


2008-2009 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

2008-2009

Dear OCL Members:

For over thirty years, OCL members have taken the importance of civic engagement to heart as each year we select an issue affecting our community to address. To the credit of the study committees, OCL's final reports do not just "sit on a shelf" somewhere. In fact, over the years, our work is referenced time and again by community groups, elected leaders, and decision-makers. As a result, the insights and recommendations of study groups have enhanced the quality of life in Central New York.

While we reflect on three decades of accomplishment, the OCL board has begun a process to update its strategic plan. One thing will remain constant: the commitment to continue the study process that is core to the OCL mission. *"The Onondaga Citizens League fosters informed public discourse by identifying and studying critical community issues, developing recommendations for action, and communicating study findings to interested and affected groups."*

Although not all realize it, residents of Syracuse and Onondaga County are fortunate to have a citizens group that tackles the issues of the day. OCL is the envy of colleagues from other parts of New York State who recognize OCL as a valuable community asset.

Thank you for supporting the work of OCL, and for continuing to be involved, as we all strive to make our community a better place.

Sincerely,



Betty DeFazio
2009-2010 Board President



Sandra Barrett
Executive Vice President

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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 recommendations from past reports.

2009-10 Study: *What Does It Mean To Be Green?*

Board members **Jason Allers** and **David Holder** are co-chairs of the current OCL study, which focuses on three fundamental questions about the environmental sustainability of Central New York:

- What defines a sustainable community or region?
- How does a commitment to principles of sustainability shape or transform public policy and, by extension, our community?
- How can we, as citizens, influence leaders to pursue those policies?

The study topic was selected based on several suggestions related to sustainability from OCL members. In selecting the “green” theme, the Study Topic Selection Committee recognized that the benefits of sustainability—loosely defined as meeting the needs of today’s generation without compromising the needs of future generations—extend beyond the environment. “Going green” can spur economic development, attract young people and innovators to our city and region, increase community pride, and enhance the quality of life and health for residents, among other benefits. The Study Committee began meeting in May 2009 to plan the study sessions, and intends to complete the study report in June 2010.

To make the study process and research as accessible as possible, OCL created its own Facebook page, as well as a new OCL Green Blog, in addition to continuing to link information on the OCL web site.

2008-09 OCL Report: *Rethinking I-81*

OCL’s *Rethinking I-81* report, issued in June 2009, tackled a topic that has the potential to change the physical and economic landscape of Central New York for future generations. For both the City and County, the need to replace the elevated portion of I-81 through Syracuse due to the structural deterioration of the bridges is the most important public planning opportunity since the decision was made to build the elevated highway fifty years ago. The Study Committee, chaired by **Rebecca Livengood**, assessed the known facts about I-81 and its environs and examined similar situations in other cities. Based on its findings, the Study Committee concluded that rerouting through traffic around the city and converting Almond Street to an attractive, pedestrian-friendly urban boulevard would benefit the entire region. OCL recommended that urban boulevard options be given priority consideration in the planning process because of the potential to improve our region’s competitiveness in the new economy, stimulate employment growth and economic development, and in conjunction with a coordinated land use and transportation plan, lead to a healthier environment.

The report was widely distributed and presentations of the findings were made to several groups throughout the summer.

2007 OCL Study—*How Inequality Makes Us Sick: The Growing Disparities in Health and Health Care*

Follow-up activities continued in 2008-09. An October 2008 event concerning childhood obesity, Healthy Youth for a Healthy Future Roundtable, featured Rear Admiral Steven Galson, M.D., who was then-Acting Surgeon General. In April 2009, Dr. Richard Daines, New York State Commissioner of Health, spoke to a group of community members and health practitioners on “The Obesity Prevention Agenda: Addressing a Public Health Crisis.”

Annual Meeting

The OCL Annual Meeting was held on June 2, 2009 at the Syracuse Renaissance Hotel. Board member **Susan Horn** chaired the **Nominating Committee**. Board members Betty DeFazio of Planned Parenthood of Rochester/Syracuse, Stephen Kearney of the City of Syracuse Economic Development Office, Anthony Malavenda of Duke’s Root Control, Inc., Kimberly Scott of Literacy Powerline, and Cynthia Stevenson of the Onondaga County Department of Aging and Youth, were appointed to second three-year terms.

New board members appointed to three-year terms commencing in September 2009 were:

1. Donna DeSiato, East Syracuse-Minoa Central School District
2. Denise Headd, Friends of the Central Library
3. Virgil Hutchinson, BD Trauma Scene Clean, Inc.
4. Ben Lockwood, Housing Visions, Inc.
5. Paul Predmore, Green & Seifter Attorneys
6. Adelaide Silvia, CNY Technology Development Organization
7. Merike Treier, Downtown Committee of Syracuse

Outgoing Board members Susan Horn, Mary Thompson, and Dr. Gregory Threatte were thanked for their six years of service to the board.

Keynote speaker at the 2009 annual meeting was **U.S. Congressman Dan Maffei**. Talking about the possibility of high speed rail linking NYC and Upstate New York cities to one another, Congressman Maffei recalled how an infrastructure project of magnificent vision changed our

history and our economy close to 200 years ago. “This new railroad—this Erie Canal of the 21st Century—would put us back on the map figuratively and, in some cases, literally. It would not make us a commuter city to New York or Buffalo or Montreal but give us much more reliable access to these cities, and their companies and overcrowded populations better access to us.” Congressman Maffei also envisioned a day when “... we will have succeeded in revitalizing downtown Syracuse because we rerouted I-81, so it no longer cuts through the heart of our city and carved up vibrant neighborhoods. It’s not just new transportation projects that create opportunities for rebirth but also removing the past projects that have become barriers.”

OCL Board members Steve Kearney and Mary Thompson presented the **2009 Levi L. Smith Civic Education Award** to **Judith C. Mower, Ph.D.**, for her outstanding contributions to civic education and engagement. Judy, who co-chaired the 2001 OCL study, *Civic Leadership for Community Transformation*, contributes her time and talents to many civic projects and organizations, including Syracuse 20/20, FOCUS Greater Syracuse and the national Funders Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities. She has been a trustee or director of over 20 nonprofit boards and has helped to launch many community programs and initiatives. 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.

Financial Statement—September 2008-August 2009

Revenue	Expenses
Memberships	Printing and Postage
\$6,370	\$1,667
Corporate Contributions.....	Professional Services
2,450	6,605
Annual Meeting	Annual Meeting
2,575	2,488
Bank Interest.....	Supplies and Miscellaneous
649	2,404
	Total
	\$13,164
Total	Net from Operations.....
\$12,044	-\$1,120
Opening Fund Balance.....	Year-end Fund Balance.....
\$45,697	\$44,576