



206 Seneca Street
Oil City, PA 16301
Phone: 814-678-7766
Fax: 814-678-0053

203 Center Street
Oil City, PA 16301
Phone: 814-676-5011
Fax: 814-677-2195

39 Parker Avenue
Franklin, PA 16323
Phone: 814-432-5749
Fax: 814-432-5618



A member of United Way of Venango County



Building Hope Together...

Celebrating



2007-2008 Annual Report

Vision Statement

To provide leadership and high-quality services to promote healthy children, families and communities.

Mission Statement

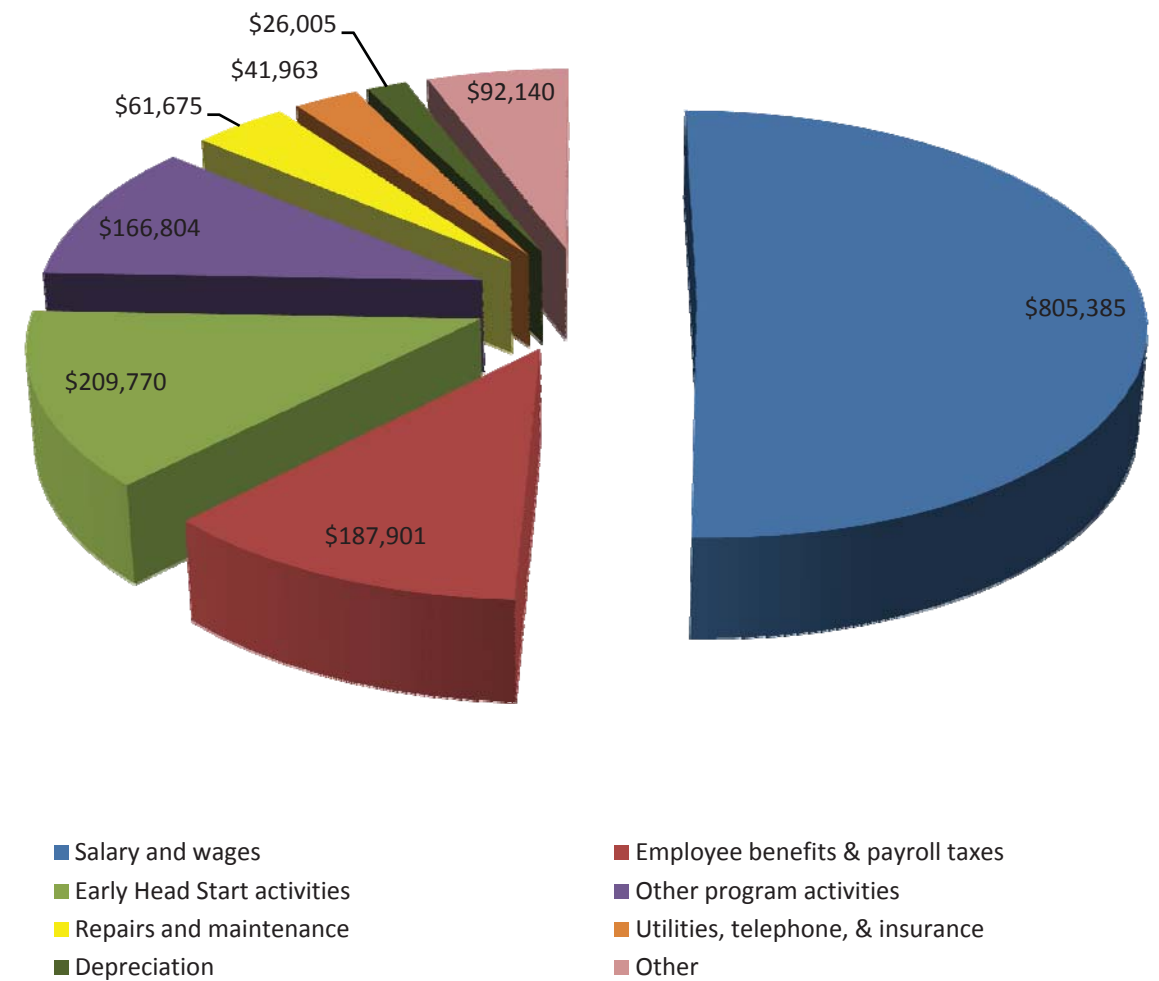
To provide resources, enhance opportunities and instill hope for the future with the individuals and families we serve.

