the chalkboard working on a math problem," she said. "When one was stuck, the other helped her. As they finished the problem together, one of them recited a thought for the day from the previous week: 'Teamwork makes the dream work.'"

Photo on Back Page: (L-R) Instructor Lavinia Buckwalter, Joseph McGroaty, and County Commissioner Kathi Cozzone celebrate McGroaty's Citation of Achievement from the Chester County commissioners' office.

CC-OIC HONORS GRADUATES

On Nov. 20, 2008, four students graduated from the CC-OIC's Certified Nurse Assistant program. Commencement and the pinning ceremony, which drew a standing room-only crowd of proud family members and friends, celebrated the culmination of ten weeks of classroom and practical work.

During training sessions, students learned to take vital signs including blood pressure, heart rate and weight, and to help elderly patients with bathing, feeding and exercising their muscles in a range of motion.

Congratulations to graduates Zuleica Guadalupe Badillo, Breanna Goodwin, Takeria Brown and Tanya Smith.

OUT AND ABOUT

Joyce Chester, executive director at CC-OIC, and Angela Tekely, assistant dean in Immaculata University's College of Lifelong Learning, both spoke at the 44th Annual Pennsylvania Adult Continuing Education (PAACE) conference in Hershey, Pennsylvania, on Feb. 11, 2009. Their presentation familiarized hundreds of educators, administrators and government representatives with CC-OIC's and Immaculata's Advanced Office Technology program.

In addition to providing details about the Advanced Office Technology program for other institutions looking to model its success, the presentation provided a forum to seek sponsors and to celebrate the triumphs of program graduate Joseph McGroaty. After dropping out of high school, McGroaty earned a GED, attended the office technology program and earned a Microsoft Office Specialist certificate. He is now working full-time and attending college part-time.

FROM OUR BOARD

CC-OIC, A “WIN, WIN” OPPORTUNITY

By Olympia Mitchell, CC-OIC Board Member

CC-OIC serves the greater community by empowering program participants to succeed in the workplace through the teaching of education, life, and work skills necessary to move from unemployment or underemployment to making a better contribution to their families and to society as a whole. Our skills development and empowerment programs promote a comprehensive approach to workforce development. CC-OIC is a “win,win” opportunity for our clients and for employers. Our clients gain practical, marketable skills leading to employment, and employers gain a turnkey workforce that is better educated and skilled.

CC-OIC’s programs are a direct result of a comprehensive review of the needs of underrepresented citizens in our community and a response to

market trends of growing industries and changing populations. Our programs include:

- Advance Office Technology
- GED Preparation
- Literacy Tutoring
- English as a Second Language
- Job Training & Life Skills (including Certified Nursing Assistant)



The cost to eligible students for these programs is “zero.” CC-OIC’s revenue to support the services provided comes from grants and donations. Additional monies come from the generosity of individuals, foundations, and corporations. CC-OIC also sponsors two annual major fundraising events:

- Annual Banquet and Dance in the fall
- Annual Spaghetti Dinner and Gospel Fest, also in the fall

As most people know, many organizations are experiencing a decrease in government funding. We invite you to support our events and to make a contribution by visiting CC-OIC’s website at www.cc-oic.org.

A WORKING COMMUNITY THROUGH WRN



WRN Executive Director Nina Malone, CCOIC Preparing for Independence Coordinator Kate Rivas, CCOIC nurse aide student Takeria Brown, WRN Board President Paula Paisley, CCOIC Youth Program Director Ceil Harkness and CC-OIC Deputy Director and Nurse Assistant Training Program Director Gina Venuti celebrate their partnership during the WRN December Holiday Luncheon.

Imagine that you asked for help and a fairy godmother appeared to fulfill your wish. Then imagine that you asked again and 100 of them materialized.

For a CC-OIC student who needed gas money to take an exam in Lancaster, then two students who were looking for GED-fee sponsors, and later CC-OIC as an organization that was hoping to raise public awareness of its activities, that’s just what happened. Their wishes were granted by 100+ generous members of the Women’s Referral Network of Chester County (WRN).

Every two years, WRN selects a deserving Community Relations Partner to support in a multitude of ways, said Nina Malone, executive director of WRN. CC-OIC is that partner for 2008 and 2009.

Each month at its meetings, WRN publicizes CC-OIC’s works and its wish list to its members. It highlights CC-OIC on its website and in online messages to raise visibility of the nonprofit. At a holiday luncheon in December, WRN spotlighted CC-OIC program coordinators and one of its students, and enriched the organization with a check for nearly \$700.

CHESTER COUNTY
oicWORKS
PUTTING PEOPLE TO WORK

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



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Thompson, **CHAIRMAN**

George Sheppard, **TREASURER**

Joyce Taylor, **SECRETARY**

Julienne B. Mbuy

Olympia Mitchell

Thomas R. Shick

L. Diane Toalton

Cynthia Vickers Wilson, Esq.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
 Joyce Chester



Putting People To Work

www.cc-oic.org

(610) 917-0545—Fax
 (610) 917-2344—Phone
 Phoenixville, PA 19340
 Suite 201
 347 Bridge Street

PHOENIXVILLE OFFICE

(610) 918-2690—Fax
 (610) 692-2344—Phone
 West Chester, PA 19382
 Suite 100
 790 E. Market Street

WEST CHESTER OFFICE

