



Ground breaking for new Triage & Assessment Center, Worcester

Martin Luther King Jr. – Business Empowerment Center
237 Chandler St., Worcester



South Middlesex
**Opportunity
Council**

Organizing Resources for Social Change & Economic Independence



7 Bishop St., Framingham
New Framingham Headquarters



Joan Brack Adult Learning Center
Graduation 2012

South Middlesex Opportunity Council
SOUTH MIDDLESEX OPPORTUNITY COUNCIL

Annual Report 2012
ANNUAL REPORT 2012

President's & Executive Director's message

Welcome!

Fiscal Year 12 began last summer with our efforts to locate a suitable site in the City of Worcester to build a new Triage & Assessment Center for the region's homeless single adults. At the end of our fiscal year, on the last day of June, we successfully acquired the Bishop Street site in downtown Framingham from the Avery Corporation. That site includes a 50,000 sf. office building which will serve as the permanent administrative and service delivery headquarters for the Metrowest.

So, we are moving forward. There has been a ground breaking, and by the middle of FY13, the Triage Center will be open. We have already started our planning to move across the street to 7 Bishop Street, a move that will allow the agency to achieve a measure of permanence and stability, and continue to provide services to the region's most disadvantaged and disabled households.

FY12, like most, was a difficult and challenging year for our organization. This report attempts to place context around the year, with highlights of the organization's achievements and recognition of those individuals who gave so much to further our organization's mission of helping households in need achieve a greater degree of economic and social self-sufficiency.

Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to create a better life for individuals and families and stronger communities.

Finally, we want to acknowledge the service of one of our long-time Board members, Paul Prior, who is retiring from the Board. Paul has served as our Treasurer since 1986. Paul was an instrumental part in the evolution of SMOC. We salute his passion and his commitment, and wish him Godspeed on his new journey.

Best,

Bruce Hulme, President
SMOC Board of Directors

Jim Cuddy
Executive Director

Mission Statement

SMOC's mission is to improve the quality of life and promote self-sufficiency of low-income and disadvantaged individuals and families by advocating for their needs and rights; providing comprehensive and integrated services; educating the community; building a community of support and developing new resources and partnerships.



2012 Highlights

On March 20, 2012 the South Middlesex Opportunity Council affiliation with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Business Empowerment Center (MLKJ-BEC), an economic and workforce development agency dedicated to empowering low-income individuals and small businesses to compete and succeed in today's economy. The Center, located at 237 Chandler Street in Worcester, has been in operation in the Worcester region since 1995. In addition to providing a workforce development platform for our work in the Worcester region, the affiliation will provide us with the ability to offer technical assistance and loans to small businesses through its Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) license.

In 2011, SMOC entered into a partnership with the City of Worcester to build a new Assessment/Triage Center that will serve as the centerpiece of this new service/housing delivery and support system that will help bring an end to homelessness in the Worcester Region. To do this, we obtained financing to acquire the future site for the new Assessment/Triage Center. This will enable us to replace the former PIP Shelter at the 701 Main Street location, which has served as the main resource for single adult homeless people in the City for 35 years.



We relocated our 133 East Main Street programs in the city of Marlborough (Head Start, Day Care, WIC, Behavioral Health Services) to new leased sites in the City that present respectful, modern and efficient facilities that will enhance the experiences of people utilizing our array of services.

This past year we celebrated the first full year of operating the “Opportunity Center,” located at our headquarters building in Framingham. The Center created a new integrated, comprehensive, client-centered service center that responds quickly and efficiently to the identified needs of disadvantaged and disabled individuals and families in the Metrowest region.

Last year we completed the acquisition of 7 Bishop Street, Framingham, providing SMOC with the opportunity to create a new permanent headquarters for our organization. This acquisition presents us with the tremendous opportunity to expand on the integration and coordination of services that we began here at Howard Street in the creation of the Opportunity Center.

In 2011 we completed an in-depth evaluation of the Loaves & Fishes Program operated by Open Pantry Community Services that will lead to the transformation of the current Loaves & Fishes Program to embrace a holistic and comprehensive client centered services approach that will provide greater opportunities for the people we serve in the Springfield area.

