



Annual Report

2011-2012

Onondaga Citizens League Mission Statement

The Onondaga Citizens League fosters informed public discourse by identifying and studying critical community issues affecting Central New York, developing recommendations for action, and communicating study findings to interested and affected groups.

Stay connected with OCL

Visit our website:
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Message from the Board Presidents

Dear OCL members:

The 2012 election season bombards us with sound-bites, flashy ads and information spin; a process that often leaves the citizenry frustrated, discouraged and confused about important issues of the day. Sadly, tuning out is not an unreasonable reaction.

OCL is the antithesis of the modern day political campaign. OCL devotes months, not minutes or seconds, to consideration of critical community issues. We strive for a thorough and balanced approach to identifying and understanding such issues, and encourage meaningful action in response. OCL's mission is built on the belief that every citizen has a role in analyzing complicated public policy issues and developing thoughtful recommendations for action to improve decision making and active engagement for the betterment of our entire community.

Public elections are absolutely a vital part of our democratic process. Civic engagement is essential to keep our elected officials connected with the pulse of the community they serve. OCL takes seriously its role as "community think tank" and continuously strives to add to public understanding of key policy issues.

In the coming year, we hope you will join us as we continue to explore ideas and goals to make Central New York an even better place to live and work.

Sincerely,

Karen B. Kitney
2011-2012 Board President

Paul M. Predmore
2012-2013 Board President

OCL Annual Report September 2011 - August 2012

OCL Study Reports

The annual study is the most important activity of the Citizens League. As each year's study gets underway, OCL board members and volunteers continue to work on communication of study findings and advocacy for recommendations from past reports.

2012 Study: The World at Our Doorstep

"*The World at Our Doorstep*" study, led by OCL Board members **Heidi Holtz** and **Kristen Mucitelli-Heath**, began in March 2012. The purpose of the study is to develop a clearer picture and understanding of the refugee resettlement experience in Onondaga County, examine innovative practices around the country and identify ways to make us a more welcoming community. The Study Committee, composed of dozens of community members including agency staff and volunteers involved in refugee resettlement, held meetings and presentations throughout the spring and summer in order to define the topic and explore selected subject areas including housing, public safety, jobs and economic development, literacy, education and youth. The Study Committee planned a fall film series featuring three documentaries on refugee resettlement in other communities. Thanks to a grant from the Gifford Foundation, the committee is planning an oral history project in conjunction with the Onondaga Historical Association. The study process will conclude later this year.

2010-11 Study: Community Image: Valuing our Public Spaces

Board members **Tony Malavenda** and **Merike Treier** were co-chairs of the 2010-11 study "*Community Image: Valuing our Public Spaces*." The report was completed at the end of 2011 and distributed in 2012. In place of recommendations, the Study Committee developed a series of Action Steps. The initiatives included creation of the **Civic Beautification Award**, presented at the June 2012 annual meeting for the "Susan Atseff Memorial Park," a public-private collaboration at Salt Springs Park. The committee also sponsored a series of discussions and walking tours on **Urban Design and City Image** by **Christine Capella-Peters** and **George Curry**. Under a third Action Step, **Go Grants**, \$500 was awarded enabling a City staff member to attend a conference on reclaiming vacant properties, a community image issue. The committee plans to follow-up with a **CityScapes Grant** initiative for small civic beautification projects.

2008-09 OCL Report: Rethinking I-81

The Citizens League continues to be involved in discussions and activities concerning public input and planning for the major I-81 corridor study. OCL participates as a member of the Community Liaison Committee for "The I-81 Challenge" transportation study's public input process. In the past year, OCL has continued to give presentations on the report findings to community groups, and was mentioned in a National Public Radio story on I-81 in July 2012.

OCL NEWS

2012 OCL Annual Meeting

The OCL Annual Meeting was held on June 6, 2012 at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. Retiring board members **Betty DeFazio** and **Cynthia Stevenson** were thanked for their service to the Board. Board member and past president **Tony Malavenda** chaired the Nominating Committee. Board members **Donna DeSiato**, **Marion Ervin**, **Benjamin Lockwood**, **Paul Predmore**, **Addie Silvia**, and **Merike Treier** were appointed to second three-year terms.

