

Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc.

2013 Annual Report

A Letter From the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

On July 9, 2014 Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc. will mark our 49th year of providing services and opportunities to the people and communities of Southwestern Minnesota. Many people call us by our acronym “SMOC”. Some refer to us as the “Opportunity Council”. Whatever moniker is used, it is safe to say that when people either call us or walk into our office, they are looking for hope. Hope that someone or something can help them meet their most basic of needs. Often they are facing a temporary crisis in their lives. They may have lost their job, housing or transportation. A medical emergency may have thrust their family into financial distress. Whatever the reason, they come, and whatever they might call us, we try to help. For 49 years SMOC has served our area residents, offering hope when it is needed most.

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 110 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 over \$5 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 2013.

SMOC Expenditures ~ Fiscal Year End 2013

Federal/State Programs:	Funds:	%:	Includes:
Child Care	\$246,623	4.9	Childcare Aware, Family U, SW Initiative Grant, MN Early Learning Scholarship
Community Services	\$822,140	16.2	CSBG/MEOG/Transit/Family Connect/Homemakers/United Way
Energy Programs	\$1,241,117	24.5	EAP
Head Start	\$1,615,871	31.9	CACFP (Food Programs)
Health Program	\$473,413	9.3	Family Planning
Homeless & Shelter	\$76,509	1.5	Emergency Services: EFSP/THP/FHPAP
Housing Programs	\$169,781	3.4	MHFA/Small Cities
Job Training	\$314,463	6.2	SCSEP
WX Projects	\$103,549	2.1	DOE/EAP WX/Oil/Propane
Total Expenses:	\$5,063,466	100	

Community Development

- The **Energy Assistance Program** (EAP) assisted 1825 households with their energy bills. The average grant was \$527 per household.
- Fuel and electric vendors received a total of \$961,360.
- Crisis dollars helped 186 households avert fuel or electric disconnects with a total of \$67,283 in assistance.
- We assisted 38 people with employment training through our efforts in the **Senior Community Service Employment Program** (SCSEP) and paid \$189,228 in training wages. Thirty-seven 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 \$40,210 as in-kind dollars to assist in training the enrollees of SCSEP.
- We provided motel vouchers for 44 homeless individuals providing them with temporary shelter utilizing Salvation Army funds.
- We provided \$14,226 in FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter Program funds in supplemental financial assistance to area food shelves that were having difficulty meeting needs through local contributions. These funds supplied the equivalent of 7,213 meals to hungry men, women and children.
- We assisted 36 households (105 individuals) with services that prevented them from becoming one of the growing homeless statistics utilizing **Family Homeless Prevention Assistance Program** funds.
- We assisted 7 households (26 individuals) with reduced rental expenses which allowed them to live in quality, safe, affordable housing utilizing **Transitional Housing Program** funds.
- We provided \$30,132 to area landlords for rental assistance payments on behalf of persons experiencing homelessness or near homelessness utilizing Family Homeless Prevention Assistance, Transitional Housing, and Salvation Army and United Way funds.
- We have weatherized 15 homes in Nobles, Rock, Pipestone, and Murray counties and spent \$80,968 on independent contractors who purchased the materials from local businesses to complete the services through the **Weatherization Program**.
- We replaced and repaired furnaces and water heaters through the Energy Assistance Program and Weatherization Program for 120 homes, totaling \$100,351.
- The **Small Cities Development Program** had four grants in 2013 which served Pipestone County and five area communities: Worthington, Rushmore, Adrian, Slayton, and Hadley. This activity rehabbed 12 homes and generated \$198,138 that has been spent at local area businesses, helping the local economy.
- We also rehabilitated two additional homes in Nobles county, one in Rock County, and one in Pipestone County through the **MHFA Rehabilitation Loan Program**, which resulted in the expenditure of \$29,700 for Nobles, \$27,000 for Rock county, and \$23,233 for Pipestone County area businesses.
- The **Homemakers Program** provided services to 20 Nobles County clients (3,223 hours) and 56 Cottonwood County clients (4,607 hours) to help elderly and/or disabled individuals stay in their home.

Region 8 Child Care Aware (formerly Child Care Resource and Referral)

- In January, 2013 Child Care Resource and Referral celebrated 25 years of service with a name change — Child Care Aware of Minnesota. This name change aligns Minnesota with the national office — Child Care Aware of America.
- Region 8 Child Care Aware serves the nine counties of: Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, and Rock. We are a part of the West/Central Child Care Aware District.
- Consultation, coaching, and technical assistance is provided to 451 early childhood programs in Region 8: 13 Child Care Centers, 391 Family Child Care Providers, 31 Preschool Programs, and 5 School Age Care Programs.
- Family Friend and Neighbor Caregivers received health, safety, and child development information including a National training on physical development and limiting screen time.
- 13 Child Care Center Directors received advocacy, training, grant, resource, policy, and support information.
- Newly licensed child care providers in Region 8 receive 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, family services, Help Me Grow Committee, Early Childhood Initiative Coalitions, ECFE, Community Education, ECSE, and Child Care Assistance.
- Child Care Aware staff provided technical assistance and guidance to preschool, family child care providers and child care centers in Region 8 involved in Minnesota's quality rating system : Parent Aware. Six programs received a rating in 2013: 3 family child care providers, one child care center, and one preschool program.
- Early Learning Scholarships in the amount of \$335,490 for Pathway I and \$335,490 for Pathway II was awarded to child care, schools, preschool, and Head Start.

