



St. Lawrence County  
Community Development

2014—2015

Annual Report

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## *Board of Directors*

Nancy Berger	Tessa Fields	Ronald O'Neill
Dee Burlingame	Joseph Finnegan	Carmon Paone
Deborah Chase-Lauther	Regina Fisher	Amber Partin
Dawn Colbert	Anne Mazzotta	Natalie Spilman
Lori Elliott	Christina Martin	Rich Will

## *Executive Director*

Norma S. Cary

## *Fiscal Officer*

Timothy M. Felt

## *Program Directors*

Barb Adams	Head Start
Nicole Woods	Housing Choice Voucher
Shannon Farhnam	Personal Care
John Thompson	Transportation
Jerry Snell	Weatherization

## *Neighborhood Center Directors*

Leacy DuPre'	Canton
Julie Vaisey	Colton/Pierrepont/Parishville
Peggy Cronk	Gouverneur
Elaine Eggleston	Massena
Nicole Sharpe	Ogdensburg
Daisy Cox	Potsdam

*Executive Director*- CDP has had challenges in the past, but this year CDP has dealt with a greater number than have presented in the past fifteen years. The majority of the challenges revolve around stagnant funding or decreases in funding and the ever increasing costs of "doing business."

A year ago, CDP closed the Transportation Program which transported individuals with mental health issues to programming at psycho-social clubs. Even though it was ordered by a physician and appeared on their treatment plans, Medicaid would not reimburse for their transportation since the destination was not medical in nature. We could not afford to provide the service with the amount of dollars provided by CSS at the county. It was determined that it was necessary to keep the repair portion of the program to service the Head Start vehicles since the program needs to have quick turnaround of accomplishing repairs. Financially, this has "hit us hard." Our Board of Directors agreed to starting a for profit business to repair vehicles for the public and to absorb some of the costs of keeping that department. It has been a lengthy process to start the Limited Liability Company to accomplish this. There were many hoops to jump through with the state and the final step of applying for a license to perform vehicle repair was just completed and we are awaiting the paperwork to proceed.

The minimum wage increase and the Affordable Health Care Act also had a big impact on CDP. We now must offer the health insurance to per diem employees who work 30 hours per week on an average. This had over a \$50,000 impact on Personal Care alone. These increases will not be accommodated in our Medicaid rates until 2016 and 2017. The minimum wage impacts both Head Start and Personal Care with their entry level positions. It impacts the wage scale of other positions that have more responsibility, but finances do not allow the agency to make the wages more equitable for all.

The Weatherization dollars were decreased dramatically in the 2014-15 contract. We were forced to do temporary lay-offs at intervals and all staff in that department had their hours cut back to 30 hours per week. We still had to complete the units in the contract. EmPower NY was slow to get started due to delays by EmPower in getting the paperwork set up after making some changes.

Head Start is working diligently on a five year grant application. It is a new process offered to agencies that have not had any outstanding issues and have done well on their triennial reviews. There is an enormous amount of work to be done before it's submission in September. We continue to have turnover in Head Start--often with teachers since they can earn twice as much in a school district job as with the Head Start Program.

The Neighborhood Centers continue to receive ever increasing requests for assistance. We are fortunate to have wonderful community support for the centers. We just received notification of an increase in our grant from United Way which will allow us to assist those in need in our communities to a greater extent. Even though many are in need of food and other assistance for their daily needs, our focus remains on family development with an emphasis on budgeting and education. Job opportunities remain a challenge in our county.

On the positive side, Housing Choice Voucher Program received 50 vouchers for the Ogdensburg area from the Ogdensburg Housing Authority. All of the vouchers that were taken during sequestration have been returned. This is not only a plus for the low-income in our county seeking safe, affordable housing, but for the agency in the receipt of the administrative funds associated with those vouchers. HCVP staff is working diligently to "fill" those vouchers.