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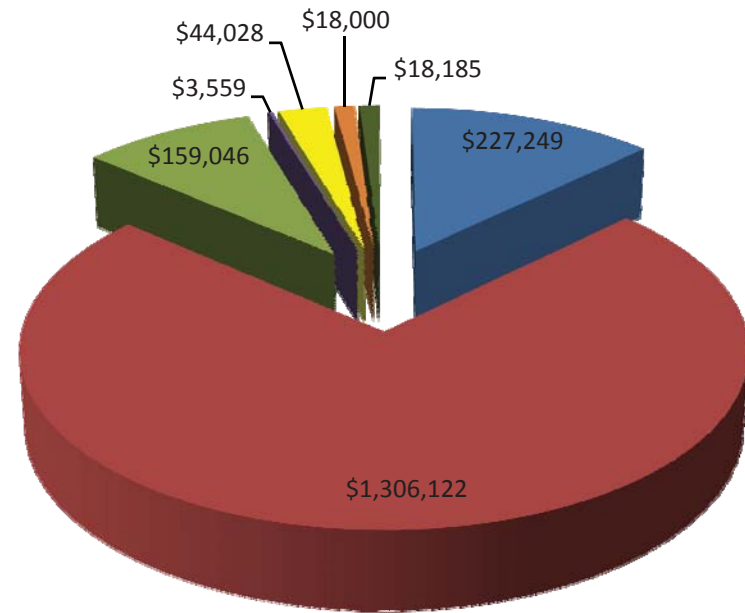
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Community Services of Venango County, Inc is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Agency

Community Services of Venango County, Inc. Functional Expenses



**Community Services of Venango County, Inc.
Sources of revenue and other support**



- Contributions, grants and bequests
- Other operating grants
- rental income
- Miscellaneous income
- Program revenue
- Investment and appreciation income
- Gain on sale of fixed assets

Message from the Executive Director and Board President



Board of Directors

- Bob Mabry – President
- Courtney Cox – Vice President
- Steve Hanna – Treasurer
- Veronica McCauley – Secretary
- Nancy O’Toole
- Donna Rapp
- Erin Schattauer
- Marie Veon

It is an honor to share with you the 2007-2008 Annual Report for Community Services of Venango County, Inc. We would like to thank our dedicated staff, donors, community partners, and volunteers. Without your support, we could not carry out our mission of providing quality services and care that restores individuals, families and communities impacted by the effects of poverty, addictions, homelessness and lack of hope. Your generosity makes it possible for us to continue to help families change their lives and provide promising futures for their children.

Community Services is celebrating 40 years of service this year! Since its inception, the agency has focused on services to improve the quality of lives among individuals and families in our community. This annual report provides valuable insight into the growth of our agency over the years and how it has constantly evolved to meet the needs of our community. Our highly qualified staff possess the extensive knowledge, enthusiasm and heartfelt commitment needed for ongoing program renewal and growth. Thanks to their diligence and passion, we are making a difference everyday of the year in the lives of the individuals and families served.

The Community Services Board of Directors is committed to fulfilling the agency’s mission. Board members are well aware that the needs of our community are ever changing. During this past year, they conducted a board self-assessment, developed a strategic plan that laid out long-range goals with a strong focus on marketing and new fundraising opportunities. Our first Golf Scramble is planned for August 2008 at Cross Creek Resort.

Community Services could not sustain the high level of services we provide to individuals and families without the generous backing of our supporters, but there is still much work to be done. Please help us continue to build hope for those we serve.

We look forward to continuing the great history of Community Services and its contributions toward a better future.

Barbara A. Feroz
Executive Director

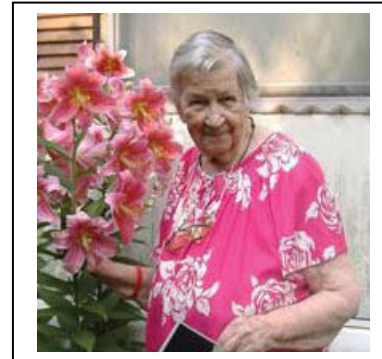
T. Robert Mabry
President, Board of Directors

“Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope...” Robert F. Kennedy, 1968

We are grateful to our VOLUNTEERS who share their resources and provide opportunities.....

Ruth Armstrong

Ruth has crocheted over 2,200 blankets for the Welcome Every Child Program.