Last year we entered into agreement with the Metrowest Regional Transit Agency (MWRTA) to lease SMOC’s vacant Blandin Avenue property to create a new public transportation development opportunity for this site and the community at large. The lease is a five-year lease with an option for the MWRTA to purchase the property.



SMOC *Highlights & Awards*

Last year we successfully completed our first tax credit financed affordable housing development with the opening of Freedom Village, a \$7.5m, 26-unit apartment complex that created new housing opportunities for 24 low and moderate-income families located in West Boylston.

In support of our continuing efforts to end homelessness in the Worcester region, we successfully completed a three-building, 24-unit supported housing project in Spencer and an 16 unit supported housing project in Gardner. Both sites will serve single adults.

Successfully negotiated a very difficult siting process involving the Bowdoin Street project in Springfield. This group residence for 13 women struggling with substance abuse issues and seeking recovery is now open.

Completed a successful operational turnaround of the Lowell Transitional Living Center (LTLC), an individual homelessness service provider. Having engaged the Center and its Board on the question of how best to carry the Center forward with its mission of helping to end homelessness in the Lowell area, the LTLC is now in discussions to formally affiliate with SMOC.



FREDERICK RUBIN AWARD

Paul Prior

We first got to know and work with Paul at the time that he was one of SMOC's banking partners. Paul joined the Board of Directors in 1986 and has served as Treasurer of the organization since his election to the Board. Paul's tenure on the Board, in one word, has been amazing. His dedication, his belief in the agency's mission and his "hands on" help in strategically positioning the agency on all financial matters has been an integral factor in the agency's tremendous growth and success over the past 25 years. Particularly noteworthy is that Paul's keen comprehension of the complex world of SMOC real estate development enabled him to craft a real estate development financing strategy that has served the agency so well over the years and that is still in use today. Paul recently retired after a successful career in banking, his most recent position being Senior Commercial Lender at the Middlesex Savings Bank. Paul is now also retiring from the Board as he starts a new phase of his life. Everyone involved with Paul in this organization wanted to honor him, and we thought this would be the most appropriate honor. Congratulations and Godspeed Paul.

EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR

Taryn Ohristo Barros, ESL Instructor

Taryn Ohristo Barros is our dedicated ESL (English as a Second Language) Instructor in the Joan Brack Adult Learning Center. Taryn knows how critically important English language skills are to the future success of her many program participants. Students throughout her classes comment favorably on her patience, kindness and individualized attention. Taryn is a tireless advocate of the program and its students and her creative energy has served the Learning Center well.

Rohey Wadda, Data Systems Coordinator, Planning, Policy and Community Relations

Rohey Wadda has been an exceptional contributor to the agency in partnering with programs across the organization as she works with every division to document, highlight and report successful program outcomes. She works at every level of the organization, patiently helping staff, managers and senior staff get the information that is needed to tell the “SMOC story.” And, she does so with professionalism, grace, patience and a smile.

Valery Cota, Assessment Specialist

Valery is the “front door” for any family seeking shelter – she helps every family to find its way to services necessary to prepare for success. This task is incredibly challenging and requires Valery to work closely with the family, DHCD staff, other SMOC program staff, and many community partners. Her knowledge of the system and her follow through with families ensures that no family is left on its own.

MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Jackie Espiritusanto-Vega, Office Manager, Housing Corporation

Jackie Vega has worked for SMOC since 1997 and has ably guided the Housing Office through the many growth periods and dramatic changes that have occurred in SMOC housing over the years. Jackie is committed to the agency’s mission and goals of providing quality housing opportunities to our residents, to professional, timely and effective communication with both staff and residents, and to the need to deliver best in class customer services.

