



Onondaga Citizens League

Annual Report 2012-2013

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.

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Dear OCL Members:

“We’ve Got Issues.” The Onondaga Citizens League has this message stamped on brochures, mugs, and our web site. It is a funny and on-target slogan, succinctly highlighting the role that OCL plays as a thought leader in the community. We have long been known for our willingness to look at complex and/or thorny issues in a clear-eyed, neutral fashion. Our findings are diagnostic and without judgment.

But over the years we’ve also offered solutions that are developed in partnership with numerous community experts and stakeholders. Each study evolves over the course of many months filled with panel presentations, data collection, interviews, and assessment of best in class programs here and around the world. No recommendation is ever made without the support of the study participants, as well as due consideration of potential implementation. Often, we are as aspirational in our solution finding as we are realistic.

In the past year we learned about refugee resettlement and its impact on our community. As part of “The World at Our Doorstep” study we were honored to hear the stories of our New Americans as well as the welcome they have received from numerous agencies, grassroots organizations, and volunteers. Recommendations from the study are already resulting in community change. An added benefit was learning that Central New York already offers “Best in Class” refugee programs—something we should celebrate and were able to document with the study process.

Currently, numerous hardworking community members are studying early childhood education—a subject receiving lots of recent attention nationally as well as on the state and local levels. While we began the study being aware of the importance early childhood experiences to school readiness and long-term educational performance levels, we are learning the extent of the impact of both positive and negative experiences very early in life on children’s futures. We hope to offer some suggestions for bringing community together to focus on this critical issue.

The 19th century author Elizabeth L. Hollander said, “A generation that acquires knowledge without ever understanding how that knowledge can benefit the community is a generation that is not learning what it means to be citizens in a democracy.” Linking learning with citizenship is a core belief of the Onondaga Citizens League. Because we listen carefully as we learn we give voice to those that have questions, celebrate when we as a community do things well, and strategically link people and institutions to resolve or further illuminate some of the issues we examine.

Sincerely,



Heidi Holtz
2013-14 Board President
2012 Study Co-Chair



Paul M. Predmore
2012-2013 Board President
2013 Study Co-Chair

Onondaga Citizens League

Founded in 1978, the Onondaga Citizens League is an independent, not-for-profit organization that encourages civic education and citizen involvement in public issues. For more than 35 years, OCL has represented an outstanding example of citizen participation in public affairs. Membership in OCL is open to any individual or organization in Central New York.

OCL Study Reports

The annual study is the most important activity of the Citizens League. Each study report becomes a resource for the community, a catalyst for community conversations, and a blueprint for actions to promote community improvement. As work progresses on the current year's study, OCL members and partners continue to advocate for recommendations from past reports.

2013 Study: Early Childhood Education: Supporting School Readiness

OCL Board members **Paul Predmore** of Bousquet Holstein, and **Laurie Black** of Syracuse 20/20 are co-chairs of the 2013 study that has begun to survey the current early childhood education landscape in Onondaga County, assess the concerns and challenges, and consider how we could more effectively deploy our existing resources toward the goal that all children enter school ready to learn. The study is building upon increased attention given to early education recently at both the federal and state levels as well as the many existing local initiatives focusing on early childhood education and literacy improvement. The Study Committee, including representatives of many partnering organizations, began work in April with a series of presentations by local experts and practitioners focusing on local data on school readiness and graduation rates, pre-school programs, child care delivery systems and quality measures, family support systems, literacy programs, and health-based initiatives. The study is expected to conclude at the end of the year.

2012 Study: The World at Our Doorstep

"The World at Our Doorstep" study of refugee resettlement in Syracuse helped spur the creation of the **Refugee Alliance**, a broad-based group representing service providers, volunteers, refugee community associations, and others working in the refugee community. The Alliance, which facilitates sharing of information and resources, began as a small working group convened by the **Gifford Foundation** prior to the study but is now expanded to a broad-based coalition working toward increased communication, collaboration, and problem-solving. The Gifford Foundation also supported the development of "**Home Sweet Home**," an exhibit on Syracuse's immigrant history, which incorporates filmed interviews with refugees from vastly different parts of the world. The exhibit is a joint project of OCL and the **Onondaga Historical Association**.