In April, Department of State did a comprehensive review of CDP with very good results. We continue to have difficulty with CAP 60 web based software to accomplish intake and tracking of outcomes. There were a number of recommendations, but CAP 60 was the only non-compliance.

For the first time, the Board of Directors is looking at opportunities in the area of fundraising. CDP is experiencing many of the same difficulties that many of our counterparts have experienced for some time and we are exploring all possibilities for increasing revenue and unrestricted dollars. Difficult decisions lie ahead as we review programs and benefits. I am appreciative of CDP staff who continues to work with so many unknowns and still remain committed to the agency and the families we serve.

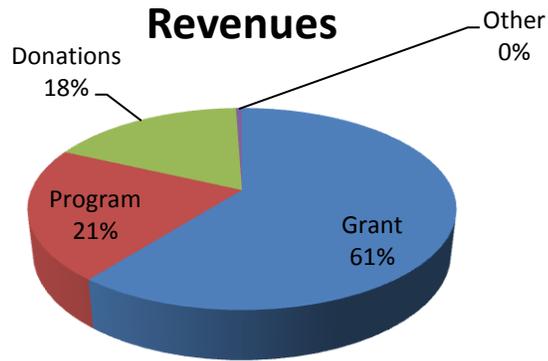
**Finance - Audit** - The firm of Bowers and Company CPA's PLLC has completed their audit work for the year ending December 31, 2014. The auditors gave us an unqualified opinion which is the best report that can be given. The audit went very well and CDP staff was able to gather and offer information well in advance of their arrival date which made the audit process much quicker and easier. There were three audit entries and no management comments reported. The auditors had one suggestion based on other not for profit audits that they have completed this year. That suggestion was to review the cancelled checks returned with our bank statement. They said this doesn't need to be done every month, just randomly.

**Health insurance reform** - The Health Insurance Reform Act is still changing. At our renewal date of October 2014 we were required to offer health insurance benefits to employees that work on average thirty hours or more per week. This requirement allowed several employees within our Personal Care Program to pick up our health insurance plan. The cost of this offering amounted to an additional \$50,000.00 in expenses to that program.

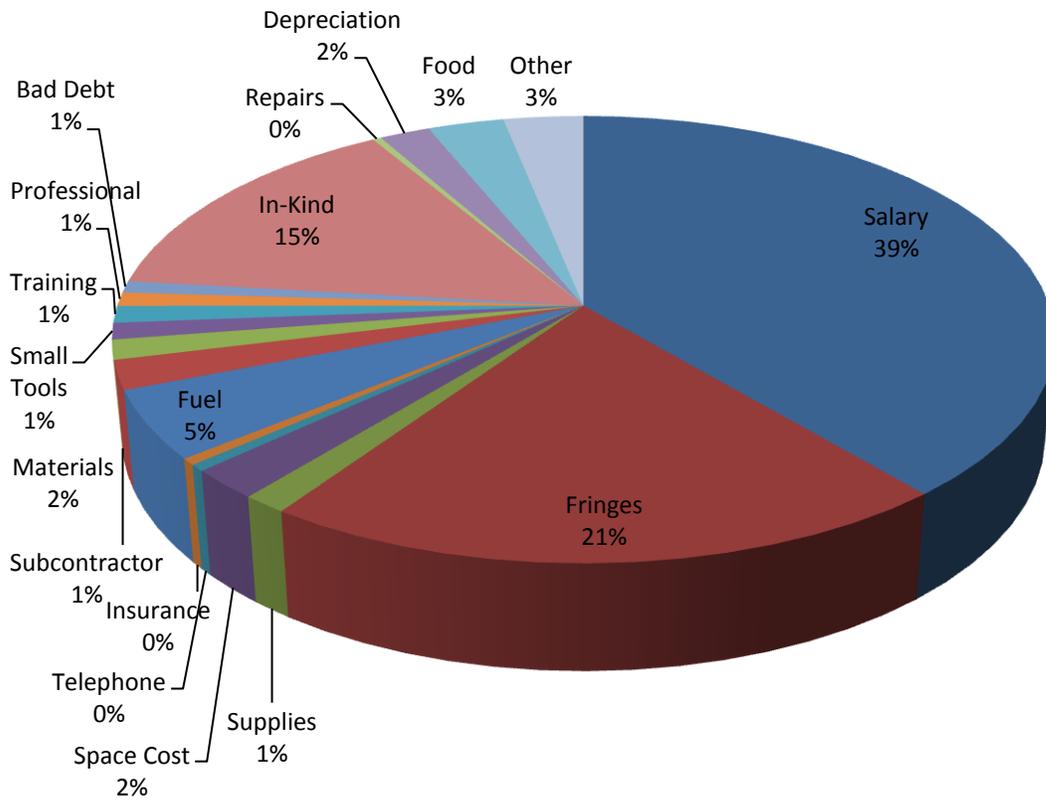
**Budgeting** - Budgeting for 2015 has been very difficult. We are working with many varying items in the salary and fringe department. Minimum wage is scheduled to increase to \$9.75 per hour, but there is a major push to change this to \$10.50 per hour. This additional increase will make it very difficult for some of our programs to balance their budgets.

