



Annual Report
2014-2015



Helping Communities Bridge Gaps



Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission

Central Susquehanna Opportunities serves as a catalyst for economic, educational, social, and workforce development in collaboration and cooperation with the entire community to provide diverse resources that promote self-sufficiency and community prosperity.

Vision

We will be the leader in advancing economic, educational, social, and workforce development opportunities.

Values

- **Central Susquehanna Opportunities believes:**
- **That each individual is unique and should be treated with dignity and respect.**
- **In developing partnerships in order to re-invest in the communities in which we live.**
- **In creating a work environment that empowers employees to make a difference.**
- **In providing services to the public in the most effective and efficient manner.**

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Dear Fellow Community Member:

As a Community Action Agency, our core mission at Central Susquehanna Opportunities, Inc. is to provide resources that promote self-sufficiency and community prosperity. Since funding has stabilized from the state and federal level, CSO has been able to have a positive impact in the lives of many individuals/families in our communities providing individualized, community action and workforce development services. The personal stories and information highlighted in this report are examples of our commitment to individual success and evidence of our employees' dedication to fulfilling the purpose of the programs we offer- to bridge gaps in services and empower people in need to move from poverty to prosperity.

Central Susquehanna Opportunities, Inc. designed a new website to enhance our marketing, promoted, provided, and provided individual success stories, provide current information to better serve our customers and provide links to other community organizations. We improved our Facebook page to help our customers and partners stay up to date on all of our services. As our geographical locations, program requirements and financial requirements continue to transform, we maintain our commitment to be the leader in advancing economic, educational, social, and workforce development opportunities.

In concluding 2015 we are grateful for the support of our stakeholders, donors, volunteers and dedicated employees. Your commitment helped to change and uplift the lives of people in need. On behalf of Central Susquehanna Opportunities, Inc. Board of Directors and Management, we thank you for entrusting your resources to us and will continue working to improve the lives of individuals and families in our community. We look forward to your continued support in the upcoming year.

Regards,



Barry McLaughlin, CEO



Barry McLaughlin

Board of Directors and CSO Staff



Officers

Eric Rowe	Chair
Greg Sacavage	Vice Chair
Douglas Diven	Secretary
Bernie Swank	Treasurer

Local Elected Officials or Their Representative

Harold Hurst	The Honorable Kurt Masser, 107th Legislative District Representative
Martha Milbrand	The Honorable John Gordner, 37th Senatorial District Representative
Sandra Robbins	The Honorable David Millard, 109th Legislative District Representative
Chris Grayson	Northumberland County Controller
Bernie Swank	Mayor of Danville
Paul Leshinskie	Coal Township Commissioner

Low Income Representatives

Greg Sacavage	Mount Carmel Area School District
Susan Blake	Danville Area Head Start
Wendy Herrold	River Front Apartments
Douglas Diven	HandUp Foundation
Rich Kisner	Columbia County Housing & Redevelopment Authority
Thomas Dougher	The Gatehouse

Private Sector/Other Community Representative

Mike Roberts	Keystone Staffing
Lake Randall	Mid-Penn Engineering Corporation
Eric Rowe	Wood-Mode
Sandra Mattocks	Mifflinburg Area School District
Tracy Gillespie	Columbia/Montour Area Vocational Technical School
Kevin Varano	Varano's Warehouse



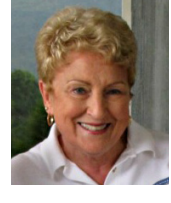
Eric Rowe, Chair



Greg Sacavage, Vice Chair



Douglas Diven, Secretary



Bernie Swank, Treasurer

Staff Recognition 2014



Each year staff are recognized for years of service during the Annual All Staff meeting in October. From Left to Right, Caroline Brady - 10 years of Service, Penny Hess - 35 years of service, Mark Hauck - 30 Years of Service, Brandy Margel - 10 Years of Service, and Brian Ambrose - 5 years of Service

Leadership Susquehanna Valley

With the assistance of this group of professionals we are proud to announce that our "new & improved" website was up and running last summer. Thanks to the hard work and expertise of students from Shamokin Area High School, CSO now has a user-friendly website that is full of information for agencies and the public. You may keep up with CSO programs and activities, as well as PA CareerLink® and Community Action Workshops, all with just a click! Visit www.censop.com today!

Staff Spotlight



In January of 2015, CSO, Inc. welcomed student intern, Sarah Fowler, from Luzerne County Community College. Sarah was a student in Luzerne's Human Services Associate of Science degree program. While Sarah completed her 140 hour internship with CSO, Inc., She worked full-time as a department manager for Weis Markets, Inc., and attended classes in the evening to finish her degree. In March of 2015, Sarah was hired as a full-time CSBG case manager with CSO, Inc.

Prior to her studies at Luzerne County Community College, Sarah graduated from Danville Area Senior High School and recently purchased a home in the Danville area. On May 28th, 2015, Sarah graduated with honors from Luzerne County Community College, and ended her final semester at Luzerne with a 4.0 grade point average. Sarah will attend Misericordia University in the fall of 2015 as a student in Misericordia University's accelerated bachelor's degree program with a major of behavioral sciences. Despite her short time with CSO, Inc., Sarah has remarked how rewarding her career with CSO, Inc. is and has praised her fellow staff in how helpful they have been while Sarah made the transition from intern to full-time staff while encouraging her in her college career and continuing education.