MARGARET DAVITT SPIRIT OF SMOC AWARD

Darlene Assencoa-Mazurek, Director, Housing & Supported Services

Darlene was SMOC Housing’s first employee, hired in 1986, before the agency had acquired its first residential building. In her role as Director of Housing & Supported Services she is now responsible for the management of 1400 units of housing in 23 communities. When first hired, Darlene used to joke that she was afraid she wouldn’t have enough to do. That worry quickly passed, replaced years ago by the sense that she had way too much to do, but somehow managed it. Darlene’s unique ability to care, combined with her understanding that our tenants need to take responsibility for their lives, have made her uniquely successful. Early on, she established a culture of caring and responsibility, one that continues to this day. Residents and staff alike appreciate her lively inimitable style, direct approach and great sense of humor. She truly represents the spirit and meaning of SMOC’s culture. This is a richly deserved award that highlights Darlene’s unique abilities, and illustrates why SMOC Housing is recognized as the “Best in Class” leader of housing disabled and disadvantaged individuals and families.

ANNIE BRADFORD FRIEND OF SMOC AWARD

Kate Schweikert & Colleen Malloy

Kate Schweikert and Colleen Malloy are members of Hopkinton troop #73799 Girl Scouts. Kate and Colleen decided to pursue the Girl Scouts' Silver Award, the highest award a Cadette Scout can achieve and chose serving Serenity House as the project that would help them to reach their goal. Their work at Serenity included creating and posting signage that would help visitors and delivery people find their way around the property, completing a total makeover of the playroom for visiting children to enjoy, painting outside benches so residents and visitors can enjoy the grounds, planting spring flowers and plants to enhance the property's appearance and creating three community service books to instruct future volunteers in how to undertake small, medium and large projects. Kate and Colleen's work earned them not only the Silver Award but the admiration and respect of both staff and residents of Serenity House.

Roberta Gray

Roberta Gray and a group of women from Shrewsbury came to Rhodes House to ask if their group could become a sponsor for the house. The women would bring in personal care items, clothing, blankets and pillows each month. Roberta Gray took on a personal mission to create a garden for the women to relax in and connect with their recovery. Over the next year Roberta raised funds and found others to volunteer supplies and their time to make the garden a reality. The women of Rhodes House joined in on the construction. Roberta also obtained a donation from Lowe's to place a bench in the garden. Today the garden blooms with roses growing up the gazebo and flowers of many different shades line the path through the garden and there are three benches to sit and just be, as well as a beautiful fire pit in the center of it all. You can watch as the women of Rhodes take time to enjoy the serenity of their garden whether they are reading, talking together or just enjoying the moment – all of this thanks to Roberta Gray.

ISABEL HARRISON VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

Gabby Hartnett, Clinton House

Three plus years ago Norman Hartnett, or "Gabby" as he likes to be called, stopped by Clinton House with a donation and has continued to come every week with fruit and pastries for the families living there. Gabby, a proud World War II veteran, purchased an American flag and flag pole that are displayed in front of the house. He also provides the families with Thanksgiving and Christmas catered dinners every year. Gabby is a generous and humble man whose acts of kindness touch the hearts of both the families and the staff at Clinton House.

Debbie Beausoleil, Roland's House

Debbie Beausoleil always brings smiles to staff faces when they see her pulling up in her car to deliver food to Roland's House. She has been providing this valuable resource every week for over 4 years. She brings wholesome surplus meals from the Senior Center every Monday and bread and pastries several times a week from local stores. Debbie is also an active member of the organizing committee for the annual Evening of Giving which provides much appreciated support for Roland's House. Debbie is very supportive of Roland's House and helps to promote awareness of the good work that gets accomplished there each day.

Elizabeth Loughman, Loaves & Fishes Community Kitchen

Liz Loughman has been a tireless and dedicated volunteer at our Loaves & Fishes Community Kitchen for the past 5 years. When Liz first started volunteering at the kitchen she realized that they needed fresh produce to serve. She persuaded a local produce store in Springfield to donate fresh fruits and vegetables to the kitchen, which Liz faithfully picks up three times a week. While it may seem like a little thing to some, Liz's caring and concern has had a great positive impact on the individuals and families who rely upon the pantry for their food.



“CAROL” IS A FORMERLY HOMELESS SINGLE MOM LIVING WITH HER 5 YEAR OLD SON, “JONATHAN”.