**Sequestering** - Sequestration has finally come to an end. The last program to recover from this was our Housing Program. All of the vouchers have been re-instated.

## Revenues



## Expenses



*Head Start* - Head Start is a federally funded school readiness program that serves eligible children 3 to 5 years of age and their families in St. Lawrence County. The program provides preschool early childhood education, health, dental, nutrition and social services as well as parent education and parent involvement opportunities.

The mission of St. Lawrence County CDP Head Start states that the agency is "committed to encourage and assist individuals and families to attain self-reliance, dignity and self-sufficiency through education, guidance and services". St. Lawrence County Head Start scaffolds the sensitivity that parents are a child's most important teacher by encouraging their participation in all areas of the program.

St. Lawrence County Head Start begins preparing children for kindergarten as soon as the child is accepted into the program. Staff reviews the child's health and nutrition status with family as well as completes required sensory and developmental screenings. Throughout the year, staff uses the Creative Curriculum to promote school readiness in all areas. This curriculum is research based and is aligned with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework as well as the New York State Prekindergarten Learning Standards. The Creative Curriculum promotes readiness in the areas of language, cognitive development, social, emotional, physical, early reading, and math. Assessment is measured three times yearly and individualized learning goals are established based on the cumulative as well as individual outcomes. All children and their families participate in transitioning, no matter which program option they participate in. Each Center and Home Based area has individualized Transition Plans that move the children and their families along in an organized approach to the child's next placement, whether it be from a Home Based program as a 3 year old to a Head Start Center as a 4 year old for a second year of enrollment or to school for UPK or kindergarten entry. Head Start maintains collaborative agreements with the respective schools in areas where Head Start is located. This past year 189 children transitioned to kindergarten.

Parents are involved at all levels at Head Start. Parent involvement activities differ from location to location around St. Lawrence County. This program year Head Start had a very active Policy Council; they participated in hiring staff as well as made decisions regarding budget and program policies. Around the county, parents have participated in family fun nights, father and child activities, local parades, home visits, classroom volunteers, paid staff (where appropriate), field trips to various places around the county, doing at home projects with their child and much more. Parent participation is the strength of our program. This past year there were 870 volunteers in total with 482 of those being current or former Head Start parents.