Career Exploration Days



PA CareerLink® has developed industry specific events, highlighting training and career opportunities. “Transportation Tuesday” focuses on the transportation industry and “Careers in Caring” provides information on the healthcare industry. During these events we invite both training providers and employers to briefly speak to job seekers about careers in that field. It is a great opportunity for job seekers and we have had several success stories, including an EARN customer who attended the transportation session. This customer was able to connect with Professional Driver’s Academy who helped him complete his remaining CDL training and obtain employment soon after. We will soon be expanding these events to include industries and careers such as Manufacturing and Trades.

Career Fair with PA CareerLink®

- In September 2014 PA CareerLink® Clinton County held their first ever Career Fair in Renovo to better serve the needs of those residents in western Clinton County and surrounding counties. The event was sponsored by Bucktail Medical Center, K&L Auto Sales, PA CareerLink® Clinton County, and the Western Clinton County Recreation Authority. It was held at the Western Clinton County Recreation Center. Seventeen employers/schools participated.



- In October 2014 PA CareerLink® Clinton County held their Lock Haven Career Fair at STEP, Inc, Clinton County Community Center in Lock Haven. The event was sponsored by the County of Clinton, Clinton County Economic Partnership, PA CareerLink Clinton County, and STEP, Inc. Twenty two employers/schools participated.



- In April 2015 PA CareerLink® Clinton County held their Career Fair at STEP, Inc., Clinton County Community Center in Lock Haven. The event was sponsored by First Quality, HCR ManorCare, PA CareerLink® Clinton County, and STEP, Inc. Twenty nine employers/schools participated. The CEO of STEP, Inc. commented “Now there’s an example of a partnership positively impacting self-sufficiency and the economy! What an outcome!” in reference to this career fair partnership leading to a local Head Start family being very successful at the event, the father obtained employment and the mother has an interview stemming from the job fair.
- The PA CareerLink® Columbia/Montour Counties held a job fair in May 2015, at the Danville Elks connecting with almost 40 businesses and 200 job seekers. The PA CareerLink® Northumberland/Snyder/Union Counties held two job fairs in April 2015. The first was at Shikellamy High School in Sunbury and the second at Masser’s Resturant in Paxinos. Each event welcomed almost 50 employers and 300 job seekers.
- Staff at the PA CareerLink® Northumberland/Snyder/Union Counties assisted with a career fair hosted by SUN Area Tech for their graduating seniors. Prior to the career fair, all students received a presentation from CareerLink staff on job searching and self-promotion. Soft skills, employer expectations and interviewing techniques were discussed along with enrollment on JobGateway®. Approximately 25 employers from the local area attended the event.
- The Lycoming site partnered with iHeartMEDIA in hosting 38 employers/training providers for a career fair that attracted over 300 job seekers.

PA Workforce Development Association Award



PA CareerLink® Lycoming County submitted the winning nomination for the 2015 Governor's Job Creation Award- PRIMUS Technologies Corp, presented by the PA Workforce Development Association and PA Department of Labor & Industry.

PRIMUS Technologies Corporation is an electronic manufacturing services (EMS) provider that produces highly reliable products for global government and commercial markets. PRIMUS is an integrated lean enterprise that fully embodies the Six Sigma principles and is a leader

in the EMS industry creating and building products for the military/aerospace, medical, computer/communications, automotive and industrial controls markets. PRIMUS's vision is "To be the most respected electronic manufacturer service provider by leading with Six Sigma quality initiatives, world class people, innovation and technology".

Since its creation, PRIMUS Technologies has been committed to growth and investment for its organization, employees, and local community. PRIMUS employs over 500 and has been a consistent, reliable partner of the PA CareerLink® Lycoming County since 1994, hiring candidates through TAA, WIA Title I and Veteran's Programs. In addition, PRIMUS has consistently supported PA CareerLink® career fairs, Industry Partnerships, FIT4 Advanced Manufacturing and Manufacturing Day activities. PRIMUS has proactively partnered with local companies that have suffered job losses due to overseas trade or economic downturn. As part of the Rapid Response process, PRIMUS has shown a willingness to meet, interview and bring local dislocated workers on-board.

PRIMUS has provided staff tours, attended employer seminars and participated in a Job Connections workshop as an employer speaker. PRIMUS hosts ongoing on-site hiring events partnering with the PA CareerLink® and local staffing agencies to fill more than 75 open direct hire positions. During the course of 2014, PRIMUS created 109 jobs (Full-time/Part-time/Temporary/Hourly and Salary) and grew from 418 to 527 employees. PRIMUS increased its total workforce by 26% throughout 2014, all positions provided family-sustaining wages and benefits for families in the Central Region of Pennsylvania.

PRIMUS Technologies understands the value of career exploration and works with local high schools and colleges, investing time and resources in the development of the next generation of workers. PRIMUS is a corporate sponsor at Saint John Neumann Regional Academy in Williamsport where the company provides invaluable support to offer a variety educational

programs and activities. PRIMUS offers Engineering Internships, actively recruits at local colleges, donates to Pennsylvania College of Technology and serves on its Advisory Board for Manufacturing. Proactive involvement in workforce development, commitment to educational opportunities, and demonstrated community leadership positions PRIMUS Technologies Corporation as a highly regarded business, a valued community partner, and a desirable employer.

