



# SARATOGA COUNTY ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY COUNCIL

2019 Impact Report

# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friend,

Saratoga County is a wonderful place to live and raise a family. There are cultural activities, great places to work and educational opportunities.

However, that is not the reality for far too many of our neighbors. Saratoga County is blessed with a low poverty rate of 6.6 percent, yet that equates to over 14,000 people, 3,600 of whom are children. And, with the high cost of living, another 15 percent of families are not able to make ends meet, even while working.

That's why EOC is here! Our early childhood education, nutrition, workforce development and food security programs all contribute to helping alleviate the disadvantages endured by low-income families.

We cannot accomplish this without your help. As 2019 comes to an end, I want to thank everyone who asks "What can we do to help?" Through your generosity, both financially and through volunteering, EOC is able to effect a change in the lives of many in Saratoga County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jo Anne Hume".

Jo Anne Hume  
Executive Director



## ABOUT EOC

At the core, we are neighbors helping neighbors. We have a clear vision of a community where everyone has the opportunity to achieve economic security.

All of our services, from the grassroots Soup Kitchen to the federally funded Head Start program, work together to alleviate immediate needs and solve long-term challenges that families in Saratoga County may face.

Although we can't use funding from our federal programs like Head Start for the grassroots efforts, we are able to leverage the programs' community reach and ensure donations have the biggest impact. For example, a family stops by to apply for Head Start and is also able to receive a four-day food basket from The Pantry and meet with an advocate who will help them set up a household budget.

## THE EOC IMPACT

215,345

meals provided

383,815

hours of educational  
instruction

\$1.1M

invested to preserve  
affordable housing

33,896

health support  
services provided

31,957

family support  
services provided

\$402,503+

returned through  
income tax help



## WORKING TOGETHER

*I met Emily, who was a mother pregnant with twins, when she came in for a WIC appointment and asked if she could receive a food basket from The Pantry.*

*They had recently moved and were struggling to get everything up and running in their new apartment. They had to buy propane, while also juggling the cost of resources for their special needs daughter.*

*Through their pantry visit, we were able to provide them with a food package and connect them to an advocate who was able to help them with their heating and other needs to make their home stable.*

*At the same time, she found out that pregnant women were eligible for Early Head Start and was able to fill out the initial application on the spot.*

*- Krystle Nowhitney Hernandez  
Deputy Director*

## WHY ARE FAMILIES STRUGGLING?

Family costs including housing, childcare, transportation and health care have risen more than 20% in the past six years while wage growth has lagged behind, according to United Way's ALICE 2018 report. 101,523 households here earn below a basic survival budget.

## A LOOK AT SARATOGA COUNTY

<b>\$25,740</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>\$72,360</b>	<b>21%</b>
Poverty level for a family of 4	of households fall below poverty line	Basic survival budget for a family of 4	of households earn less than a survival budget

## FOOD PROGRAMS

We believe that no one should be hungry. Our food programs help turn that into a reality every day. **In 2019, we provided over 135,000 meals to the Saratoga County community.**

Everyone is welcome at the Community Lunch Program (The Kitchen) in Saratoga Springs for a nutritious meal, served 365 days a year. On most days there is soup, salad, fresh fruit, dessert and baked goods available in addition to the main dish, which is prepared with fresh ingredients.

The Pantry in Ballston Spa goes above and beyond, providing a minimum of a four-day supply of food because we know that transportation is one of the biggest challenges facing our customers. This year, there has been an increased focus on specialty diet items for those with diabetes or who are gluten-free.

The Summer Lunch Program, with sites in Corinth, Malta and Saratoga, offers kids a free lunch every weekday from the beginning of July through the end of August. The Rural Food Delivery Program and Mobile Food Pantry help those who are elderly or homebound throughout the county.

*One day a new person came in to the Soup Kitchen. He seemed a bit uncomfortable, and wanted to tell me that he had never been any place like this, but had lost his job and fallen on hard times. I told him that the soup kitchen was a “judgment-free zone” and that we were happy to serve anyone and everyone that came in. He still comes in from time to time and is always appreciative of the meals we serve.*

*- Wendy Tarricone, Soup Kitchen Assistant*



## YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK

20,124

meals through the  
soup kitchen

97,320

meals through The  
Pantry

12,910

meals through Rural  
Food Delivery

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ADVOCACY

Families in crisis often don't know where to turn. Our trained advocates are available during food pantry hours to help families address their needs by identifying resources here at EOC and in the community, setting goals and accompanying them on their journey.

# IMMIGRANT SERVICES

The Latino Community Advocacy Program, now part of a larger Immigrant Services Department, provides bilingual advocacy and educational support to immigrants and their families in Saratoga County.

