


2006-2007 Board of Directors

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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.

Onondaga Citizens League
c/o Syracuse University
University College
700 University Avenue
Syracuse NY 13244-2530



Onondaga Citizens League

Annual Report

2006-2007

Dear OCL Members:

When Lee Smith and a group of civic leaders started the Onondaga Citizens League nearly 30 years ago, they did so with the belief that active citizenship is an essential element of good democratic governance. As OCL members, we know that to be effective, the active citizen must be well-informed, with an in-depth understanding of complex community issues.

Through OCL, citizens with differing perspectives and a wide range of knowledge can come together to develop a common understanding of issues and develop innovative solutions to community problems. An important part of the Citizens League mission is to see that our reports and recommendations are heard throughout the area and implemented by government and community organizations. In that regard, individual participants in OCL studies, and partner organizations, play a key role in influencing decision makers and undertaking actions to facilitate change and implement policy changes.

OCL study reports have long lives as blueprints for solutions, and many recommendations have been realized or are being implemented.

The 2006 Downtown Study, OCL's 27th report, was dedicated to founder Levi L. Smith, who passed away on February 7, 2007. Lee's leadership and guidance of the League for over 20 years established OCL's reputation as a respected organization and valued community resource. Thank you for helping to continue Lee's legacy through the work of the Citizens League.

Sincerely,



Elaine Walter, 2007-08 Board President



Sandra Barrett, Executive Vice President

Visit our web site: onondagacitizensleague.org

E-mail: ocl@syr.edu

Phone: 315-443-4846

OCL Study Reports

Health Inequalities in Syracuse and Onondaga County—2007 Study

OCL Board members Betty DeFazio and Mayra Urrutia are the co-chairs of the current study of the problems associated with inequalities in health outcomes, health status, and access to healthcare in Onondaga County. The study committee, established as its mission statement: To inform and mobilize the community about inequalities in health outcomes, health status, and access to healthcare in Onondaga County. In addition to describing and promoting understanding of the problems, the committee hopes to develop specific recommendations to address the causes of inequalities.

The work of the committee began in the spring, with review and discussion of recent studies and reports on the issue of disparities nationally. Throughout the spring and summer, the committee held discussions and public sessions with local experts on the areas established for focus: maternal and child health; chronic disease; long-term care; HIV/AIDS; nutrition; and lack of health care coverage. The study report is due to be completed and released in early 2008.

Downtown Study and Follow-up—OCL’s 2006 report, “Leveraging Better Outcomes for Downtown,” released in April 2007, recommends a number of public

policy initiatives to enhance the prospects for new investment in the downtown core over the next decade. Recommendations include implementation and enforcement of a sound and thoughtful downtown master plan, establishment of a municipal parking entity for coordinated management of parking resources, enactment of an effective NYS historic tax credit to help spur the rehabilitation of downtown’s historic building stock, and enhanced public improvements and marketing efforts.

With the support of the county executive, and the appointment by the mayor of study co-chair Doug Sutherland to head an implementation task force addressing city policies, many of the report recommendations are already under consideration by city, county and business leaders. Study co-chairs, Joe Ash and Sutherland, are working with the Economic Development Leadership Team (including the county executive and the mayor) on an implementation plan to tackle several major issue areas beginning with parking, the Convention Center project and its connection to downtown, and leveraging growth of the medical and educational institutions on University Hill to benefit downtown.

2007 Downtown Living Tour—Downtown residential is leading the current reinvention of downtown, so to showcase the diversity of existing downtown housing,

OCL presented a Downtown Living Tour on Saturday, May 19. Nearly 2,000 people attended the first-ever Downtown Living Tour, organized following the issuance of the 2006 study report. Included were a dozen apartments, lofts and condominiums, including historic renovations and new construction, as well as projects in design or underway. The downtown ‘parade of homes’ replaced the usual OCL Community Leadership Conference and highlighted the many creative housing options already existing downtown. The website for the tour is www.downtownlivingtour.syr.edu. The Downtown Committee of Syracuse, one of OCL’s partners in planning the event, will take the lead in organizing another downtown living tour in 2008.

Government Consolidation Study Follow-up—The “Strategic Government Consolidation” report forms the basis of Syracuse 20/20’s Government Modernization Project. The grassroots effort, in which many OCL members remain involved, attempts to grow support among the general public for changes in government, in order to compel politicians to make changes necessary to sustain Upstate New York. Learn more or get involved at <http://syracuse20/20.org>.

Political Participation Study Follow-up—Acting on one of the recommendations in the Onondaga Citizens League’s 2004

study, “*Disappearing Democracy? A Report on Political Participation in Onondaga County*,” the Syracuse League of Women Voters has organized a **Citizen Fact-Checkers Project** to analyze the accuracy of campaign advertisements and help voters make informed decisions. OCL Study Committee members served on the planning committee.

Annual Meeting

The OCL Annual Meeting was held on June 13, 2007 at the Syracuse Renaissance Hotel. Board member **Kim Scott** chaired the Nominating Committee. Board member **Jesse Dowdell**, of Southwest Community Center, was appointed to a second three-year term.

New board members appointed to three-year terms commencing in September 2007 are:

- Jason Allers**, Haylor, Freyer & Coon Insurance
- Linda Lopez**, Salvation Army
- Kevin McAuliffe**, Green & Seifter LLC
- Sharon Owens**, Home Headquarters
- Rhoda Smith**, 40 Below

Outgoing Board members **Larry Bousquet**, **Dennis Connors**, and **Frank Woolever** were thanked for their six years of service to the board.

Keynote speaker at the 2007 annual meeting was **Kenyon Craig**, President of Housing Visions Unlimited, a partnership of dedicated citizens focused on making a positive change in the Syracuse Greater East Genesee Street Neighborhood. Starting as a taskforce of the University United Methodist Church in 1989, this group set out to revitalize a neighborhood and by doing so, proved to be a catalyst for positive and lasting changes. Housing Visions Unlimited, Inc. continues to improve the quality of housing and the quality of life in the Greater East Genesee Street neighborhood of Syracuse and to create a model for revitalizing other neighborhoods.

Levi L. Smith Civic Education Award

OCL awarded the fifth annual Levi L. Smith Civic Education Award to Kathleen DeForge, Social Studies Department Chair at Marcellus

Central Schools, at the OCL annual meeting on June 13, 2007.

Ms. DeForge was selected as the recipient of this year’s award for her commitment and promotion of Civic Education. As the department chair at Marcellus Central Schools, Kathy and her colleagues strive to educate well-informed citizens by actively involving the Marcellus students in the process of self-governance. Their efforts make the school district’s mission “that each student will develop the responsibility, the confidence in his/her talents, and the knowledge necessary to function as a productive and contributing citizen in a diverse and changing world” a reality.

The Onondaga Citizens League created the Levi L. Smith Civic Education Award to honor outstanding citizens and organizations whose contributions to the field and practice of civic education have benefited Central New York. The namesake of the award is the founder and former executive vice president of the Citizens League who for many years has exemplified good citizenship by giving much time, thought and effort to strengthening civic education.

Financial Statement—September 2006-August 2007

Revenue	Expenses
Memberships	Printing and Postage
\$6,830	\$1,751
Corporate Contributions	Professional Services
3,667	6,350
Annual Meeting.....	Annual Meeting.....
1,750	1,715
Downtown Living Tour.....	Supplies and Miscellaneous
46,475	2,536
Bank Interest	Downtown Living Tour.....
851	23,780
Total.....	Total.....
\$59,573	\$36,133
Opening Fund Balance	Net from Operations.....
\$25,561	\$23,440
	Year-end Fund Balance
	\$49,001