

# Onondaga Citizens League

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## Annual Report

### 2014-2015

#### 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 web site:

[onondagacitizensleague.org](http://onondagacitizensleague.org)

 Like us on Facebook

E-mail: [ocl@syr.edu](mailto:ocl@syr.edu)

Phone: 315-443-4846

Dear OCL Members:

The Onondaga Citizens League has always been on the forefront of community discussion, and this year was no different. OCL's history of embracing challenging issues that impact our community has led the way in how we look at these issues. OCL values the potential and power of an informed citizenry. At its core, OCL members are engaged individuals, committed to informing public discourse so that we can collectively improve the quality of life in our community.

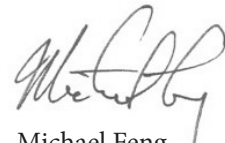
Past OCL studies have looked at the opportunities presented with I-81 and Government Modernization, two topics that are at the forefront in our community today. In the recent past, we have strengthened community relationships by looking at the refugee population in Syracuse, we have taken steps to preserve our future by concentrating on early childhood education, and we have fortified the present by exploring the gap between skills and employment. Our current study, which focuses on transportation, casts a wide net and will help us understand both the power and the challenge facing all of us who live and move around Onondaga County. The study has a local focus and regional impact, and promises to open our eyes to a reality that we often take for granted.

For OCL, collaboration and partnerships are critical to ensure that studies are meaningful, have impact and serve as a tool for action. We have been fortunate to work alongside two incredibly talented staff members who have been with OCL for a combined 27 years. This year we say goodbye to our two longtime staff members and friends, Sandra Barrett and Colleen Karl-Howe. They have been the foundation of OCL for many years and have left a tangible legacy. Thanks to their diligence, they leave an organization ready to begin a new chapter and eager to continue the work they have shepherded over the years. We thank them for their tireless effort and commitment to OCL and to the community. The Onondaga Citizens League will not be the same without them, but will continue carrying the flag and leading the way to a better and more informed community.

Sincerely,



Merike Treier  
2014-15 Board President



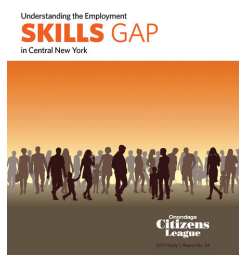
Michael Feng  
2015-16 Board President

## OCL Study Activity

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.

### 2015 Study: How CNY Moves

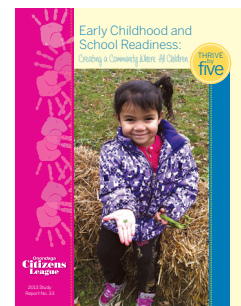
OCL Past President **Heidi Holtz** and Board member **Mary Kate Intaglietta** co-chair OCL's on-going study, exploring how to develop a framework for a 21st century transportation strategy for Syracuse and Onondaga County. The Study Committee began work in May 2015 with scoping sessions to help frame the discussion, then commenced a series of bi-monthly study meetings to consider various aspects of "How CNY Moves," including transportation and land use planning, public transit, transportation and employment, and the needs of low-income and disabled persons. The study will encompass other aspects of transportation, including biking, walking, bus rapid transit, and alternate modes of transportation and uses of technology. Presentations and panel discussions continue through the fall, with a report release planned for spring 2016.



Employers need to modify their recruitment methods, training practices and compensation levels, the committee found, to respond to the labor market and address their staff needs. Employers were advised to invest time and resources in assessing potential candidates, coaching and training new employees, and paying wages that match the education, skills, and experience of employees. For more information or to view the full study, visit [onondagacitizensleague.org](http://onondagacitizensleague.org).

### 2013 Study: Early Childhood and School Readiness

Since the release of OCL report No. 33 in April 2014, the Education Task Force of the **Syracuse 20/20** civic group—led by task force chair **Meg O'Connell** of the Allyn Foundation—convened stakeholders, including the County's Department of Children and Families and nonprofit groups, to implement the primary recommendation of the report. As a result, the Early Childhood Alliance has been formed to work toward creation of an integrated system of early childhood and family support services to ensure that all children enter kindergarten ready to learn. The ECA has begun work on a strategic plan and development of a pilot program aimed at better supporting parents in their efforts as their child's first teacher.



### 2014 Study: Understanding the Employment Skills Gap in Central New York

OCL's report No. 34 was released in April 2015 at a panel discussion coordinated by OCL and the Central New York Education and Business Consortium. Over 50 people convened at Lockheed Martin and heard from a panel that included study committee members **Jeff Craig** of OCM BOCES, **Melissa Menon** of OnPoint for Jobs, and **Ron Boxx** of Visions for Change. Representatives from Lockheed Martin, Loretto, and King & King Architects also participated. The report, co-chaired by OCL board members **Barbara Carranti** of Le Moyne College and **Ben Lockwood** of Housing Visions, addressed the disconnect between the numbers of people seeking employment and extent of unfilled jobs. The yearlong study began by looking at the middle skills gap (jobs that require more than a high school education but less than a four-year college degree). A consistent theme in the skills gap discussion was a lack of soft skills among job seekers. Soft skills include communication skills, time management, problem-solving, and teamwork. It also includes business etiquette such as appropriate dress and workplace behavior. Job-seekers also suffer from a lack of networking skills.