Technology + You = Success!



During the summer of 2014, Central Susquehanna Opportunities, Inc. (CSO, Inc.) provided a summer STEM project for thirty-four students from Milton, Shikellamy, and Mid-West School Districts. The project, Technology + You = Success! focused on how the STEM principles students learn in the classroom relate to specific occupations. Throughout the three weeks students met with teachers to learn about STEM, toured and interviewed employees at a local business (ConAgra, Best Buy, Brush Industries, Sunbury Wastewater Treatment Plant, Wood-mode, and Kreamer Feed), and worked with Best Buy to create a video documenting their experience.

Students were exposed to STEM related careers that they didn't know existed. The program concluded with a video premiere at The Campus Theatre which showcased the student videos on the big screen.

Employer Trainings



PA CareerLink® Lycoming in partnership with the Williamsport/Lycoming Chamber of Commerce and Holiday Inn offered a series of three Unemployment Compensation Seminars with 23 employer representatives attending. Nancy Smithbauer, Workforce Development Representative from the Altoona UC office, presented on several UC topics such as UC 101, Law Changes, UC Appeals/Hearings, and Separation Issues.

Thaisa Williams' Journey to Success



Thaisa Williams is a 25-year-old single mother of two from Lycoming County. She has struggled throughout her life with maintaining employment due to past traumatic issues with abuse and neglect. Thaisa realized that her children needed a stable environment and it was her responsibility to be a positive role model.

Thaisa was residing with her family in a homeless shelter at the time that she was initially enrolled in the EARN program in December of 2013. Her employment search was put on hold so that she could find stable housing for her family. In January 2014 after getting a new apartment for her family, she returned to the EARN program.

The EARN program worked with enrolling Thaisa into a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) Training program through Manor Care. This training allowed her to start working part-time with Manor Care in

April 2014. Her hourly rate increased by \$1.20 in June 2014 once she obtained her CNA certificate. She now has two jobs. She continues to work part-time at Manor Care, but now also works full-time at the Roseview Center, also as a CNA.

Thaisa has aspirations to continue her schooling to become a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). The EARN program has scheduled Thaisa to return in April 2015 to speak to current program participants about her experiences in the program and her continuous journey to success.

The Department of Human Services recognizes Thaisa for her endurance and congratulates her for obtaining financial independence for her family through employment while continuing to pursue her academic goals. PA CareerLink® Lycoming County submitted the winning nomination for the 2015 PA Department of Human Services Governor's Achievement Award, T. Williams.

The PA CareerLink® Columbia/Montour/Northumberland/Snyder/Union Counties takes a customer centered approach when designing services and operating business. It is top priority to offer services that meet the needs of businesses and job seekers. Over the past year, new relationships were developed and partnerships with community agencies and businesses were strengthened. New career focused events were created for all customers of the PA CareerLink®. Job seeker services were redesigned resulting in more intensive services and business services were improved by increasing outreach and the introduction of business seminars.

CSO Highly Trained Professionals



CSO sent two employees to Career Development Facilitator Certification Training. This is considered one of the most valuable certifications for career development professionals. The Global Career Development Facilitator program is comprised of 120 hours of course work and utilizes the National Career Development Association (NCDA) curriculum. This certification recognizes facilitators as an expert in the field of career development, customers will know that they are being served by highly-trained professionals, it is recognized in 15 countries, and as value to the organization serving job seekers.

Career Changes Made Easy



In May 2014, Nicole visited the PA CareerLink® Lycoming County submitted the winning nomination for the 2015 PA Department of Human Services Governor's Achievement Award, T. Williams Lycoming County submitted the winning nomination for the 2015 PA Department of Human Services Governor's Achievement Award, T. Williams Columbia/Montour Counties. She had worked as a Manager in a grocery store for over 2 years and wanted to make a career change to a position helping people. She had a short term goal of becoming a Certified Nursing Assistant, working in a Nursing Home or Home Health Care. Her long term goal is to become a Licensed Practical Nurse. She began to meet regularly with the Workforce Specialist to guide her through a series of career development activities and to assist with the application process of attending training. During this time, Nicole achieved a Gold Level National Career Readiness Certificate. After researching various training options, she chose to attend Luzerne County Community College. She met the Nurse Aide program requirements and started training in September 2014. Nicole passed the course in October 2014. Nicole was pregnant and due in November 2014 but still scheduled the Certification testing, with thoughts that she might have to reschedule. Nicole gave birth to a baby boy that month, and rescheduled her testing. In January 2015, Nicole passed the certification, and received a job offer from

Workforce Development Programs are made possible through the support of the Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporation, the leader and active partner in workforce development efforts.

a local employer as a Certified Nursing Assistant, starting wage \$12.50/hour. She is beginning to take the steps to go to school to become a Licensed Practical Nurse and is proving to be a great role model for her family.

PA CareerLink® Northumberland County



Anthony Herrold came to the PA CareerLink® Lycoming County submitted the winning nomination for the 2015 PA Department of Human Services Governor's Achievement Award, T. Williams in Sunbury in September 2014 to request assistance to attend Professional Drivers Academy in Milton for the Class A CDL Program. Anthony had recently been unemployed from a manufacturing company where he worked for seven years due to family medical concerns. One of Anthony's children had suffered an urgent medical condition that required hospitalization.