To build HOPE together

*“The greatest work that kindness does to others is that it makes them kind themselves.”
Amelia Earhart*

Agency Staff

Administrative Staff

Barbara A. Feroz	Executive Director
Cindy Vayda	Administrative Assistant
William E. Lucia	Director of Finance
Cindy Woloszyn	Office Manager

Administrative Staff Support

Sally McIntyre	Receptionist: Oil City
Heather Marshall	Receptionist: Rocky Grove
Tom Kahle	Maintenance
Jim Edwards	Driver
Fran Dlugos	Clothing Room Manager

Program Directors

Tracy Burchfield	Families First Network Director
Stephanie Coston	Program Director, IM4Q, C/FST
Mary Jeanne Gavin	Social Services Program Director

Program Coordinators

Larry Roberts	Community Engagement Coordinator
Jennifer Billingsley	Early Intervention Independent Evaluator
Dave Gibbs	Transportation/Facilities Coordinator
Mary McFarland	Health Coordinator
Elsie Mott	Program Coordinator, IM4Q, C/FST
Beth Owens	Mental Health Coordinator
Stacey Skinner	Welcome Every Child Coordinator
Debbie Thorp	Education Coordinator
Mary Jane Verhoff	ERSEA Coordinator
Tiffany Wright	Data Coordinator

Early Head Start Home Visitors

Sara Bell	Sarah Lu
Melissa Bensink	Michele Minich
Alison Carson	Melanie Rog
Jodi Ei	Chris Sanford
Beth Freer	Meghan Snyder
Christine Heckathorne	

Key Funding Sources

Charitable Trusts

Samuel Justus Charitable Trust
Edith Justus Charitable Trust
E J Luce Charitable Trust
Elizabeth Black Charitable Trust

Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry

Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare

Private Donations

United Way of Venango County

US Department of Health and Human Services

US Department of Housing and Urban Development

Venango Area Community Foundation

Venango County Children and Youth

Venango County Mental Health/Mental Retardation

Venango County Substance Abuse Program

NEW DIRECTIONS

PA Working Wardrobe

Pa Working Wardrobe is an innovative program that Community Services will begin during 2008-2009. Developed by the Bureau of Employment and Training and funded through the Workforce



Investment Act, the main goal is to empower a person to become successful without relying on the welfare system for money to purchase work clothing. Community Services will receive referrals for individuals to come to our agency to select and try on work clothing as well as interview and training outfits. In the process, they will be given suggestions from a personal assistant such as dressing for an interview. They may also receive any additional accessories to complete the interview outfit. Some funding will be provided to purchase special items from the specially designed boutique but the program relies mainly on new or nearly new donated items.

Little Voices for Healthy Choices

In May, 2008 the Early Head Start Program applied for and received funding to send a team of staff and parents to an intensive training to implement the new Little Voices for Healthy Choices initiative in our local program. The training provided the team with information and strategies to positively influence the healthy development of children and families in their care, and subsequently, positively influence their own movement and nutritional practices.



The EHS Program, through the Little Voices initiative, will continue to address the issue of childhood obesity by focusing on preventative measures for staff and parents to provide healthy nutrition and movement experiences for the infants and toddlers in their care.

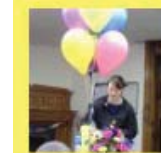
Above & Beyond 2007-2008



Christine Heckathorne has worked for Community Services of Venango County as a Home Visitor with Early Head Start since January 2001. This year in May, Christine reached an Early Head Start Program Milestone. She is the first Home Visitor to complete 2,000 home visits with over 54 children and their families in Venango County.

Home visiting is a unique and complex interplay of social services, child development, and parenting education. It requires persistence, insight, stamina, imagination, along with a sense of humor. This is a tall order and Christine consistently shows these traits and a reserve of

quiet energy that allows her to give 110% to each and every family. Christine's ability to maintain focus on Early Head Start's primary goal of helping parents become "Their child's first and best teacher" shines through even when she must ask very hard questions of parents in difficult times. Christine asks these questions with respect, empathy and conviction. Her milestone of 2,000 visits attests to the trust, mutual respect and genuine heartfelt commitment to the families in Venango County and their children.



Christine's work with families has been used as a teaching tool by our Infant Mental Health Consultant, Dr. Steve Simms in both local trainings and at his international training in Finland. We are extremely proud of Christine and her ability to go the extra mile in advocating for the children and families she serves.

RESOURCES

Nourish the Community: Mind, Body, Spirit

I felt ashamed asking for food, but the staff at Community Services were so kind and helpful. They treated me with courtesy and compassion and made me feel at ease. I never thought I would be in this situation, and I am grateful the Food Pantry and Clothing Room are there to help people like me. I want to thank you for being here and for supporting not only those in dire need but those that are strapped by the unexpected changes in life also.