Trained staff support families as they navigate life in a new community and overcome language or cultural barriers. The goal is to promote healthy, thriving families with strong community connections.

Staff provide families with health, education, financial literacy and legal support. Services range from interpreting at medical appointments to holding ESL classes, preparing tax returns and offering assistance accessing quality immigration legal services.



*We met Liliana, her husband, and their six children when they arrived a year and a half ago after fleeing violence in Mexico.*

*We connected them to EOC's food pantry, WIC program and Back-to-Work clothing vouchers, all of which helped Liliana and her husband stretch their hard-earned income to be able to afford rent and legal fees.*

*We also helped get all of the children registered in school, signed up for health insurance and up-to-date with their vaccinations. We remain in close contact with all of the children's ESL teachers.*

*Their oldest passed two Regents exams last year and is on track to graduate. We're excited to partner with the Saratoga Immigration Coalition to mentor her and help her become the first in their family to attend college.*

*While they are uncertain whether their application for political asylum will be successful, they are working hard to build a safe life here in Saratoga with the help of Immigrant Services.*

*- Joan Odess, Immigrant Services Manager*

## DID YOU KNOW?

The Immigrant Services Department was created in response to the need for support for newcomers in many languages. In 2019, we also began partnering with the NYS Office for New Americans Navigator Program to extend our outreach.

## YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK

477  
clients

80  
ESL  
learners

731  
Medical  
services

364  
Legal  
services

454  
Family  
advocacy



## IT TAKES A COMMUNITY

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank all who support the mission of Saratoga County EOC!

Your gifts of time and financial resources are essential as we seek to serve the most vulnerable in our region.

No community is immune to poverty and EOC's ability to come alongside families in their time of need provides not only an immediate solution, but also offers a supportive network to help people on their path towards self-sufficiency.

We are fortunate to receive significant grant dollars for programming like Head Start, WIC and Weatherization,



partners like you who give to support Community Services and general food programming.

Thank you for your partnership in this important work!

*- Rev. David Bennett  
EOC Board President*



## COMMUNITY MAKES A DIFFERENCE

**225**  
volunteers

**8,175**  
hours of  
volunteer time

**250,000**  
lbs. from the  
food bank

**84,500**  
lbs donated by  
grocery stores

## SAVE THE DATE!

**March 11**  
Interagency  
Awareness Day

**May**  
Community Action  
Awareness Month

**May 13**  
May Day for  
Hunger

## ENERGY SERVICES

Safe, affordable housing is one of the biggest challenges facing families in Saratoga and Schenectady counties. The Weatherization Assistance Program makes critical repairs and upgrades that help make homes safe, healthy and energy efficient.

The weatherization crew installs energy-, health- and safety-related measures. These help lower both utility and medical costs for low-income families. On average, a family sees an annual reduction of over \$300 in utility costs and an average savings of \$514 in medical costs. This allows them to spend more on food and other essentials.

By helping make homes healthy, safe and affordable, people are able to stay in their homes longer. It also keeps affordable housing available to families struggling to make ends meet in Saratoga and Schenectady counties.



Energy Services converted an electric hot water tank and an oil furnace to an energy-efficient natural gas boiler system for a weatherization participant.



*"I did an audit in Waterford and found that there was a hot water heater that was not vented properly. Carbon monoxide was spilling into the basement. Thankfully there was insulation that was keeping the carbon monoxide from reaching the main floor. Without it, the homeowners would have been very sick.*

*We installed a new hot water heater, combo smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and a new exterior door as well as sealed the basement perimeter and insulated the attic and sidewalls.*

*These changes improved the health and safety of their home, and will help keep them warm for years to come.*

*- Mike Seeley, Energy Services Director*

## #WEATHERIZATIONWORKS

155	356	\$5,515	\$311
dwellings were weatherized	people were served	avg energy-related investment	avg annual savings

## HEALTHY HOMES MATTER

A home's air quality, water quality and infrastructure have health implications on residents. After weatherization, residents with asthma report fewer hospitalizations and ER visits, and families out of pocket medical expenses decreased by an average of \$514.

# HEAD START

Head Start and Early Head Start help children from low-income families get ready for school by promoting development that supports early learning, health and family well-being.

Children have a harder time becoming school ready if they're homeless, hungry or cold. We facilitate solutions to help families overcome challenges and achieve their goals. Our programs' focus is on working with parents and helping families improve their quality of life.

Whether it's helping families coordinate doctor's appointments for vaccines or locating resources for affordable housing, all of our Early Head Start and Head Start staff are here to go above and beyond for those we serve.