### **Head Start Centers**

Brasher Falls  
 Canton  
 Gouverneur  
 Massena  
 Norwood  
 Ogdensburg  
 Parishville  
 Potsdam

### **Home Based Programs**

\*Brasher Falls  
 \*Canton  
 \*Gouverneur  
 \*Hammond  
 \*Massena  
 \*Morristown  
 \*Norwood  
 \*Ogdensburg  
 \*Potsdam  
 \*surrounding areas

## **Administrative staff at St. Lawrence County Head Start**

Norma Cary	Executive Director – CDP
Barbara Adams	Director – Head Start
Tona Bouchard	Training Coordinator
Laura George	Education Coordinator
Rebecca Hannon	Health/Disabilities Coordinator
Janet Allen	Parent Involvement
Terry Reilley	Transportation Coordinator
Kelley Martin	Home Based/ERSEA Coordinator
Jennifer Pfothenauer	Nutrition/Mental Health Coordinator
Peggy Gaumes	Administrative Assistant
Tammy Garno	Secretary

### **Enrollment Information**

Funded enrollment	351
Actual enrollment	391
Three year olds enrolled	195
Four year olds enrolled	196

Children are served in classrooms having a maximum size of 17 children with a teacher and an assistant teacher. Each center has a classroom aide to assist when needed to maintain ratio or for breaks. Brasher Falls Head Start provides a choice of morning or afternoon programming to families. In this center, children are served breakfast or lunch depending on the programming they attend. In all other centers, breakfast and lunch are served. As part of our transition agreement with schools in Brasher Falls, Canton, Massena, Norwood, Gouverneur and Potsdam, families who need full day child care may participate in both programs if they are eligible. Children are eating a variety of nutritious foods as well as being introduced to new foods. Phoebe the Food and Fitness Fairy visits throughout the year to help children understand the importance of health foods and moving.

The Creative Curriculum Assessment System is used to track children's developmental progress for both the Home and Center Based options of the Head Start Program. Home Based Head Start collects data from primarily three year old children while Center Based collects data from primarily four year old children. This data is gathered and analyzed for core children (children enrolled entire year) three times during the program year: fall to establish a baseline for developmental growth, then again in the winter and spring to track progress in each of 11 federally mandated objectives. The results of each analysis is used to measure growth, as well as shape curriculum, identify areas of need for staff development, set overall program goals and highlight program strengths. Clarkson University assisted Head Start by developing a data collection program. The pivot tables help to give a picture of children's academic ability across county as well as center, classroom and individual. This data is then used to develop individual as well as classroom goals. School readiness goals have been developed that align the Head

Start Framework with the New York State Early Learning Guidelines. Parent Engagement goals have also been developed and are in the process of being aligned with the school readiness goals.

Data for the 2014 -2015 program year will not be available until mid summer. The exit data for program year 2014-2015 shows 98.7% of those enrolled had health insurance at the end of the program year, 99% had a medical home, 93% were up to date with immunizations or all possible immunizations, and 64% had a dental home. These percentages show a decline from the previous year's enrollment. This decline may be attributed to the types of insurance providers are accepting. Waiting lists are long and appointment waits lengthy. Families continue to seek dental care from as far away as Glens Falls, New York, which is 3 ½ hours from the center of the County. 100% of the children needing medical treatment received it. 249 enrolled children completed a professional dental exam with 37% needing professional treatment. 60% of those children received the treatment.

At the close of program year 2013-14, 30% of the enrolled families were unemployed and 7 % were in school or job training. 10% of enrolled families were assisted with emergency or crisis intervention, 16% were assisted with housing, 5% assisted with mental health referrals, 3.5% were assisted with adult education, 1% with job training and 3.5% with preventive services.

At the close of program year 2013-14, 96.25% of the enrolled four year old children (189/191) were ready to enter Kindergarten. This is an increase of 3.25 % over the prior year. 17% of enrolled children had an IEP or an IFSP, with 36% of those children being identified after enrollment in Head Start. These are both on par with previous years.

The Head Start Act of 2007 requires that 50% of teachers in Head Start programs nationwide must have a bachelors degree or higher. At the close of program year 2013-14, 71.25% of Head Start preschool classroom teachers in St. Lawrence County Head Start met the requirement of a BA or higher. 100% of classroom assistant teachers met the qualification of a CDA (Child Development Accreditation) or higher. Of the 13 home visitors, three (3) held Master's degrees, two (4) held a Baccalaureate, four (4) an Associate's degree, two (2) a CDA and one (1) was enrolled in a CDA program. 78% of Family Advocates employed (7) held degrees; one had Bachelor Degree, 4 had Associate Degrees and two (2) completed a FDC (Family Development Credential).