New board members appointed to three-year terms commencing in September 2012 are:

Laurie Black	Syracuse 20/20
Virginia Carmody	Literacy Coalition
Linda Hartsock	Syracuse University Community Engagement
Andrew Maxwell	City of Syracuse Bureau of Planning
Stephen Skinner	Skinner Development
Maryam Wasmund	FilterTech

Keynote speaker at the 2012 annual meeting was former **New York State Lieutenant Governor Richard Ravitch**, an advisor to Syracuse Mayor Stephanie Miner on municipal finances. Mr. Ravitch, who chairs the Mayor's Syracuse Municipal Financial Advisory Board, highlighted the trends that are forcing the city to confront drastic budget decisions.

On behalf of OCL, Board members **Lisa Daly** and **Grant Reeher** presented the **2012 Levi L. Smith Civic Education Award** to **Professor Emeritus Ralph Ketcham** of the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University for promoting civic education and engagement. A scholar and educator for over 60 years, Ketcham began his career at SU as a graduate fellow in 1951 and received his PhD in 1956. He was named Professor of American Studies and Public Affairs at SU in 1963, Professor of Political Science in 1965, Professor of History in 1968, and Maxwell Professor of Citizenship and Public Af-

fairs in 1994. His specialties include American political thought, the era of the American Revolution, public policy, and comparative political cultures. He is the author of scores of books and other publications. Ketcham is presently working on a manuscript, "The American Political Science Association and the Teaching of Democracy and Citizenship in the Twentieth Century." In 2003, Ketcham received the George Arents Pioneer Medal, which recognizes career accomplishment and is the highest alumni honor Syracuse University bestows.

The Levi L. Smith Civic Education Award was named for the founder and former executive vice president of the Citizens League, and honors an outstanding citizen or organization that has contributed to the field and practice of civic education in Central New York. Recipients have demonstrated understanding of, and commitment to, citizen education and involvement in public affairs.

2011-2012 Board of Directors

Kevin Agee, Pastor, Hopps Memorial CME Church
 Jason Allers, Vice President, Agency Specialists Insurance Group
 Sandra Barrett, Executive Vice President, Onondaga Citizens League
 Barbara Carranti, Clinical Asst. Professor, Le Moyne College
 Elizabeth Dailey, Executive Director, Onondaga County Public Library
 Lisa Daly, Program Manager, Internet Consultant
 Betty DeFazio, Corporate Director Community Affairs and Public Policy/Planned Parenthood of Rochester/Syracuse

Donna DeSiato, Superintendent, East Syracuse-Minoa Central School District
 William Emm, CFO, SUNY OCC
 Marion Ervin, Community Volunteer
 Michael Feng, VP of System Integration, Progressive Expert Consulting
 Karen Hanford, Community Volunteer
 David Holder, President, Syracuse Convention and Visitors Bureau
 Heidi Holtz, Director of Research and Projects, Gifford Foundation
 Virgil Hutchinson, Owner, BD Trauma Scene Clean, Inc.
 Karen Kitney, Community Volunteer
 Benjamin Lockwood, Director of Development, Housing Visions, Inc.
 Anthony Malavenda, Owner, Duke's Root Control Inc.
 Kristen Mucitelli-Heath, Director of State, Federal Relations and Community Initiatives, St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center
 Paul Predmore, Manager, Green & Seifter Attorneys
 Grant Reeher, Professor, Syracuse University
 Wendy Riccelli, Manager, Tax Department, Testone, Marshall & Discenza
 Peter Sarver, Executive Director, Welch Terrace
 Adelaide Silvia, Community Volunteer
 Cynthia Stevenson, Program Director, Onondaga County Office of Aging & Youth
 Albert Stirpe, Jr. Synapse Sustainability Trust
 Merike Treier, Executive Director, Downtown Committee of Syracuse

Financial Statement—September 2011-August 2012

Revenue		Expenses	
Membership Dues	\$7,260	Printing and Postage	\$3,026
Corporate Contributions	\$2,000	Professional Services	\$5,170
Annual Meeting	\$2,855	Supplies and Miscellaneous	\$3,025
Bank Interest	\$54	Annual Meeting	\$2,959
Gifford Grant	\$3,500		
Total Revenue	\$15,669	Total Expenses	\$14,180
Net from Operations			\$1,489
Opening Fund Balance	\$51,356	Year-end Fund Balance	\$52,845