Prairieland Transit System ~ Nobles County Heartland Express

- Twenty routes are provided in Nobles County each week with two Nobles County Heartland Express buses. Each of the fourteen communities in Nobles County is served five times each week.
- 4,282 rides were provided to residents of Nobles County with the Nobles County Heartland Express buses.
- 28,161 rides were provided at a reduced fare within the City of Worthington by the Worthington Taxi Service.
- 11,352 hours of public transportation services were provided.
- 84,888 miles were driven by Nobles County Heartland Express buses and Worthington Taxi Service vehicles.
- SMOC became the grantee for a four county collaborative project between Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, and Rock: Buffalo Ridge Regional Transit.
- A four county Buffalo Ridge Regional Transit Joint Powers Board was established and a cross-county route connecting Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, and Rock was established and began providing services December, 2013.

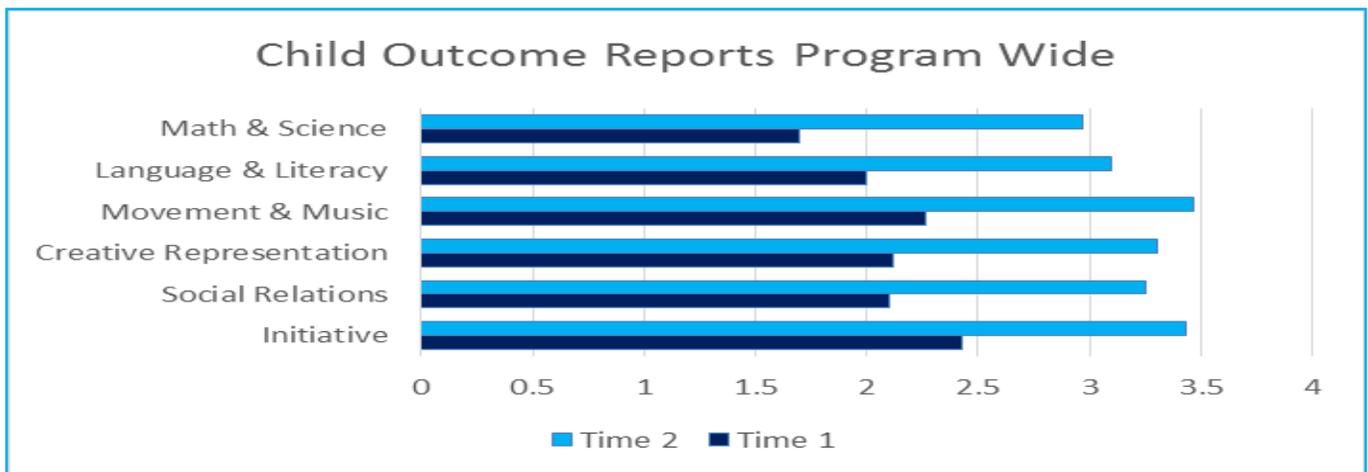
Family Planning

- Provided exams and health related services to 475 clients.
- Total visits of 1715, ages 13-55, 225 new clients.
- Provided services to 36 persons from communities of color.
- Provided services to 143 Hispanic clients.
- Provided interpretive services to 143 Limited English Proficient clients through the use of two bilingual Family Planning staff and use of the Interpreter Line.
- Provided services to 36 male clients.
- Provided education and counseling:
 - √ At 5 clinic sites of Worthington, Marshall, Ortonville, Montevideo, and Redwood Falls.
 - √ To 322 students, middle school through college age in Marshall, Worthington, Slayton, and Westbrook.
 - √ To 700 persons at Community Health Fairs, Special Community Events, and Colleges.
- Family Planning operates with a budget of \$449,722 and employs 5 staff members and 6 clinicians.

Head Start

Head Start Annual Report April 2014

- Head Start received \$1,290,246 from federal and state funding to provide comprehensive child development services in Murray, Nobles, Pipestone and Rock Counties. A total of 177 children were served during the 2013-2014 school year.
- In addition to these funds, MN Early Learning Pathways II scholarships, provided \$ 92,745 of funding. This allowed us to serve an additional 13 children and enhance services by providing one-on-one classroom aides in our Nobles County classrooms.
- Non Federal In-Kind donations totaled \$292,507 for the 2013 fiscal year; this exceeded the amount required and documents community support for our program.
- With the Early Learning Scholarship funds we hired four classroom one-on-one aides.
- Our Self-Assessment was conducted in January and February. Staff, Board and Policy Council Members, community representatives and parents participated in the process. The 2013 Monitoring Protocol & the Head Start Self-Assessment; Your Foundation For Building Program Excellence resources were used, and there were no non-compliances in any program areas.
- The Leadership Team participated in a 3 day ChildPlus training. This 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.
- We are in the process of licensing our new site in Nobles County.
- Each classroom (combination classrooms and home-based classrooms) have 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 the 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.
- At the end of March, physical examinations are at 196 (including drops) or 95%, and dental examinations are at 151 or 73%. Several appointments are scheduled so this number is expected to increase by the end of the program year.
- The School Readiness Coaches continue to attend the MHSA Quality Assessment quarterly meetings.
- The Head Start Director and the Pipestone Combo Teacher have joined the MHSA Parent Family Community Engagement work group, and attend quarterly trainings and work sessions.



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