Community Services has been in existence for **40 years** serving struggling families and individuals in our community. We continue to offer invaluable support and seek to alleviate the hardships they face during their times of crisis. We offer immediate relief by providing Emergency Aid Services through food, clothing and shelter.

Emergency Food Pantry

Our two food pantries, located in Oil City and Rocky Grove provide access to food for people who need it. During 2007, many families were provided a two-day supply of nutritious food items. This translated into over **78,655** canned and boxed food items. More than **1,000** families sought assistance because they lacked the **resources** to purchase sufficient food. Our food pantries are always in need of:

- Meat and poultry
- Fruits and vegetables (canned, frozen, fresh)
- Cereals, pasta, rice



Family Café

My family really enjoys Family Café. It is the only time that we can sit and eat together as a family each week. My kids love that we can talk about our day and everyone can eat at the same time. I love knowing when we come here we can have a hot and nutritious meal, use the computers, or talk to other families. It is a great evening together that we look forward to all week.



One day each week, Community Service staff and volunteers provided an opportunity for families to come and receive a free nutritious meal. The Family Café also provided literacy based activities, book library, family games, socialization, nutrition education and computer support.

During 2007-2008, Family Café served over **600** meals and our dedicated volunteers provided over **400** hours of service.

HOPE FOR A HEALTHY NEW BEGINNING

Those utilizing the medical card are routinely denied dental care in our county, due to the limited number of dentists that will accept the medical access card. The EHS program utilizes the Mobile Dentists to provide check-ups and preventative care to those enrolled children ages 18 months – 3 years old as well as their siblings. The Mobile Dentists brought all of their equipment to Community Services Rocky Grove site in May 2008 and saw **35** EHS children.



Isaac shows off his new toothbrush and dental certificate.

Families in Recovery: An Early Head Start Program

Two EHS Home Visitors assist families in substance abuse recovery to find ways to overcome barriers to their sobriety while continuing to raise their infants and toddlers. During fiscal year 2007-2008, they served **20** families with **23** infants and toddlers, and **7** pregnant women. A total of **5** mothers received Methadone or Saboxone treatment while enrolled in the EHS program. Many continued to receive outpatient substance abuse counseling as well as attended AA or NA meetings.

Another component of this specific program is to work with women one day a week who are in the Venango County Prison. Typically, when a woman goes to prison there are often children left behind. One of the main purposes for these services is to find ways to keep the mothers connected to their children while they are incarcerated. The Home Visitors support literacy practices such as reading and writing along with discussions center on child development. They also assist the mothers with transitioning back into their children's lives once released from jail.

In May 2008, the program received a mental health grant from Venango County MH/MR to expand these services. The expansion:

- Supplied a gift of a book to children from their parents
- Enhanced prison library with parenting books
- Provided visitation room with bookcase and books behind the window so parents can read to their children during visitation
- Made books available to read to their children during telephone contacts
- Provided an array of approved craft supplies for mothers to make gifts, cards, memory pieces, jewelry and other crafts to send to their children

HOPE FOR A HEALTHY NEW BEGINNING

INFANT MENTAL HEALTH

A key component of the EHS Program is the Infant Mental Health component. Our EHS Program has worked with the Philadelphia Child Guidance and Training Center for the past several years to assist staff in helping parents to build and nurture relationships which support the social and emotional development of their infants and toddlers. Factors such as depression, domestic violence, poverty, homelessness, and a lack of supports for the family pose challenges to mental health promotion among many EHS families. These challenges are even more difficult when a child has biological problems such as prematurity, low birth weight, a disability, or a regulatory disorder. The strong relationships that our EHS staff develop with families enables them to have a unique vantage point to observe the strengths and challenges of families, and to have the trust and respect of families in order to provide or coordinate the help they may need. Thus, program staff need to understand the factors that influence infant mental health and how their work with families can best support mental health and emotional development. EHS staff also have relationships with other providers in the community who are able to offer more intensive and specialized services.



During the 2007-2008 program year, EHS served **114** families and **157** infants and toddlers. One hundred percent of the families served established and met various goals for themselves and their children. All families received parenting education, health and safety education and were given information on other local resources available. All **17** of the pregnant women served received pre and post natal care. One hundred percent of the children served were linked to an ongoing, continuous preventive medical "home" and 94% were up to date on all of their well-child medical checks. Of the children served, 96% were up to date on all immunizations appropriate for their age.

RESOURCES

Nourish the Community: Mind, Body, Spirit

Clothing Room

Another valuable community **resource** are our clothing rooms, located at the Oil City and Rocky Grove sites. Essential donated clothing is distributed to community members in emergency situations. Donated clothing is available daily to people using our services at no cost to them.