Immediately upon entering the emergency family shelter, Carol made every effort to utilize all options available. Carol enrolled with the SMOC Career Center certificate program where she received a certificate of training for TJ Max. While participating in the training course, she also worked at Burger King and was eventually promoted to a supervisor’s position. Carol struggled with the demands of her schedule but she went to work every day and consistently asked for extra hours.

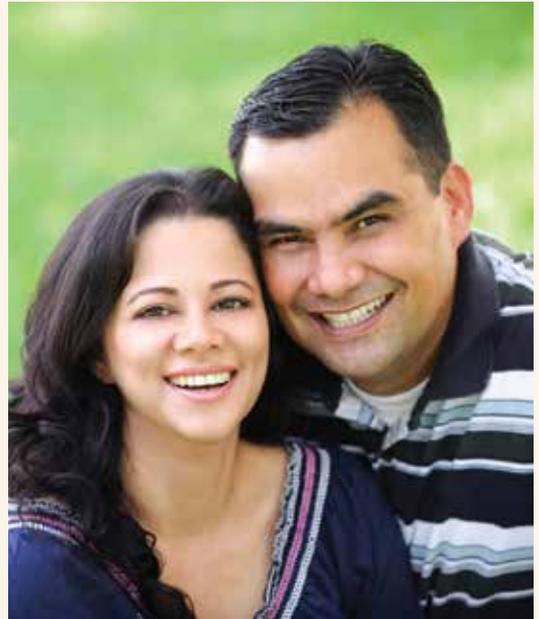
While working with Carol on reestablishing her credit, it came to our attention that one of her parents had used her name as the party responsible for the utility bills. She was now responsible for a \$500.00 debt that she had not incurred and had no control over. Carol became disheartened and felt as though she would never be able pay it off. SMOC staff was able to advocate for her and a payment plan was established and she successfully paid off the debt prior to her move out of shelter.

Carol was very fortunate and was offered two housing options at the same time. She was accepted into the Framingham Housing First Program and also received a letter stating that she qualified for, “Leading the Way Home Voucher.” Ultimately, Carol felt that it would be best for her and Jonathan to stay in Framingham because she had already established a stable home for her family.

Today, Carol continues to work and Jonathan is enrolled in kindergarten and doing well. Carol has been proactive in scheduling a fuel assistance appointment and she is current with her rent. Carol still struggles with the many challenges facing her but she is determined to succeed. She is diligent about keeping abreast about current resources. Due to her tenacity, the strong work ethic she has developed and the assistance that she received from SMOC and other community programs, Carol has been able to overcome homelessness and establish a successful home life for herself and Jonathan.

“GEORGE” AND HIS WIFE “SONIA” CAME TO THE COMMON GROUND RESOURCE CENTER AT 300 HOWARD ST. IN FRAMINGHAM LAST YEAR AFTER LOSING EVERYTHING.

For years George had worked as a truck driver making a decent living and providing all the necessities for his family. Then, due to the emergence of a host of medical issues, both George and Sonia lost their jobs. Unable to pay their rent, they lost their apartment. Living out of their car that was packed with all of their worldly possessions they wondered what would become of them. Then, sadly, their car broke down and they now had no place to stay. George became despondent and eventually suicidal and was hospitalized at a local psychiatric hospital.



George was placed at Roland’s House in Marlborough and Sonia was placed at Shadows women’s housing in Ashland. When George arrived at Roland’s House, he was still very depressed about the circumstances into which he and Sonia had fallen and he missed being with Sonia – they had never been separated before in all their years of marriage. George was not taking care of himself physically or mentally. George had no health insurance, no food stamps and no income. His stay at the psychiatric hospital had left him traumatized.

The first few nights at Roland’s House were very difficult for George. He had terrible nightmares with lots of yelling and, when awakened, he appeared very scared and confused. George took several trips via ambulance to the Emergency Room for low blood sugar and soon became overwhelmed with the bills that followed. Through the coordinated efforts of the Common Ground Resource Center team, George was enrolled in Medicaid to cover his health issues, applied for and received SNAP (food stamps) and submitted an application to Social Security for disability benefits. The Roland’s House staff helped George to learn to monitor his blood sugar levels and supported him in reconnecting with his family. George stabilized medically and soon thereafter his Social Security application was approved.