Anthony worked closely with his Workforce Specialist and completed the Career Development Process which indicated that his interests, strengths and values aligned with his goal of becoming a truck driver. Local labor market information was reviewed with Anthony as well as current job opportunities. Through the program, Anthony learned more about the tasks, skills and abilities required for the Heavy Tractor Trailer Driver occupation. Anthony earned a Gold National Career Readiness Certificate on October 6, 2014 and exceeded the recommended scores profiled for the Heavy Tractor Trailer Driver occupation. Anthony and his Workforce Specialist also created an individual employment plan that outlined his goals and

the steps to reach those goals. Anthony was accepted into the Class A CDL Program at Professional Drivers Academy for the October 27, 2014 start date, and successfully completed the program on December 16, 2014.

Anthony was recruited by Veriha Trucking on 12/17/14 for an over the road driving position. Anthony accepted the job offer and began employment on 1/9/15. Anthony's guaranteed weekly starting salary is at least \$887.00 per week. Within 8 weeks of training for a new career in the Transportation industry, Anthony is earning similar wages in an entry-level position to that of his 7 year tenure in the Manufacturing industry.

GET2WORK Program



CSO began piloting Out of School Youth group enrollments this fall. We have found that engaging youth in activities with their peers keeps them motivated to succeed, and helps staff to effectively serve larger numbers. This has also allowed CSO to build in additional structure to the OSY program with scheduled enrollment dates, workshops that embed soft skill instruction, a career development process for youth to learn more about themselves and identify career goals, hands-on work experience and job development.



PA CareerLink® Outreach

All PA CareerLink® sites are now using Facebook and Constant Contact to promote our services and events to more job seekers and businesses.

- Both sites are become more involved with local chambers, economic partnerships, and SHRM to improve business engagement. Recently staff from the PA CareerLink® Clinton County attended an appreciation luncheon celebrating First Quality's 25th anniversary, which is the county's number one employer.
- Over the past year the sites have become more involved with helping re-entrants, now known as "returning citizens". Staff have conducted job search workshops at the PA CareerLink® sites, county and federal prisons, and other locations. They have also attended local re-entry and CJAB meetings to address potential barriers re-entrants face when transitioning from prison to the community.
- The addition of our Business Consultant positions has allowed for increased involvement with chambers, economic partners and local businesses as well as the creation of new PA CareerLink® events, seminars and marketing strategies.
- Thousands of job seekers and businesses subscribe to receive notifications from PA CareerLink® Columbia/Montour/Northumberland/Snyder/Union Counties Facebook page, LinkedIn and Constant Contact. These tools are used to promote job recruitments, career fairs, and events and to fill immediate job openings. Emails are distributed to new customers to inform them of all services readily available at the PA CareerLink® and on JobGateway.
- To showcase Industry Clusters and high priority occupations with in those clusters, PA CareerLink® Northumberland/Snyder/Union Counties hosted events celebrating Healthcare Awareness Week and Manufacturing Day.
- Over 30 vendors attended the Healthcare Awareness Week event. It was held in conjunction with Health Care Awareness week and entertained a combination of employers, schools, and service providers supplying services such as flu shots, blood pressure screenings, massage therapy, vision testing and much more.
- PA CareerLink® hosted one of nearly 1,500 events held across the nation to celebrate Manufacturing Day. Job seekers met with employers to become familiar with manufacturing jobs and the skills needed to obtain them. The majority of jobs require a special skill set, many which can be and currently are taught in our local trade and technical schools.
- PA CareerLink® began partnering with Adult Probation this year to host a workshop on Exploring the Criminal Justice System and Job Searching with a Criminal Background. Together staff answers questions regarding criminal charges and how to get hired with a criminal background. Job seekers with criminal charges receive information on how to market themselves regardless of their background and how to get employers to give them a chance working at their business.



A Year in the Life of Central Susquehanna Opportunities, Inc.



It is our pleasure once again to present the 2014/2015 annual report of Central Susquehanna Opportunities, Inc. "A Community Action Agency" of Northumberland, Montour and Columbia Counties. Community Action focuses on making every opportunity available to our service population to achieve their dreams for empowerment and success. Last year, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Lyndon B. Johnson's declaration of the War on Poverty.

We recognize that the fight continues because we will always have the low income individuals and families. Our mission is rooted in uplifting our low income, and helping them to help themselves. We do this through a myriad of programs designed to break the chains of poverty. We also do this by leveraging our resources with community partners and strategic alliances.

Our Community Action Agency provides an array of services that are designed to help identify barriers, teach ways to overcome enabling negative factors and to change one's focus for new opportunities. During 2014, CSO, Inc. Community Action served 5514 Unduplicated individuals with over 16,000 services. We are proud to say we met or exceeded our goals/outcomes for the year.

Central Susquehanna Opportunities J.O.B.S Center



CSO, A Community Action Agency, is proud to announce the grand opening of the (Job Opportunities Build Self Sufficiency) Center. The program is designed to provide employment services to job seekers in the Lower Anthracite Region. It also serves as a resource to local employers who are looking for qualified workers.