13,957 items of clothing were disseminated through the clothing rooms



WUZZ Warmth and Northwest Savings assisted us with "Operation Overcoat". **240** adults and children received warm winter coats.

Housing

Imagine having no place to return home to at the end of the day. Now imagine:

A Place Called Home: Sycamore Commons

Crises around lack of affordable housing and homelessness continue to grow in our community. Housing is one of our very basic needs. Without a place to live, one is unable to find work, access services or to feel empowered to contribute as a member of our community. We can build a stronger community through meeting a basic need: shelter.

CSVC received HUD McKinney-Vento Continuum of Care federal funding to develop and provide permanent housing for persons with disabilities, specifically, to those persons with serious mental illness, chronic substance abusers and chronic homeless. Permanent supportive housing, linked with community supportive services are an effective strategy for ending chronic homelessness and are cost effective. Even those with multiple challenges can live independently in the community when they have access to available support programs. Renovations began on four apartments in June 2008. Upon completion of these renovations, the apartments will be completely furnished and available for occupancy in November 2008.



CSVC also provides housing that consists of **four** separate apartments in downtown Franklin. These also offer housing options for persons recovering from severe mental illness.



RESOURCES

Nourish the Community: Mind, Body, Spirit

Holiday Programs

It is heartwarming that in these difficult times, when all families are feeling the effects of high food and gasoline prices, that so many in our community put aside their own financial concerns to help others facing hard times.

Local citizens continued to volunteer and extended their generosity to our children and families during the holiday season. They have unceasingly aided our families throughout the holidays with incredible generosity that brings warmth and gratitude to the hearts of many.

November 2007 marked the 18th year that the **Friends for Food Campaign** distributed turkey dinners with all the trimmings to families in need.

Thanks to the generosity of numerous local donors, the campaign exceeded its goal of **\$35,000!!!**

Close to **200** volunteers pitched in to make this day a success.



1,300 households received a turkey and holiday food for Thanksgiving serving over 3,216 family members.

During December 2007, the Spirit of Giving Program provided **368** families with Christmas assistance.

970 children received new clothing and toy (s) for Christmas.



Adopt-A-Family Program made the holidays a little brighter for families.

Each year the **Adopt-A-Family program** ensures that families in need do not miss out on the joy of opening presents. CSVIC supporters made the holidays brighter for **43** families by participating in our annual Adopt-A-Family program. **176** family members received gifts from **28** sponsors.

“Giving connects two people, the giver and receiver, and this connection gives birth to a new sense of belonging.” Deepak Chopra

HOPE FOR A HEALTHY NEW BEGINNING

Early Head Start

“When you help a child today, you write the history of tomorrow”...Father Flannigan

Sara is three weeks old. Her mother and father just moved to a new town for dad’s new job. They have no families or friends in the area. Dad works long hours and was only able to take a few days off after the baby was born. Mom is by herself all day with Sara. Mom begins to show signs of depression – she’s weepy and listless, and has been spending extended periods of sitting on the couch staring at the TV or out the window. Sara, lying in her crib, is feeling hungry. Her tummy rumbles. She begins to cry. Mom is sitting on the couch with the TV on. She hears Sara’s cries from the other room. Mom sighs and turns up the TV to block out Sara’s cries. Mom begins to cry too. After about 15 minutes, Mom gets up to feed Sara. She brings the baby to the couch to feed her a bottle. Mom looks at Sara’s face. When the baby does not look back at her, Mom sighs again, her body slumps a little, and she looks at the TV for the rest of the feeding.

The above vignette is a common situation for young, struggling parents in Venango County and all over the country. The Venango County Early Head Start (EHS) Program provides comprehensive, year-round, child and family development services and support to low-income families with children, prenatal to three years old in similar situations to the family above.

During weekly home visits and parent-child socialization groups, trained EHS staff plan activities with families to:

- Foster the child’s development
- Increase family literacy
- Promote healthy parent-child relationships
- Provide parents with support and education
- Assist expectant families in preparing for their new baby
- Assist with transition to Head Start or other preschool programs
- Link families to other community resources, such as food, clothing, housing, child care, job training, health care and mental health counseling



Six months later, Sara is a healthy, thriving little girl. Her mother is attentive and loving. Mom has been keeping regular visits with her EHS Home Visitor and has begun receiving help for her depression. She has learned ways to tend to Sara’s needs as well as her own in order to achieve balance as a mother. She has met some other moms that are involved in EHS through socializations and they have become friends. She often meets the other moms at the playground with the children. Sara’s father is less anxious now just seeing that her mother is doing well. Although they still struggle at times, this young family is functioning well and is happy. EHS has helped them to find the joy in parenting and to utilize the resources available to them in the community.