### 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 coalition of refugee leaders, service providers, government agencies, grassroots groups and local foundations. This group, with representation from over 20 entities, continues to meet monthly to build upon the recommendations of the report and to help the community constructively negotiate emergent issues concerning resettlement of new refugee groups.



## 2015 OCL Annual Meeting

The OCL Annual Meeting was held on June 10, 2015 at Drumlins. Board president **Merike Treier** spoke about the Citizens League's commitment to embracing some of the most challenging issues in our community, noting that OCL is an organization that sees the potential and power of an informed citizenry around key issues like the opportunities presented with government modernization or Interstate 81. She also noted that at the core of OCL are its members, engaged individuals committed to informed public discourse and improving the quality of life in our community.

OCL Past President **Heidi Holtz** chaired the Nominating Committee. Board member **Laura Miller** presented the Nominating Committee report. Board members elected to a second term are: **Laurie Black**, Syracuse 20/20; and **Ginny Carmody**, Literacy Coalition of Onondaga County. New board members appointed to three-year terms commencing in September 2015 are:

**Tom Carlin**, Technical Workplace Consulting  
**Rev. Craig French**, University United Methodist Church (ret.)  
**Christopher Gorman**, National Grid  
**Michael La Flair**, Northeast Hawley Development Association  
**Melissa Menon**, OnPoint for Jobs  
**Bill Pollard**, past college president  
**Honora Spillane**, Onondaga County  
**Debbie Stack**, WCNY

**Matt Leighninger**, executive director, of the **Deliberative Democracy Consortium**, was the keynote speaker. Leighninger spoke on "The Next Form of Democracy: Public Participation for the 21st Century," focusing on the relationship shift between citizens and government as communities look for

new ways for people to work together to address complex issues such as education, infrastructure, and economic development. Deliberative democracy describes a new wave of efforts to engage citizens directly in the type of policy discussion and decision-making traditionally left to elected officials and experts.

On behalf of OCL, member **Dennis Connors** presented the **2015 Levi L. Smith Civic Education Award** to **Mike Stanton** and the **Preservation Association of Central New York**. Since its founding in 1974, PACNY has advocated for the preservation of historic buildings, and consistently educated the broader community in the significance of its history, architecture, and civic design. The PACNY listserv, moderated by Mr. Stanton, is a widely read vehicle for civic education and dialogue on matters of urban design, land use planning, and transportation. The Levi L. Smith Civic Education Award was named for the founder 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.

The civic group **Syracuse 20/20** received the inaugural **OCL Study Champion Award** at the June 10 event. Syracuse 20/20 spurred OCL's 2005 Strategic Government Consolidation study and was actively involved in the research and dialogue. The organization then followed up on the topic through a Government Modernization initiative that has resulted in creation of Consensus, the Local Government Modernization Commission. More recently, 20/20, through its Education Task Force, followed up on OCL's Early Childhood and School Readiness Study recommendation, resulting in formation of a county-wide Early Childhood Alliance.



## Financial Statement—September 2014-August 2015

### Revenue

Membership Dues.....	\$8,990
Corporate Contributions.....	4,250
Annual Meeting.....	5,020
Bank Interest.....	82
Total Revenue.....	\$18,342

Opening Fund Balance..... \$45,107

### Expenses

Printing and Postage .....	\$3,080
Professional Services .....	6,315
Supplies and Miscellaneous .....	3,363
Annual Meeting.....	3,906
Total Expenses.....	\$16,664

Net from Operations.....\$1,678

Year-end Fund Balance..... \$46,785

## 2014-2015 Board of Directors

Sandra Barrett, Onondaga Citizens League  
 Laurie Black, Syracuse 20/20  
 Virginia Carmody, Literacy Coalition of Onondaga County  
 Barbara Carranti, Le Moyne College  
 Marion Ervin, Community Volunteer  
 Michael Feng, Progressive Expert Consulting  
 Travis Glazier, Onondaga County  
 Mary Kate Intaglietta, Baltimore Woods  
 Benjamin Lockwood, Housing Visions, Inc.  
 Paul Mahalick, Grossman St. Amour CPAs  
 Andrew Maxwell, City of Syracuse

Doreen Milcarek, Onondaga County Public Library  
 Laura Miller, Darco Manufacturing  
 Kristen Mucitelli-Heath, St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center  
 Tina Nabatchi, Syracuse University  
 Paul Predmore, Bousquet Holstein PLLC  
 Peter Sarver, Welch Terrace  
 Olive Sephuma, CNY Community Foundation  
 Indy Shelby, Community Volunteer  
 Adelaide Silvia, Community Volunteer  
 Jai Subedi, InterFaith Works  
 Merike Treier, Downtown Committee of Syracuse