In response to the overwhelming need for employment services, CSO applied for funds through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. The JOBS Center is completely equipped with brand new computers, as well as many other resources for job seekers. The center offers internet access, interview space and courtesy phone. Staff is available to assist customers one-on-one. CSO, Community Action Agency will work hand in hand with the JOBS Center to deliver "One-Stop" services to customers who are seeking assistance with any number of issues, such as budgeting help, utility programs, income management, and individual case management. The addition of the JOBS Center will complete the menu of services required to help customers attain economic self-sufficiency.

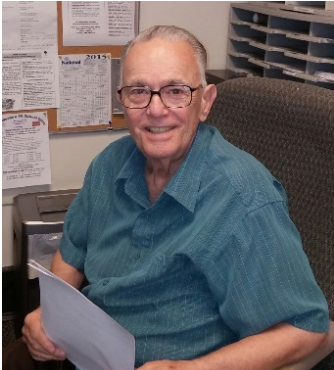
The Grand Opening was held on Tuesday, March 17th to officially present this resource to the public. Local Dignitaries were on hand and a mini job fair was also held in conjunction with the event. Over 150 guests attended the opening. The JOBS Center is currently open for business Monday through Friday from 8am-4pm. For more information, please call 570-644-6575, extension 136.

Poverty Simulations



Poverty Simulations is a teaching tool to educate our communities about poverty conditions and the struggles faced by those in or near poverty for a better understanding so that appropriate poverty issues can be addressed. CSO Community Action has been hosting simulations throughout our three county area. CSO, Community Action feels these simulations help everyone understand what it is like to walk in the shoes of our clients and for our clients to partner with us as they play a vital role in these simulations. Simulations were held for various groups including: Columbia County Y.I.P. (Youth in Philanthropy) in conjunction with Central Susquehanna Community Foundation, Leadership Greater Susquehanna Valley through the Chamber of Commerce and the United Way of Greater Susquehanna Valley and AGAPE of Bloomsburg.

Experience Works



Because experience matters to us, CSO, Inc., has partnered with Experience Works to provide adults aged 55 and older paid work experience to re-enter the workforce and gain a competitive edge in today's job market. Currently, CSO, Inc. has two Experience Works participants within our Community Action Agency as administrative assistants.

Joe Bartello came to CSO, Inc. as an Experience Works participant in April of 2012. Joe, a retired music teacher, enjoys spending his free time focusing on his photography and is the proud grandfather of 8 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild. Joe assists individuals when they enter our agency leading them to the services they need. He is also our SafeLink phone representative. Joe often remarks how much he enjoys his time he spends here at CSO, Inc. and is anxious to see where his experience with CSO, Inc. will lead him next.



Gloria Walters came to CSO, Inc. as an Experience Works participant in early 2015. Gloria spends her time at CSO, Inc. answering phones, and assisting individuals as they come into our office. While participating in Experience Works, Gloria is also pursuing an Associate's Degree in Human Services from Luzerne County Community College. Despite her short time with CSO, Inc., through Experience Works, Gloria has remarked how welcoming and helpful the staff was when she started and how wonderful of an environment CSO, Inc. creates for staff and the individuals we serve. We are so grateful for the assistance!

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

Our program started on January 20th, 2015 and we completed 291 returns.

- The average AGI was \$15,332
- Total Child Tax Credits received: \$7358
- Total EIC received: \$ 156,660 / 112 taxpayers
- Total Education Credits Received: \$20,171 / 19 taxpayers
- Total amount of Federal Refunds: \$319,470
- Total Amount of State Refunds: \$19,212
- 178 taxpayers used direct deposit



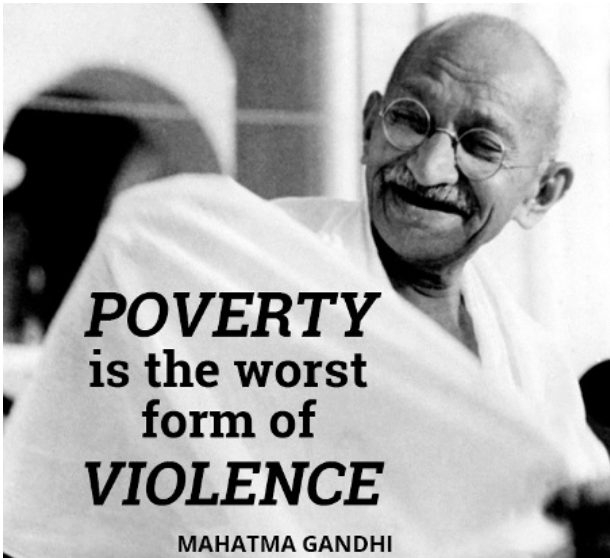
Need Assessment

During the fall, CSO began preparations for an updated Needs Assessment. This tool is used to help identify strengths and deficiencies in the service area, so that our programs may better meet the needs of our residents.

CSO asked agencies and individuals to offer their perspectives by completing a survey. One version was geared to those who require services, the other was for service providers.