HOPE FOR A HEALTHY NEW BEGINNING

WELCOME EVERY CHILD

Becoming a mother is a memorable experience, regardless if it is the first, second or third time. Each experience is unique and is forever etched in your memory. You are no longer living for yourself; you are living for your child.

Welcome Every Child strives to make this life altering event even more memorable by welcoming each new baby into our community. The Welcome Every Child program serves expectant women and families with newborns in Venango County. The program helps provide families with the opportunity to ensure a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby. The baskets contain numerous baby items and a home-made afghan that symbolizes the hope that each baby will be swaddled in love, warmth and security. Welcome Every Child has touched the lives of **3,648** families during the past ten years. In fiscal year 2007-2008, Welcome Every Child volunteers contributed **6,139** hours and **149** referrals were made to the Early Head Start program and **235** referrals were made to other agencies.



“Making the decision to have a child-it’s momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking outside your body”.
– Elizabeth Stone

NURSE HOME VISITOR

A young woman becomes pregnant. She is not prepared for motherhood, has not received adequate prenatal care, does not have a reliable support system, does not have transportation and has no means of supporting herself and her child.

The Nurse Home Visitor Program strives to change lives through one-on-one contact with at-risk families. The Nurse Home Visitor forges relationships and inspires families to make better choices that will improve their pregnancy outcome, their child’s health and well-being and their future.

The Nurse Home Visitor program helps parents learn how to care for the health needs of themselves and their families, access community resources and form support systems. These skills form the basis for hope and provide an opportunity for families to plan for the future and become more self-reliant.

The Nurse Home Visitor program is a home-based program that serves pregnant women, infants, toddlers and their families. The program has been providing services for eight years and has made **5,910** home visits. **Fifty two** families received services during the past fiscal year, **19** of these families transitioned into Early Head Start program.

EARLY INTERVENTION INDEPENDENT EVALUATOR

Early Intervention Independent Evaluator assessments/evaluations were conducted to determine eligibility for early intervention services for infants and toddlers under the age of three. The Evaluator is part of a Multi-Disciplinary Team and assists with the coordination of needed services for families referred.

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

Supported Work Program

Jason was hesitant to go to the Welfare Office because he knew that in order to get financial help his case worker would put him in a work program. The last thing that Jason wanted was to be around a group of people and attend job readiness classes. In the past, he would always get nervous and feel like he was suffocating around groups of people. He believed that this was probably the main reason that he had dropped out of school in the 10th grade. But, he was tired of going from relative to relative to get assistance and wanted to step up to the plate and be the father that his young son needed him to be. He had heard that he could get help getting his driver’s license, taking his GED, and securing funding to get a car. In addition, he knew he really needed help devising a resume and finding a job.

It has been said that in work, success is 10% skill and 90% attitude. With that in mind, the Supported Work program strives to provide **opportunities** assisting and supporting individuals individually or in small groups with career readiness workshops. These include appropriate job behaviors and skills related to employment, career counseling, and addressing self esteem issues. Other **opportunities** in Supported Work include providing case management, skills training, job placement, job follow up and job retention activities. For the program year 2007-2008, **24** individuals were provided **opportunities** to be successful in job placement and other job related activities.



“Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome.” Booker T. Washington

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

Life skills program

Mary's water has been turned off at her home and she hasn't had gas for two months. It doesn't matter at this point if she has gas because it has been warmer out and her two boys have been sleeping with several blankets on at night. Their feet are kept warm in bed by the wool socks that the neighborhood church was able to supply them. Mary thinks about how if only she can have water for the boys to brush their teeth. She knows that spring is around the corner and soon the warmth of the day will keep her boys warm. But, where can she find a few dollars to buy some jugs of water? She needs to find help soon because she knows that it is just a matter of time before someone will find out about her loss of utilities and it would be so difficult to lose her boys for even a day. . .

Many individuals that come to us have either been referred or just don't know where else to go. They have exhausted most of their resources and are just trying to make it through another day. Many have never been formally taught how to prepare a budget or how to plan a nutritious menu. People, like Mary, need to have the opportunity to find ways to become more self-sufficient. Our Life Skills program has developed into a comprehensive program that can be designed to meet the needs of people who require these services. Each family/individual develops an individualized goal plan that is reviewed regularly to determine progress. Our goal is to continue to find ways to help families/individuals gain the tools they need to overcome some of the barriers that have prevented their success in many aspects of their lives. During 2007-2008, **145** referrals were made to the life skills program. A total of **78** individuals completed budgeting classes. Others requested assistance in a variety of different areas such as nutrition, job training, getting a GED and obtaining proper identification.