This year we added a maintenance position to Head Start. This has proven to be an asset to our program in that repairs are done on site by a specific employee, thus affording us savings because they are not hired out at higher costs to the program.

**2014 Financial Report**  
**Annual Budget**  
**\$3,756,063**  
**2014 Actual Outcomes**

Federal Revenue	\$2,891,566	Total Expenses	\$3,737,225
USDA Revenue	\$ 115,514	Depreciation	\$ 91,010
In-Kind	\$ 748,983	Fixed Assets	\$ 116,185
Program Income	\$ 6,528		

*Housing Choice Voucher Program* - St. Lawrence County Community Development Program's (CDP) Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) currently provides rental assistance to 555 low-income, disabled and elderly families throughout St. Lawrence County. Included in the 555 are 13 first time homebuyers and 18 families are enrolled in our FSS (Family Self Sufficiency) program. Of these 18 enrollees, 15 carry an escrow balance demonstrating success in meeting goals leading to self-sufficiency.

The Housing Program currently has 855 applicants on the waitlist yet to be served. The Federal Sequestration that had forced NYSHCR to enforce a freeze on the Section 8 Program has begun to lift some of the restraints and allow our program to accept new admissions to fill the vouchers that have been lost through attrition. Our department is working busily to fill 152 tenant based vouchers within the next two months.

This past fall our department transitioned 2 participants from the HCV monthly subsidy program into the Homeownership program. One of the participants was a recent graduate of the FSS program and used her escrow account to pay for the closing costs and the inspection needed to complete the transition. The other participant was a past graduate of the FSS program. In the beginning of June, we participated in the FSS Roundtable that was held in Albany. We hope to use the information and knowledge gained from this event to expand our FSS program and gain a fulltime coordinator position. We also look forward to attending a First Time Homeowner's Training that is in the planning stages for this fall.

*Personal Care* - The Personal care Program is a licensed Home Care Agency providing in-home care to clients throughout St. Lawrence County. Our Personal Care Aides and Home Health Aides provide services such as light housekeeping, laundry, assistance with shopping and errands, assistance with bathing, dressing, grooming, ambulation, meal preparation, medication prompting, respite care and monitoring of vital signs. All care is ordered by a physician and supervised by a Registered Nurse.

Personal Care has struggled with the Affordable Care Act and the increases to minimum wage this year. There is also a lack of certified aides available in the county and most home care agencies are struggling to staff cases. It seems like an uphill battle, but this year we have already provided home care services to over one hundred clients in St. Lawrence County, including very rural, outlying areas such as Wanakiena and Pitcarin. The services we provide play a key role in

keeping elderly and disabled people in their homes independently and safely, rather than placing them in an institution. We hope to continue to provide these valuable services in the future.

*Weatherization* - The 2014-15 year was very challenging for Weatherization. Due to a cut in funding, staff hours were cut back to 30 weekly and lay-offs were necessary. As of April 1, the Weatherization Program is back to a 40 hour work week. The funding had an increase for the 2015-16 program year. Staff will be working hard to juggle the projects.

We have received word from DANC (Development Authority of the North Country) that we have received an award of \$200,000. This will enable us to complete 6 or 7 rehabilitation projects which will address homes of the elderly or disabled with code violations. The homes will also receive Weatherization Services.

The EmPower New York Program was off to a slow start with delays in receiving forms that were provided by EmPower, but is now moving along nicely. This program is similar to the Weatherization Program in its activities and allows CDP to complete more weatherization work in the community which translates to energy and dollar savings for our families.

We are on schedule with the 8 units at Madrid in Grasse River Housing. It will be completed by the end of June as planned. EmPower is also contributing to the cost of the project which is a good means of leveraging funds for a project.