CSO joined forces with the Bloomsburg University Sociology Department to analyze the results of the survey. Outcomes will be available to any interested parties including, but not limited to, social service agencies, schools, and civic organizations. Follow this link to take the survey https://eSurv.org?s=LOLMOL_b2f0034b

Poverty Statistics for Columbia, Montour & Northumberland Counties



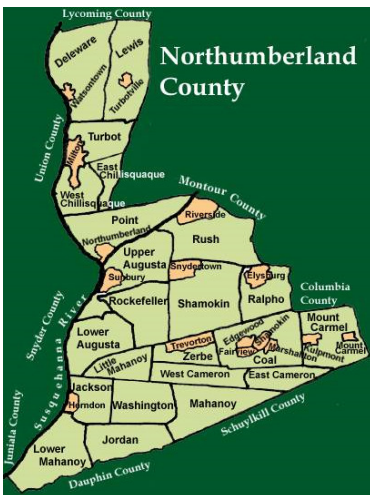
A total of 25,741 persons living below the poverty rate in the report area. There are 11,234 students eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch in the 3 County area, which makes up 43.70 percent of total enrolled students, compared to a Pennsylvania rate of 42.94 percent. Eligibility rates for individual school districts vary from 7.64 in Montour County to 60.7 in Northumberland County.

According to the American Community Survey 5 year averages, an average of 14.65 percent of all persons lived in a state of poverty during the 2013 calendar year. Montour County had the lowest poverty rate (9.96 percent) while Columbia County had the highest poverty rate of 16.62 percent. The poverty rate for all persons living in the 3 county report area is greater than the Pennsylvania average of 13.3 percent.

According to the American Community Survey 5 year averages, an average of 20.09 percent of children lived in a state of poverty during the 2013 calendar year. Montour County had the lowest poverty rate at 13.89 percent while Northumberland County had the highest child poverty rate at 23.42 percent. The poverty rate for children living in the 3 county report area is greater than the Pennsylvania average of 18.76 percent.

Poverty rates for Seniors, including data for all counties from the American Community Survey Montour County had the lowest percentage of seniors in poverty at 7.23 percent, while Columbia County had the largest percentage of seniors in poverty at 10.05 percent compared to the statewide percentage of 8.27. In 2013, it is estimated that there were 2,907 seniors, or 9.58 percent, living in poverty within the report area.

Northumberland County Coalition – Putting the Pieces Together



The formation of a Northumberland County Coalition was a priority for this year. CSO recognized the need for this coalition and wrote the organization of a coalition into our state CSBG plan. The organizational meeting of the Northumberland County Coalition was held at the Career and Arts Center in Shamokin on Wednesday, August 13th, 2014. CSO took the first step in forming the coalition by extending invitations. The response was an overwhelming “YES” for such a group to be created. The meeting was attended by 24 individuals representing various agencies and interests. CSO’s philosophy is to look at the big picture – individuals and families will do better if the community does better. One agency is not able to fulfill the needs, but a collaborative effort will bring together the information and resources in the area. Meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month.



CSO, Community Action applied for and was approved for \$5,500 from the Lower Anthracite Regional United Way to support our Tax Assistance program. Pictured, Lisa Milbrand, CSO and Laun Dunn, United Way Director

Emergency Solutions Grant

CSO had the opportunity to collaborate with the Columbia County Housing and Redevelopment Authority on the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program. Through this program residents of Columbia County who were in a homeless situation or in danger of losing their housing were able to be assisted with either a security deposit or rental arrears and current rental assistance. Participants also received case management and attended financial literacy workshops.

I am someone who has always struggled. To say that I learned early that life isn't fair is an understatement. That being said, I have made my fair share of mistakes. Those missteps ultimately landed me in a maximum security prison. When I was younger, full of potential and promise, no one could have told me that was the direction my life would soon be headed. Before I knew it, I was 22, in prison with no hope to get out of the situation I was in. After all, who wanted to put faith in the woman who was in prison – living off of nothing but hope for the future.

Whether it be God, coincidence, or luck that brought me Becky and the CSO Community Action Agency is not for me to stipulate. All I can say for sure is that I would not be where I am today had they not been there. Becky, 5 months pregnant, in the dead of winter worked swiftly and efficiently to get everything in place. CSO provided me with the support I needed, but never had.

For once, I have my own apartment, I am back in school, and I work for a multi-billion dollar company. I am headed in the right direction towards a future of my own – which would have never been possible without stability, their support, and of course somewhere to lie my head at night. Who knew someone could be so happy walking a mile home at 4:00AM in 20 degree weather and crawling into bed after a long day's work?

Without this program, I would still be in prison, imagining the day I could take my life back. I owe them everything.

Donated Home from Wells Fargo



CSO, Community Action has filed an application with Wells Fargo's Community and Urban Stabilization Program through their REO Community Development Division. The Wells Fargo REO Community Development Team fosters relationships with key stakeholders to revitalize neighborhoods through innovative solutions and responsible property management.

Every year the Wells Fargo REO Community Development team donates bank managed properties (REO) to nonprofit organizations and municipalities across the country. The bulk of the properties are donated to organizations with the mission of providing low-to-moderate income housing. Organizations participating in the program must meet the eligibility guidelines. Each participant will be eligible to receive one donated property in the first stage of the program. Decisions regarding future property donations will be based on the organization's successful rehabilitation of the first property and satisfactory completion of all the post-closing reporting.

CSO, Community Action was awarded a property in Shamokin at 819 East Sunbury Street.

SNAP Updates for July 2014 to May 2015

SNAP Case manager has performed outreach at 34 community agencies and events distributing CSO brochures and SNAP outreach information. SNAP information was distributed at 90 local businesses in Columbia, Montour and Northumberland counties through flyers and bulletin boards.