*A homeless mom and 2-year-old daughter were spending nights staying with various friends and family. When they enrolled in Head Start, their goal was to find immediate affordable housing and begin budgeting to afford their own home.*

*Through our home-based program and then center-based classroom, their family advocate Karen helped them achieve their goals. With her support, the family was able to quickly find affordable housing. Mom received a promotion at work, which allowed her to become more financially stable. The family recently moved into their own home after saving for over two years.*

*It was very satisfying to watch this family grow, learn, achieve their goals and become financially stable. We watched the child become more confident as the family found security. We are excited that the child has a home as she enters kindergarten.*

*- Bernie Jones, Head Start Director*

## DID YOU KNOW?

Head Start offers a whole-family approach, not only helping parents or guardians help their child learn and grow but also helping families reach their goals and move toward stability.

## #HEADSTARTWORKS

<b>472</b> families, 81% at poverty line	<b>530</b> children, 32 homeless	<b>96%</b> up-to-date on immunizations	<b>99%</b> of families met a goal with help
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# WIC

WIC is dedicated to providing a healthy start to life. Good nutrition during pregnancy and in the first few years of life has positive long-term impacts on health, putting children on the path to a bright future.

Our staff help ensure healthy pregnancies, healthy birth outcomes, and healthy growth and development for women, infants and children up to age five who are at nutritional risk. They do this by providing nutritious supplemental foods, breastfeeding promotion and support, education on healthy eating, and referrals to health care and critical social services.

It makes a difference. Our WIC program is one of 80 WIC sites across the country chosen to participate in the nationwide 'Feeding My Baby' study, now in its 6th year. The study has found that most children who have participated in WIC have a healthy BMI and mothers report having made at least one change due to something they learned from WIC.



*Benjamin transferred into Saratoga County EOC's WIC program when he was 18 months old. At the 2-year certification for WIC, it was apparent that Benjamin was not communicating clearly. While mom indicated that she wanted to talk about developmental milestones and expressed concern about his speech, she was taken aback and frustrated by the nutritionist's suggestion that mom may want to schedule a speech evaluation for Benjamin.*

*Even though Benjamin's mom initially was upset by the referral, in the end, she was very grateful the WIC nutritionist recommended the speech evaluation. When we saw them three months later, he had gone through the evaluation and was receiving speech therapy.*

*We were thrilled as we listened to him asking questions and telling stories that we could understand. Speech therapy definitely helped Benjamin become school ready. Benjamin entered kindergarten this September, right after graduating from WIC this past summer!*

*- Cathy Valenty, WIC Director*

## #WICWORKS

1,500

women, infants and children served monthly

\$92,689

average monthly WIC redemption

100

breastfeeding moms served monthly

## eWIC

Saratoga County - WIC has completely transitioned over to electronic benefits. eWIC has made the shopping experience more convenient for WIC participants including easier check-out, more discreet WIC transactions and the freedom to spread out WIC purchases.

## EOC'S ECONOMIC IMPACT

We take our responsibility to be good stewards of both your donations and taxpayer money very seriously. Both of these sources are vitally important to ensuring that we can help struggling families in Saratoga County overcome the challenges they may be facing. By helping our Saratoga County neighbors in need achieve economic security, we improve the community for everyone.

As a nonprofit, all funding is invested back into the community while helping families in need.

### Fundraising and donations

Fundraising and donations are critically important and sustain EOC's grassroots services like the food programs and immigrant services department. While it represents only 3 percent of our budget, fundraising and donations support the following:

- Food Pantry
- Mobile Food Pantry
- Soup Kitchen
- Rural Food Delivery
- Summer Lunch Program
- Thanksgiving Basket Program
- Crisis Intervention
- Advocacy and Referrals
- Family Development
- VITA (Tax Preparation)
- English for New Learners
- Immigrant Rights and Legal Resource Liaison
- Interpretation and Translation

### Federal grant funds

Saratoga County EOC's federally funded programs are considered model programs and among the top performing in the state and region. Federal grant dollars support Head Start and Early Head Start, Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP).



## Thank you for making this work possible!

*When delivering for our Mobile Food Pantry, I was able to meet the residents of the community. They were incredibly appreciative and made sure to continue letting me know how thankful they were during my entire time onsite. It was an incredible feeling to have such an impact on a group of people. It truly made me feel that what we are doing each day does make a difference.*

*My breastfeeding peer counselor was a breastfeeding lifesaver. She worked with me to help me continue breastfeeding my baby and the choices of foods and recipes that WIC provides has helped me to eat better.*

*Thank you! The crew did an outstanding job in taking care of my home. I appreciate everything that was done for me- the insulation in my attic and basement, and the LED lights. I couldn't have done it without them, now this winter I'll be warm!*

## LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

We are one of the top 100 employers in Saratoga County, made up of 142 caring professionals with specialized training and education.

142

local jobs

\$4.8M

back into the community  
through employment

80%

of health premiums paid  
for staff and families

## 2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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