

# Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc.

## 2010 Annual Report

### A Letter From the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

These are uncertain times that we live in. There are many factors that play a part in that uncertainty, paramount among them is the prolonged economic recession and/or stagnation we are experiencing. It just seems like we can't dig our way out of the hole.

We watch with great interest and concern as our state and federal legislatures debate the correct path for eliminating our budget deficits and righting our economic ship. Should we eliminate these deficits by cutting spending alone? Should we eliminate them by raising taxes? Or, should we attempt a combination of spending cuts and tax increases? Who among us will end up shouldering the burden whenever the legislature comes to an agreement on this matter? Will it be the low-income and disadvantaged, the middle-class, or the wealthy among us? These are all great questions with no easy answers.

These are not the first uncertain times in our state or nation's history. As a private nonprofit charitable Community Action Agency, Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc. (SMOC) has weathered uncertainty over the course of our forty-six years of our existence. As a private nonprofit, you must learn to adapt to change forces, and to become flexible and efficient, or else you do not survive. We have evolved over those forty-six years. We acknowledge that more change will be required of us. Until then and after, we are positioned to continue our mission of service and assistance, thereby strengthening the people and communities of Southwestern Minnesota.

The pages of this Annual Report reflect the efforts of Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council's board, staff and volunteers, as we provide opportunity, assistance and hope to those who need it the most. We thank you for your continued support of our efforts.

Neal W. Steffl

Executive Director

### Positive Outcomes for Our People and Communities

Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc. (SMOC) is a private non-profit, 501(c)3 Community Action Agency. SMOC was incorporated in July 1965 to assist and serve the needs of low-income persons in Southwestern Minnesota, specifically in the counties of Nobles, Rock, Murray, and Pipestone. Although these counties receive most of our attention, SMOC does provide specific program offerings in as few as one, and in as many as fourteen counties.

The mission of SMOC is "Strengthening our communities and people through opportunities and service." To accomplish this mission, SMOC currently employs approximately 120 full and part-time staff, that deliver an array of programs over our service area. Each of these programs has stated goals and outcomes by which we measure our success. The setting of program goals and measurable outcomes is a requirement of most of our funding sources. The operations and policies guiding SMOC's actions are governed by a fifteen member Board of Directors. It is a tri-partite board comprised of one-third elected officials, one-third private sector representatives, and one third low-income or community representatives.

In addition to making a positive difference in the lives of disadvantaged citizens of Southwestern Minnesota, SMOC also contributes to the economic development of the region. Annually, SMOC makes payments of nearly \$6 million to contractors, vendors, partners, and agency employees. This money circulates throughout the area, thereby benefiting the entire economy of the region.

We are proud to share the following summary of outcomes we have provided in 2010.

## SMOC Expenditures ~ Fiscal Year End 2010

Federal/State Programs:	Funds:	%:	Includes:
Child Care	\$183,993	2.6	SWCCRR, Family U
Community Services	\$889,368	12.4	CSBG/MEOG/Transportation/Family Connections/Homemakers
Energy Programs	\$2,200,035	30.7	EAP
Head Start	\$1,964,675	27.4	CACFP (Food Programs)
Health Program	\$413,471	5.8	Family Planning
Homeless & Shelter	\$85,402	1.2	Emergency Services: EFSP/THP/SHP/ESP/FHPAP
Housing Programs	\$123,913	1.7	MHFA/Small Cities
Job Training	\$420,958	5.9	SCSEP
WX Projects	\$878,919	12.3	DOE/EAP WX/Oil/Propane
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$7,160,734</b>	<b>100</b>	