Year to date we have processed applications through the COMPASS based system for 603 services.

- 283 SNAP Applications
- 129 Medical Assistance Applications
- 150 LIHEAP Applications
- 17 Cash Assistance Applications
- 20 Free Lunch Applications
- 2 CCIS Application
- 1 CHIP Application
- 1 Persons w/Disability Waiver



2014 - 2015 Financial Literacy

The Financial Literacy program had another successful year of teaching members of the community to learn practical money skills. Two new workshops were added assisting individuals to look toward the future with the addition of workshops that focus on costs and options for Assisted Living and Life Insurance.

The Financial Literacy workshop instructor offers workshops in Northumberland, Columbia and Montour counties that focus on assisting individuals to understand money, credit and banking. The most popular are the Basic Budgeting, Credit Reporting and Identity Theft workshops. Throughout 2014-15 there were a total of 736 who individuals learned the importance of how money works, how to manage it and how to save it. 278 individuals attended the budgeting workshops and received money saving and cost cutting tips to insure their bills are paid on time by creating and following a budget. Many individuals attend workshops on a monthly basis for intensive financial and budget counseling.

2014 Housing Report

In 2014, our Reinvestment dollars shifted to focus on Justice Involved consumers as well as utilizing BHARP Contingency Funds to assist Behavioral Health consumers obtain and keep their safe and affordable housing units.

Approximately \$190,140.00 will be utilized to house consumers into housing who are justice involved and have a dual diagnosis of Behavioral Health and/or Drug and Alcohol issues. \$50,000.00 will be utilized for BHARP Contingency Funds, which are actually MA dollars (Medical Assistance). Eligible consumers must have an active BH caseworker through Northumberland County, have Medical Assistance through CCBH and have a monthly sustainable income. These funds can be utilized for first month's rent and/or security deposits, utility assistance, back rent and in some instances, emergency furniture or appliance purchases-consumers have a lifetime cap of \$1,000.00 per household.

In 2014, there was a total of 321 consumers served in Northumberland County with varying types of housing assistance. 74 consumers obtained new housing opportunities and 177 referrals were made to other agencies for other various supportive services. A total of 35 consumers were able to utilize BHARP Contingency Funds to remain in safe and affordable housing units in Northumberland County.

Keep Our Kids Warm



For the third consecutive year, we helped to “Keep Our Kids Warm” with assistance from Brewser’s Sports Grille in Coal Township, as well as donations from other sources. Originally available only to residents of Lower Northumberland County, and wholly funded by Brewser’s, the program was expanded to include communities throughout our service area. More than 150 coats were distributed in 2014.



CSO was also a distribution point for Toys for Tots. 27 families with 57 children were served through the Shamokin site. Our Community Action Staff “adopted” one family from each of the three counties in our service area. We purchased clothing and toys to help brighten their holiday season.



I was in the hospital for 18 days and during that time lost my apartment. I had no place to go and had to stay in a motel room. I met with Brian Ambrose, who helped me get an apartment. Brian even helped me get food from a food pantry and delivered it since I don’t drive. He showed me an apartment and helped me out with the security deposit and firsts month’s rent. Five months later I’m settled in my new apartment thanks to the program and Brian’s help.

—Thomas Feudale

Thank you to Everyone Who Contributed!



CSO volunteer Chase Higgins, son of Community Action Case Manager Rich Higgins, poses in front of just some of the items collected during CSO's Clothing Drive.

CSO, A Community Action Agency, sponsored a "gently used" clothing drive the first two weeks in May. Items collected were taken to the Community Aid Thrift Store in Shamokin Dam, Community Aid stores offer a vast array of goods at very low prices as a service to the public; proceeds from the stores are used to provide financial assistance to non-profits like CSO.

Danville Area, Line Mountain, Shamokin Area and Southern Columbia Area Elementary Schools participated in the project. Each child making a contribution was entered in a raffle for prizes. Several housing sites in the area were drop-off locations, as well.

The program was an overwhelming success! More than 10,000 pounds of clothing, shoes, purses, bedding, curtains and other "soft lines" items were collected. CSO gives a huge "Thank You" to everyone who contributed!

STEAMS (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math)



CSO Community Action received a \$3,000 grant from the CSIU to administer a Job Shadowing program for Mt. Carmel, Shamokin and Our Lady of Lourdes High School. This grant will target 30 students in the tenth grade.



I would like to extend my gratitude for the classes that I have attended at your Sunbury location. I have searched the Career Link's website for classes that will help keep me up to date on my computer skills as I am currently unemployed after 27 years with the same company.

Your Identity Theft class was a bonus for me. I wanted to make sure I was doing what is needed to protect my personal information. I really appreciate the time that was provided for this class.

In all the searches that I have done your Sunbury location has been the only location having classes that meet my needs. I live in Halifax PA and travel almost an hour to attend classes in your facility. Your facility is worth the drive. Everyone that I have met and worked with has been professional, pleasant and conveys they want to do a great job.

I can't thank you enough for the classes you provided during this difficult transition.