Now George and Sonia were ready to plan for the future. They went back to where they had abandoned their car, and found it still there with all their belongings. Through the unemployment benefits obtained by his wife and his new Social Security disability income, they were able to find a one bedroom apartment in Waltham. Now Sonia is working full time and George has set up a small shop in the basement of their building. They have a safe, decent place to call home and a better future ahead of them.

SMOC CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES - CORE OPERATIONS
Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2012

REVENUES:

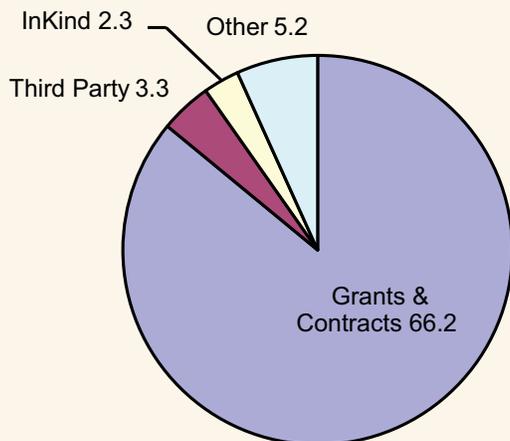
Grants & Contracts	\$ 66,194,895
Third Party	3,326,057
InKind Revenue	2,250,801
Other	5,161,154
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Total Revenues	\$ 76,932,907

EXPENSES:

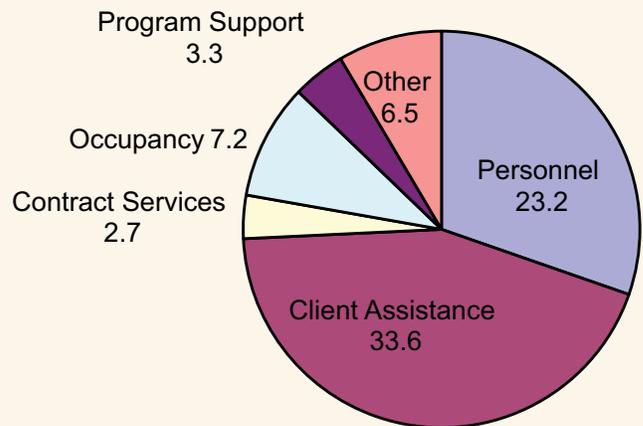
Personnel	\$ 23,220,582
Client Assistance	33,606,944
Contract Services	2,714,192
Occupancy	7,191,529
Program Support	3,273,929
Other	6,484,132
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Total Expenses	\$ 76,491,308

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS \$ 441,599

SMOC FY12 REVENUE
in millions



SMOC FY12 EXPENSES
in millions



SMOC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rev. Robert Bachelder, Auburn
Kim Battle, Holliston
Yvonne B. Brown, Westborough
Jeffrey Fishman, Vice President, Framingham
Patricia Greeley, Framingham
Isabel Harrison, Ashland
Ruth Hibbard, Framingham
Hugo Hollerorth, Natick
Heather Holt, Whitinsville
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Dorothy Kennedy, Natick
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Joan Rastani, Framingham
Lawrence Scult, Wayland
Jim Shay, Framingham
Richard Twomey, Holliston
Pamula Zicko, Holliston

CONTACT INFORMATION

Framingham Main Number	508.872.4853
Child Care and Head Start	508.820.8380
SMOC Behavioral Healthcare	508.879.2250
Fuel Assistance/LIHEAP	508.620.1230
WIC	508.620.1445
SMOC Housing Corporation	508.879.6691
Housing Service Center / Housing Consumer Education Center	508.620.2675
Opportunity Center Common Ground Resource Center	508.620.2690
Career Center	508.620.2677
Marlborough Main Number	508.460.9699
Greater Worcester Housing Connection	508.757.0103
Open Pantry Community Services (Springfield)	413.737.5354