"Our greatest glory is not in never falling but in rising every-time we fall." Confucious

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

Community Engagement Group for Early Care and Education

Community Services of Venango County's Community Engagement Group (CEG) began in 2004 as a task force within the Focus on Our Future Collaborative Board. We are currently comprised of individuals representing various organizations forming a joint partnership dedicated to developing and improving the quality of early care and education. We are funded through the Office of Child Development and Early Learning. Through this grant, it is our responsibility to educate the schools, businesses, community leaders, and families of the link between early learning and school readiness. Studies have shown that what a child learns in the first five years of life will have an impact, not only on their success in school, but on their achievements later in life.

*"If we don't stand up for children,
then we don't stand for much"
Marion Wright Edelman*



CEG continued to serve as a local advisory board for **First Book-Venango County**. First Book has a single mission: to give children from low-income families the opportunity to read and own their first new book. First Book- Venango County works exclusively from donations provided by organizations and charitable grants. Since its inception in 2005, First Book-Venango County has awarded over **4,000** new first books to children in our community.

During 2007-2008 First Book-Venango County distributed **\$ 4,000** worth of books to the following programs and agencies: Child Care Information Services, Families First Network Early Head Start, YWCA Twin Creeks Head Start, Youth Alternatives, and Pathways.

Children's Day at the Mall: "Transition Can't Wait in 2008"



Children's Day at the Mall served many purposes. The main focus of the day was to provide children and their families with literacy based activities that could be continued at home. Another function was to share with the community the wealth of services, activities and opportunities available to the children and families throughout Venango County. Finally, this day served to educate the community of the importance of volunteers and volunteering in order for many of these services to even be provided. March 2008 marked the **14th** year of this event and over **500** children and their families participated.



Because Every Child is Pennsylvania's Future: www.papromiseforchildren.com

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

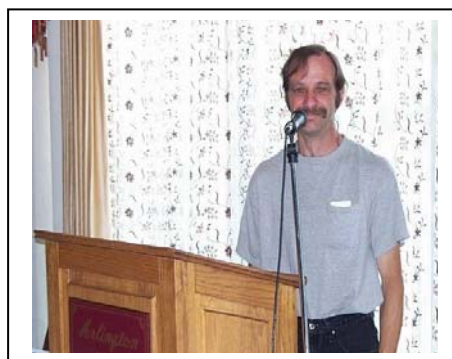
COMMUNITY VOICES

Consumer Family Satisfaction Team CFST

"Do not see my disability as a problem recognize my disability as an attribute." Norman Kunc

CFST completed **161** surveys for Value Behavioral Health, our local Managed Care Provider. Information shared by persons receiving mental health/substance abuse services were provided to the county, service providers, and managed care to evaluate and create quality services. CFST recognizes the inherent knowledge of each person because of their life experiences and we value these perceptions.

"Do not try to be my friend; get to know me, we may become friends." Norman Kunc



"When I first started working with CFST, talking on the phone was a real challenge for me. I had to practice so that people would understand what I was saying. I started doing phone contacts and scheduling interviews. Some people wanted to do the interviews over the phone; this was hard for me at first. I learned how to complete interviews over the phone and in a timely manner. I also learned to record the statements that people made. Later I learned to do data entry. I have used what I learned and have grown. Now I do different things, I've overcome my challenge of talking to others on the phone, I have new

opportunities. I have a new full time job, a vehicle and I really developed friendships with the people I worked with."

Richard Wilson, CFST Team Member and Family Member

"I have been working with CFST for a year now. It's changed the way I look at myself and how I look at the world. I like getting out of the house and meeting new people. I'm more confident about who I am and what I want out of my life. Now I want to advance in my current job. I want to get my driver's license and GED. That will help me achieve my goals. I'm more outgoing than I was before I started working here. I can stand up for what I believe in and for what I want. I feel that my life is worth something now that I found a job that I really like to come to everyday."