— Sincerely, Donna Miller

Financial Statements



Statement of Financial Activity - Fiscal Year ended June 30, 2015

REVENUE:		
Federal, State and Local Grant funding	\$ 3,449,325	91.51%
Fundraising	\$ 139,992	3.66%
Fees, contracts and other revenue	\$ 174,541	4.56%
Restricted Grant revenue	\$ 10,078	0.27%
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 3,823,936	100.00%
OPERATING EXPENSES:		
<i>Program Services:</i>		
Workforce Investment Act - Adult	\$ 524,210	14.23%
Workforce Investment Act - Youth	\$ 1,103,753	29.96%
Workforce Investment Act - Dislocated Worker	\$ 643,698	17.47%
Department of Public Welfare - EARN program	\$ 556,720	15.11%
Tech+You=Success	\$ 22,240	0.60%
JOBS1st PA	\$ 10,500	0.29%
Department of Public Welfare - Work Ready program	\$ 109,983	2.99%
Community Service Block Grant (CSBG)	\$ 430,160	11.68%
Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) Discretionary	\$ 30,372	0.82%
Food Stamp Participation program	\$ 53,579	1.45%
Housing MHMR	\$ 65,925	1.79%
Pinnacle Place	\$ 16,469	0.45%
School to Work initiatives	\$ 5,209	0.14%
CSO CARES - Emergency Energy Assistance program	\$ 13,443	0.36%
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program	\$ 6,638	0.18%
Other Community Action Initiatives	\$ 13,799	0.38%
Total program services	\$ 3,606,698	97.90%
General and Administrative	\$ 13,401	0.85%
Fund-raising	\$ 45,955	1.25%
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 3,684,054	100.00%
Change in Net Assets	\$ 139,882	
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	\$ 219,032	
Net Assets - End of Year	\$ 358,914	
EXPENSE BREAKDOWN:		
Program services	\$ 3,606,698	97.90%
General and Administrative	\$ 31,401	0.85%
Fund-raising	\$ 45,955	1.25%
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 3,684,054	100.00%
ASSETS:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 158,458	44.15%
Land	\$ 2,031	0.51%
Construction in Progress	\$ 18,425	5.13%
Accounts receivable	\$ 161,660	45.04%
Prepaid client expenses	\$ 18,340	5.11%
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 358,914	100.00%
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS:		
<i>Liabilities:</i>		
Accounts payable	\$ 12,886	3.58%
Accrued expenses	\$ 204,904	57.09%
Accrued leave	\$ 105,590	29.42%
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$ 323,360	90.09%
Net Assets	\$ 35,554	9.91%
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$ 358,914	100.00%

As Always... Thanks for Your Support!

2015 Raise the Region

Raise the Region, a massive online fundraising effort, was held from Wednesday, March 11 to Thursday, March 12. CSO, A Community Action Agency, was once again an appreciative recipient of money raised during the 30-hour event. The total raised this year exceeded \$1.1 million! CSO garnered \$9044.22 from donations, as well as a Green Flag Award of \$1000.



CSO staff getting ready to Raise the Region at Blaise Alexander Dealership in Bloomsburg. In photo, left front: Brandy Margel, Kathie O'Grady & Chase Higgins. Second row, left: Jamie Mercaldo, Jennifer Gotaskie & Rich Higgins. Center: WNEP's Ryan Lecke. From right: Peggy Demko, Sara Fowler & Lisa Milbrand.

10th Annual Golf Classic

The 10th Annual Golf Classic was a great Success!

10 years and still putting! Each year it get bigger and better! 26 teams played in the tournament.



4th Annual CSO Sportsman Raffle

This years 4th Annual CSO Sportsman Raffle was the best year ever! Employees volunteer their time to sell tickets at community events. CSO Board Members also helped sell tickets. There were many happy winners!



Thank you to all of our partners who have financially supported our agency! Your contributions have enabled us to serve our communities to further our mission to serve as a catalyst for economic, educational, social, and workforce development in our communities. Thank you for your support and sharing in our vision. If you would like to support CSO, Inc. please visit www.censop.com and click on the 'donate' button or contact our corporate office at (570) 644-6575 for more information on how you can help.

Central Susquehanna Opportunities, Inc. Locations



*CSO Central Office and Community Action Agency
2 East Arch Street
Shamokin, PA 17872
Phone: 570-644-6575*



*Columbia/Montour Action Agency
16 Sherwood Drive
Bloomsburg, PA 17815
Phone: 570-412-2830*

The CareerLink Hubs continue to offer full services to customers five days a week.



*PA CareerLink® Northumberland/Snyder/Union Counties
225 Market Street
Sunbury, PA 17801
Phone: 570-988-7300
TTY: 570-268-8293*



*PA CareerLink® Lycoming County
329 Pine Street
Williamsport, PA 17701
Phone: 570-601-5465
TTY: 570-601-1754*

The CareerLink Affiliates offer core services to customers.



*PA CareerLink® Columbia/Montour Counties
415 Central Road, Suite 2
Bloomsburg, PA 17815
Phone: 570-387-6288
TTY: 570-387-4294*



*PA CareerLink® Clinton County
8 North Grove Street
Lock Haven, PA 17745
Phone: 570-893-4022
TTY: 570-893-2989*



*This Project was financed in part by a grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,
Department of Community and Economic Development.*

*The official registration and financial information of Central Susquehanna Opportunities,
Inc. may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within
Pennsylvania (1-800-732-0999). Registration does not imply endorsement.*

Helping Communities Bridge Gaps