We worked with HEAP to complete "no heats" and now air-conditioner installation, but did not do as many units through the new process as when we had a contract with the county. We did do a few "no heats" through EmPower once HEAP closed.

There is support in the Senate to increase Weatherization funding for the 2016-17 program year, however, it is difficult to predict how the funding will play out as it goes through the federal budgeting process.

*Canton Neighborhood Center* - The Canton Neighborhood Center began the year with a new director. The beginning of 2014 was challenging for many clients using the Center. It was a bitter winter & the utility costs were high. The Center was able to assist over 90 families with Care & Share applications. A portion of these applications were done in Dekalb. This outreach was aimed at people with transportation barriers. The Center held several educational classes to help build knowledge and skills for the people we serve. The Center held a budgeting class, childcare safety class and several nutrition classes. These classes offered valuable information on each topic. The Center hosted a Summer Food Program and a Thanksgiving Program. Both programs served a significant amount of families at a vulnerable time. The Center was also able to partner with Church & Community for a Back to School Program. The Back to School served three different school districts and doubled the children served over the last year! The Program offered school supplies, socks, backpacks, and free haircuts. It was a great success!

Throughout the entire year, the Center had two people find employment and enter the workforce. These are two individuals that we were working closely with on family development. The Center had over 2000 individual sales in the thrift store, allowing individuals in our community to

receive quality clothing at an affordable price. The Center also distributed approximately 73,000 pounds of food, not including Food Sense orders.

*Colton, Parishville, Pierrepont Neighborhood Center* - The Colton Pierrepont Parishville Neighborhood Center has faced a challenging year. A new director came in November starting during the hectic Holiday Program, heating season and the Care & Share Program. With the assistance of volunteers and the Potsdam Neighborhood Center Director, the Center was able to provide families with gift cards for children, a blanket for senior citizens, and food baskets for all of the families.

Throughout the 2014 -15 school year our Center has assisted the Colton Pierrepont and Parishville schools with their backpack programs. We have provided 107 students with nutritious food over school breaks each month.

Partnering with local faith based agencies has enabled us to be more effective with our funds and increase the number of families we assist. The number of volunteers, both people who utilize our programs and other members of community has also increased. Our Center has also benefited from donations and fundraising by local organizations. We plan on strengthening these community connections this year by improving communication between our center and our communities.

Our community has two senior citizen housing complexes and we will be investigating ways to enable the residents that lack transportation to obtain food packages or utilize our other programs. Communication and cooperation is necessary to provide the quality service and respectful, comfortable environment we are striving for.

This spring we offered workshops on budgeting, childcare and nutrition. We will be offering additional workshops throughout the year. Open enrollment for health care insurance is in the fall. A couple of insurance companies will hold a workshop at our Center to assist people in obtaining an insurance policy that fits with their medical needs. A workshop is planned in early January to assist people with utilizing their tax returns effectively. The presenters are willing to meet with people individually after they attend the work shop to address their specific issues.

The director is committed to provide each site with a stable food pantry and consistent support, respect and a welcoming environment.

*Gouverneur Neighborhood Center* - The Center has had a good year with regular hours of operation. There are several volunteers who donate time and in addition there are community service workers, high school and college interns who work required hours.

The director has worked closely with several families on Family Development and has seen them make good progress. A couple has found employment and one has completed the LPN course.

The number of households using the pantry has increased in the last year despite construction on Route 11 through the Village and a change in how we operate the choice pantry. Pantry hours now include lunch time hours recently to accommodate the working families.

The Center continues to run a thrift store which supplies low cost clothing and household items to families. Clients who cannot afford Thrift Store prices are given items for free. It also gives the public a place to donate items. The construction on Route 11 affected sales and donations last year, but we have seen an increase recently. The store has been made more open and spacious by removing a large counter. More clothes racks were added as a result of the added space. Bag sales are held regularly and clothing recycling has been started to reduce trash costs. Volunteers to take clothes to the recycling sites are being sought.