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

As a result of OCL's 2010-11 "Community Image: Valuing our Public Spaces," the Study Committee developed a series of Action Steps including awarding of a **Civic Beautification Award**, presentation of a series of lectures and walking tours on **Urban Design and City Image**, and awarding of a travel grant to a municipal employee to a conference on a community image issue in 2012. OCL completed the final Action Step, awarding of a **CityScapes Grant** to the **Northside Urban Partnership** for the planting of a gateway park on Syracuse's Northside in 2013. The CityScapes award was designed to encourage volunteer efforts on a project to beautify a public space, to increase civic pride and ownership. The NorthsideUp project had the added element of beautifying a gateway park in a neighborhood that is traditionally home to many of the community's refugees and immigrants.

2013 OCL Annual Meeting

The OCL Annual Meeting was held on June 5, 2013 at the new WCNY Education and Broadcast Center. Board member and past president **Karen Kitney** chaired the Nominating Committee.

New board members appointed to three-year terms commencing in September 2013 are:

Elizabeth Dailey, Onondaga County Public Library

Paul Mahalick, CPA, Grossman St. Amour, CPAs

Olive Sephuma, Central New York Community Foundation

Indi Shelby, Community Volunteer

Keynote speaker was **Robert Daino**, WCNY President and CEO, who spoke about the community collaborations that resulted in development of the new broadcast facility and 10,000 sq. ft. community Education Center, and WCNY's leadership in creating a central broadcast delivery service for all of New York and New Jersey's PBS stations. Former OCL Board president **Fred Fiske** provided musical entertainment and sang the 35th anniversary version of his OCL Anthem.

On behalf of OCL, past Civic Education Award recipient **Judy Mower** presented the **2013 Levi L. Smith Civic Education Award** to Syracuse University Chancellor **Nancy Cantor** for promoting civic and community engagement. OCL member and SU Vice President **Marilyn Higgins** accepted the award on behalf of the Chancellor.

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 2012-August 2013

Revenue

Membership Dues.....	\$7,965
Corporate Contributions.....	3,750
Annual Meeting.....	3,795
Refugee Report.....	698
Bank Interest.....	104
Total Revenue.....	\$16,312

Opening Fund Balance..... \$52,845

Expenses

Printing and Postage	\$4,420
Professional Services	7,000
Supplies and Miscellaneous	5,914
Annual Meeting.....	3,892
Total Expenses.....	\$21,226

Net from Operations..... \$(4,914)

Year-end Fund Balance..... \$47,931

2012-2013 Board of Directors

Rev. Kevin Agee, Hopps Memorial CME Church
 Jason Allers, Agency Specialists Insurance Group
 Sandra Barrett, Onondaga Citizens League
 Laurie Black, Syracuse 20/20
 Virginia Carmody, Literacy Coalition of Onondaga County
 Barbara Carranti, Le Moyne College
 Lisa Daly, ITX Corporation
 Donna DeSiato, Ph.D., East Syracuse-Minoa Central
 School District
 Marion Ervin, Community Volunteer
 Michael Feng, Progressive Expert Consulting
 Linda Hartsock, Syracuse University
 David Holder, Syracuse Convention and Visitors Bureau
 Heidi Holtz, Gifford Foundation

Karen Kitney, Community Volunteer
 Benjamin Lockwood, Housing Visions, Inc.
 Anthony Malavenda, Duke's Root Control Inc.
 Andrew Maxwell, City of Syracuse
 Kristen Mucitelli-Heath, St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center
 Paul M. Predmore, Bousquet Holstein LLC
 Grant Reeher, Ph.D., Maxwell School
 Wendy Riccelli, Testone, Marshall & Discenza
 Peter Sarver, Welch Terrace
 Adelaide Silvia, Community Volunteer
 Stephen Skinner, Skinner Properties
 Albert Stirpe Jr., Synapse Sustainability Trust
 Merike Treier, Downtown Committee of Syracuse
 Maryum Wasmund, Filtertech, Inc.