Sally Deeter, CFST Team Member and Family Member

All Voices Must Be Heard

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

At Risk Youth Life Skills Program

Sally missed three weeks of school because she didn't want to face other students and their happy and carefree lives. The only reason she was going to school now was because she promised her mother that she would finish and graduate. It took all of Sally's strength to pull herself out of bed. She needed to go to school and find someone to help her deal with her mother's death and help her find a place to live and find a reason to keep going. She had no food and no money. She knew she would be able to receive Social Security but where would she start? She wondered what other services could be available for a homeless, parentless child? She was so incredibly sad and didn't want anyone to know what she was going through. How would she ever dig herself out of the hole she had fallen into?

Today's youth face an unbelievable amount of barriers. Many are forced into adulthood years before their time. It is important that these youth are prepared for life and careers. Community Services identified and provided services to **six** youth the **opportunity** to prepare for independent adult life. These at risk youth were involved in accessing community resources, obtaining proper ID and Driver's education, securing housing, banking education, menu planning, seeking proper medical and dental assistance, and developing greater self esteem. A total of **75** hours was spent working with these youth providing the **opportunities** to become successful adults who will make good decisions that will impact family, friends, jobs, their future, and their community in a positive manner.



"It is difficult to say what is impossible, for the dream of yesterday is the hope of today and the reality of tomorrow." Robert Goddard

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

Recruitment and Retention

Monica has always wanted to help people. As a little girl, she would read about Clara Barton under her covers at night so that she wouldn't wake her other two siblings sharing her room. Monica vowed that one day she too would become a nurse. As circumstance would have it, Monica became pregnant at an early age and had to provide as best that she could for her two little girls. Any extra money that she was able to garner went to the girls and their school activities. Monica knew that she didn't want to work for minimum wage at the local call center all of her life, but how would she ever be able to afford to go back to school and make her dream of being a nurse, like Clara Barton, come true?

Many individuals want to achieve their highest potential but do not have the means to do so financially. A total of **15** participants were selected to enter a Nurse Assistant Training program. These individuals were provided the **opportunity** to learn new skills by attending **128** hours of classroom and clinical instruction to obtain a Certified Nurse Assistant Certificate. Additionally, they were given the **opportunity** to interview with five participating agencies upon successful completion of the program. Of the 15 individuals that successfully completed the program, 8 were hired by the participating agencies. The **opportunities** this program provided helped to promote personal development as well as confidence and earning potential.



“Within our dreams and aspirations we find our opportunities” Sue Atchley Ebaugh

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS



COMMUNITY VOICES

Independent Monitoring for Quality IM4Q

“I was 4 years old when the Blind School said I was Mentally Retarded and could not go there. My being home was really hard on my mom and dad and Polk was the only place that would take me. When I first came here there were 3,200 people, now there are 320. I've been here a long time.” Paul Miele

In past interviews Paul's has always stated “I want to live on my own, in my own apartment, in town, but I can't; my mom wants me to stay here because Polk has really helped me.” Once again this year Paul expressed his dream but added “my mom has passed away”. Paul's dream is what we at IM4Q call a Consideration for Change.

“Please listen when I talk, but don't only listen with your ears for if you do, you will not always hear what I'm saying.” Keri Nordling

During the interview, Paul's social worker shared her belief in making Paul's dream a reality and his right to try. Tears streamed down her face as she talked about failed attempts in acquiring community supports for Paul. IM4Q shared Paul's consideration with his County Supports Coordinator. Many meetings occurred and Paul's dreams were valued despite the challenges. The Office of Developmental Programs agreed to identify barriers and solutions to his long term funding needs. Community Resources for Independence agreed to provide needed modifications to Paul's future home, because he is blind. The Blind Association agreed to provide independent skills trainings. One of the most important commitments was made by Polk's Administrator who believes in Paul's ability to succeed. The Administrator plans to convert part of an empty cottage into a one person apartment. Paul is also on a waiting list for an apartment in the community.



Because of everyone's belief in possibilities, an innovative approach to independence has started at Polk. Paul's dreams changed the way services and supports are provided on all levels: on the individual, provider, county and state level.

This survey year, Community Voices completed **206** IM4Q surveys in Cameron/Elk, Clarion, McKean and Venango counties and **37** interviews at Polk State Center. IM4Q surveys identify the opinions of persons with developmental disabilities, their families and staff. Community Voices employed, trained and supported **20** IM4Q interviewers, all were either persons with a disability or family members.

“This year I learned one of my greatest lessons. As a mom and family member, I realized how valuable my life experiences are. I see how important it is to value people and make sure their needs are written down. The surveys are thorough and people's choices and voices were respected”.

Molly Geitner Team Member and Family Member

“Dreams are renewable. No matter what our age or condition there are still untapped possibilities within us and new beauty waiting to be born.” Helen Keller