The director has obtained an application for the Compassion Coalition to receive personal care items and household goods at a substantial discount. She needs to find volunteers that would be able to pick up the items in Utica. Then she will send in the application to see if the Center qualifies to receive the items.

There have been many workshops in the last year which include: budgeting, childcare, nutrition, Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables, and SNAP.

FoodSense started being offered a year and a half ago to clients and the public. We are trying to increase the number of people using the program by distributing fliers in public places and placing articles in the newspaper, church newsletters and church bulletins.

The director continues to do mobile outreach in the Star Lake area on a monthly basis. The director is working on increasing the number of clients seen there by hanging posters, and distributing fliers. A Book Swap is being organized and should be in operation soon.

*Massena Neighborhood Center* - The Massena Neighborhood Center has had another busy year offering a variety of services and programs to the families in the communities that we serve. Last year we assisted 966 families with some type of program or service.

We strive to engage our consumers with long term positive changes not only on a daily basis but through our Family Development Program, budgeting, family assessment, referrals, information and services and programs. Our goals are to empower families to become more self-reliant, self-sufficient, and economically stable. We are committed to treat each individual with dignity and respect. We worked with 10 families with this program last year.

We had 93 volunteers who assisted us with many of our programs. There were 18 with low-incomes and 75 community volunteers. Some volunteer on a regular basis, while others come in for special programs or functions. They are the “heart” of the Center and we could not operate without them.

In 2014, the Center provided over 94,200 meals to individuals and families. An average of 221 households each month received food assistance from the Center. 38% of these individuals were children under the age of 19. We distributed over 117,938 lbs. of food.

We have a Community Garden that volunteers and staff plant each year and care for on a daily basis. We receive donations of seeds, seedlings, fertilizer, garden tools, etc. from the community. The fresh vegetables, herbs, and fruit are a wonderful supplement to our food packages. We also receive donations of vegetables and fruits from the local prison, farmers, and individuals.

We held several workshops this past year. This included a budget workshop and child care workshop. Also, we had several food/ nutritional classes; Stretching Food Dollars, Just say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables, and How to use Farmers Market Coupons.

We provided families with assistance with fuel, utilities, shelter, emergency shelter, prescriptions, educational books and fees, phone cards, gas cards, clothing, etc. We are able to fund these through the United Way, Care & Share Program, and monetary donations.

The majority of our community donations are received through the special efforts and dedication of a separate group of volunteers, the “Fundraising Committee to Benefit Massena Neighborhood Center Food Pantry, Emergency Assistance Program and Christmas Holiday Program.” Without their help we would have very few funds and would not be able to assist families at our current level.

We had a small school supply program through the donations of a few local businesses and community donations. We also had a summer children’s feeding program where we were able to give additional food to children over the summer months, again because of donations.

The Christmas Program is our largest program of the year. We assisted 482 families with a complete ham or turkey dinner with all the trimmings and provided gifts to 630 children and a box of chocolates to 126 seniors.

*Ogdensburg Neighborhood Center* - In January of this year, the Neighborhood Center added a new Director to the team. The new Director is attending college courses to gain her degree in Community & Human Services. With the position of directing the Neighborhood Center she is able to gain experience and knowledge of what the Human Services field consist of. The job descriptions that pertain to the Director consist of helping families in the community to become more self-sufficient along with gaining skills in budgeting, and providing food to low-income households. The experience gained at the Neighborhood Center will assist in meeting the Director's future goals.

During the month of December, the Neighborhood Center participated alongside the Salvation Army during the Christmas food program. The Neighborhood Center provided families with free

turkey vouchers along with a box filled with most of the side dishes needed to prepare a holiday dinner. The Center was also able to provide some families with Christmas presents that were donated to the Center from some of the surrounding churches.