### Community Development

- The **Energy Assistance Program** assisted 2249 households with their energy bills. The average grant was \$646 per household.
- Fuel and electric vendors received a total of \$1,451,368.
- Crisis dollars helped 889 households avert fuel or electric disconnects.
- Total crisis assistance was \$333,855.
- We assisted 51 people with employment training through our efforts in the **Senior Employment Program** and paid \$186,336 in training wages. Thirty-six local non-profit worksites were assigned workers that helped to enhance their services.
- Worksite supervisors in the six county area of Cottonwood, Jackson, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, and Rock donated their time valued at \$42,379 as in-kind dollars to assist in training the enrollees of the Senior Employment Program.
- We provided \$24,162.99 in supplemental financial assistance to area food shelves that were having difficulty meeting needs through local contributions. These **FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter** funds provided the equivalent of 12,081 meals to hungry men, women, and children.
- We provided motel vouchers for 101 homeless individuals providing them with temporary shelter through the Emergency Shelter Program and the Salvation Army.
- We assisted 49 households (111 individuals) with services that prevented them from becoming one of the growing homeless statistics through the **Family Homeless Prevention Assistance Program, Transitional Housing Program, United Way, Salvation Army.**
- We have provided \$32,778 to area landlords for rental assistance payments on behalf of persons experiencing homelessness or near homelessness with monies from Family Homeless Prevention Assistance Program, Transitional Housing Program, United Way, Salvation Army.
- We have weatherized 28 homes in Nobles, Rock, Pipestone, and Murray counties and spent \$163,423 on independent contractors who purchased the materials from local businesses to complete the services through the **Weatherization Program.**
- Using ARRA money, we weatherized 135 homes in Nobles, Rock, Pipestone, and Murray Counties, which infused \$498,064 being paid to local businesses specializing in energy related equipment replacement or repairs.
- We replaced and repaired furnaces and water heaters through the Energy Assistance Program and Weatherization Program for 69 homes, totaling \$68,421.
- The **Small Cities Development Program** had three grants in 2010 which served seven area communities: Worthington, Wilmont, Round Lake, Slayton, Hadley, Luverne, Hills, and Jasper. This activity rehabbed 49 homes and generated \$1,246,897 that has been spent at local area businesses, helping the local economy.
- We also rehabilitated one additional home in our four counties through the **MHFA Rehabilitation Loan Program**, which resulted in the expenditure of \$20,000 to area businesses.
- The **Homemakers Program** provided services to 20 Nobles County clients (3,689 hours) and 55 Cottonwood County clients (5,419 hours) to help elderly and/or disabled individuals stay in their homes.

## Southwest Child Care Resource & Referral

- SWCCRR serves the nine counties of Region 8: Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, and Rock.
- Consultation, coaching, and technical assistance calls provided to 472 early childhood programs in Region 8: 15 Child Care Centers, 409 Family Child Care Providers, 42 Preschool Programs, and 6 School Age Care Programs.
- 1,565 Family Friend and Neighbor Caregivers received health, safety, and child development information.
- 15 Child Care Center Directors received advocacy, training, grant, resource, policy, and support information.
- 8 Child Care Centers received staffing support through the ARRA project.
- 43 newly licensed child care providers in Region 8 received individualized telephone consultation along with a resource packet including child development, business, and child care safety information.
- Community outreach opportunities were provided in each county by collaborating with partner organizations: public health, Lower Sioux Community, child care family services, Help Me Grow Committee, Early Childhood Initiative Coalitions, Early Childhood Family Education, Community Education, and Early Childhood Special Education.
- 197 child care assistance participants received informational packets containing health, safety, and child development information.
- 24 grants were awarded to Family, Friend, and Neighbor Caregivers in our nine county region totaling \$5,380.14. The maximum amount a caregiver could request was \$250.00 and the average award was \$224.17.
- SWCCRR staff are involved with 8 Early Childhood Initiative Coalitions throughout the nine counties to provide guidance and leadership regarding child care information and development.