Since January of this year, the Center has been grateful to benefit from a few local events that have happened in the area. The annual Lights on the River event donated food along with funds that were raised during the event. In March, the local Boy Scout troop held in a food drive at Wal-Mart with all of their profits donated to the Neighborhood Center.

Again this year, the Neighborhood Center was able to aid in the application process for the National Grid program Care & Share. The Center took appointments and completed the application process for the local residents. This program is a great benefit to the community considering the bitter winter we faced this year. Outreach was done in Hammond for this program as well.

The Ogdensburg Neighborhood Center will also be looking forward to some changes in the upcoming months. In the beginning of July the Neighborhood Center will be getting a new look. The Catholic Heart WorkCamp will be volunteering their time and teens to paint our food pantry area. This will happen just in time to kick off our summer and the center's continuing Summer Food program. The Summer Food program provides an extra package per child in the home. We recognize that it is hard for low-income families to provide two extra meals a day when the school season is over. This program is anticipated and supported by our whole community.

*Potsdam Neighborhood Center* - The Potsdam Neighborhood Center has had a great year! We have seen many of our Family Development participants move forward, often leaving their role of Center Aide behind for employment. The Center aims to have these folks leave for good jobs; ones with benefits and, as much as possible, a decent hourly wage. It is not always easy for people to leave assistance for employment in part because feasible opportunities are scarce, but slowly and surely that is what we work together towards.

The Center has a vibrant food pantry, serving 250 to 300 households with any one or more of the following food programs: three day program, five day program, or FoodSense program. These programs help a variety of people: working households with low incomes, those who are dependent on public assistance and the elderly. The majority of folks are on a fixed income of Social Security. The food pantry is a stabilizer for them, as the assistance they receive is not at all adequate to meet their needs, let alone make them comfortable. They face unique barriers to employment, and long term work is often not an option. This is especially so in our very competitive employment market.

The Center has had the privilege of obtaining a local food grant, and as such, is able to provide fresh produce during the growing season and support local growers. It's another one of those programs that takes state funds and injects them into our county.

PB&J is a new program of the Center. It provides children at the Potsdam recreational program with a bagged lunch. It piloted last year, serving 50 kids on Tuesdays and Thursdays for six

weeks. This year we are increasing this program to include each day of the week. This is a program that doesn't necessarily require income eligibility, as we do not wish children to experience stigma. We know it is a needed service by the number who choose to participate, as well as the number in attendance who live in low-income housing, and based on the fact that there is a 37.5% utilization of the school free and reduced meal plan. Utilization does not reflect all that are actually eligible.

We have been partnering with many organizations for a variety of outcomes. We partner regularly with Helping Hands, Knapps Station Church, Nutrition Outreach and Education, Fidelis, and Salvation Army.

We have seen an increase in homeless persons and families. The Center receives requests for emergency housing at least once a week, either from those about to be evicted or people who are out on the street, in their cars, or "camping". This is a disturbing trend, and as costs rise while wages are stagnant, more people will slide backwards into these situations.

Projects are in the works with the Canton Potsdam Hospital, having quarterly sessions where the hospital brings people to the Center to talk about medical bills, chemical dependency, nutrition, as well as doing blood pressures and sending people for lab work as a free service. This has become quite successful and has grown to include other entities such as the Sea Comm Bank doing free credit requests and soon the Health Initiative will be including a table for their Cancer Services program.

Going into the upcoming year, the Center will need to weather some challenges. It is getting more expensive to help people, and while the Center is stable right now, we are anticipating greater financial stress. To overcome this, we will be looking towards establishing our own development committee that will look specifically at fundraising opportunities.

## MISSION STATEMENT OF CDP

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program is committed to encourage and assist individuals and families to attain self-reliance, dignity, and self-sufficiency through education, guidance, and services.

## VISION STATEMENT OF CDP

St. Lawrence County Community Development Program is a community organization that envisions equal opportunities and self-sufficiency for low-income individuals and families in St. Lawrence County.