## Prairieland Transit System ~ Nobles County Heartland Express

- Twenty routes are provided in Nobles County each week with two Nobles County Heartland Express buses.
- 5,586 rides were provided to residents of Nobles County with the Nobles County Heartland Express buses.
- Nobles County Heartland Express bus service is available to everyone of the fourteen communities in Nobles County five times each week.
- 24 senior citizens received transportation to allow them to participate in Senior Dining.
- 33,948 taxi rides were provided at a reduced fare within the City of Worthington.
- Five preschool programs in Worthington received transportation for their students at a reduced rate.
- 10,671 hours of public transportation services were provided.
- 94,536 miles were driven by Nobles County Heartland Express buses, Worthington Taxi Service vehicles, and volunteer driver cars.

## Family Planning

- Provided exams and health related services to 631 clients.
- Provided services to 44 persons from communities of color.
- Provided services to 189 Hispanic clients.
- Provided interpretive services to 113 Limited English Proficient clients through the use of two bilingual Family Planning staff.
- Provided services to 26 male clients.
- Provided 543 STI testings.
- Provided Education and counseling to:
  - ~878 one on one conference at the 5 clinic sites of Worthington, Marshall, Ortonville, Montevideo, and Redwood Falls.
  - ~746 students, middle school through college age in Marshall, Worthington, Slayton, Ortonville, Westbrook, Tracy, and Redwood Falls.
  - ~57 persons through the Department of Corrections.
  - ~650 persons at Community Health Fairs and Special Community Events.
- Family Planning operates with a budget of \$388,000 and employs 4 staff members and 7 clinicians.

## Head Start

- Head Start received \$1,327,115 from federal and state funding to provide comprehensive child development services in Murray, Nobles, Pipestone and Rock Counties. A total of 191 children were served during the 2010-2011 school year.
- Non Federal In-Kind donations totaled \$350,733 for the 2010-2011 fiscal year; this exceeded the amount required and documents community support for our program.
- New SMOC Head Start Staff include: Cynthia Celander, the Program Manager and Heidi Streff, the Family Support Coordinator.
- A Child Care Center Risk Reduction Plan was developed to meet state licensing requirements.
- Our Self-Assessment was conducted in January and February. Staff, Board and Policy Council Members, community representatives and parents participated in the process. The 2010 Monitoring Protocol was used, and there were no noncompliance's in any program areas.
- The Head Start Child/Family Housing Questionnaire was developed to document homelessness and ensure that all homeless children are served by our program.
- ChildPlus.net is the database program that SMOC Head Start uses for tracking all the required information for the Program Information Report (PIR), and other reports; this data helps us determine areas of strength and areas needing improvement and individualization.
- A total of 1,008 quality books were purchased and given to Head Start children for the cost of shipping at 35 cents each. Additional books were provided by the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.
- Each classroom (combination classrooms and home-based classrooms) has Family Nights for parents, Head Start children and their siblings. These events encourage and promote Parent Engagement within our program. The Mental Health Family Night gives parents the opportunity to have their questions answered and concerns addressed by a mental health professional, and Nutrition Nights focus on healthy food choices and obesity prevention.
- All Head Start Buses passed the State of Minnesota Department of Transportation Bus Inspections complying with all requirements. Children's safety is our top priority.
- Staff have been using Reflective Practice as a means of extending the classroom and modifying their skills to suit specific contexts and situations. They create new strategies to better meet the individual needs of the children, discuss the strategies used during monthly teachers' meetings, and record strategies they have tried and the results in their journals.
- At the end of March, physical examinations are at 209 (including drops) or 97%, and dental examinations are at 181 or 84%. Several appointments are scheduled so this number is expected to increase by the end of the program year.
- Three staff members and two interpreters attended a training on interpreter ethics at Windom. This training reviewed the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. The participants discussed various principles, standards, and strategies for dealing with difficult situations. Interpreters help us provide effective two-way communication with the many diverse families we serve.

### Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc.

1106 3rd Avenue  
P.O. Box 787  
Worthington, MN 56187

Phone: (507) 376-4195  
Toll Free: 800-658-2444  
Fax: (507) 376-3636

Website: [www.smoc.us](http://www.smoc.us)

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