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The Status of Young People in Connecticut

19% or 119,000 young people in CT were at risk or disconnected in 2021-2022.

In Connecticut, 1 in 3 high schoolers were at risk of not graduating.

In Hartford, 53% of young people were at-risk of not graduating.

The Dalio study included specific recommendations for getting young people back on track, such as funding effective programs and investing in scalable, evidence-based supports and services for at-risk and disconnected young people.

Essential actions proposed:
- Expanding the flexible supports and services from effective programs already working for youth
- Providing high-touch case management
- Tackling chronic absenteeism
- Strengthening pathways from disconnection to employment

The full report can be found at CT's Unspoken Crisis: Getting Young People Back on Track (dalioeducation.org)
Message from the CEO and the Board Chair

We are proud of our impact on young people. Our staff and board are investing in making a difference. Our difference shows in the relationships we build with one another and the youth we serve. It shows in the outcomes of our youth. As you review this annual report, we invite you to reflect on the individual stories as well as the data behind them. With your support, OPP helps youth reach their potential and achieve success.

Our Piece of the Pie (OPP) has a long history of serving at-risk and disconnected young people. The recent report, Connecticut’s Unspoken Crisis: Getting Young People Back On Track, serves to affirm our work and provides insight into the trends that we have observed over many years.

OPP views our young people holistically, listening deeply to their stories as we ascertain individual strengths and challenges. We work with youth to create a road map to the future with goals for personal development, academic achievement, and workforce readiness. The plan identifies barriers along with the supports and services needed for youth to make their dreams a reality.

Each youth is paired with a trained, caring, and proactive Youth Development Specialist who acts as a guide, providing the consistent high-touch case management we know makes a difference. Youth also work with a Workforce Development Specialist focusing on strengthening work skills, overseeing internships, developing career pathways, and coaching youth as they enter the workforce. Getting a job is one thing. Keeping it is another. OPP often works with youth through that first year of employment, helping to remove barriers and keep youth on track towards the future.

Youth in our recuperative school, OPPortunity Academy, engage with teachers and Youth Development Specialists to ensure they receive both academic and wrap-around services. Youth know they are valued as individuals; we share their future vision and hold them accountable for meeting their goals. We combat chronic absenteeism through meaningful relationships and youth-focused services. We proactively engage, and youth know they are seen as people, not problems. OPPortunity Academy is a holistic learning environment where we offer connections to post-secondary and workforce opportunities.

Through giving youth a voice, OPP learns what youth need. Our youth shared their mental health needs and the struggle to find services. We responded by adding mental health services to our roster. OPP clinicians interact with youth within the programs, build trust, and are there to provide individual counseling as needed. We have shown youth their voices are valued as we address this critical need.

We are proud of our youth and applaud their journey from “youth in crisis” to youth empowered to succeed in education and employment.

Hector Rivera, Jr.
President & CEO

Rashani Swaby
Board Chair
Meet our Leaders

Hector Rivera, Jr.
President & CEO
Hector.Rivera@opp.org

Chanda Robinson
Interim Chief Operating Officer
Chanda.Robinson@opp.org

Patricia Moro
Chief Financial Officer
Patricia.Moro@opp.org

Girard Dawes
Senior Director of Youth Engagement
Girard.Dawes@opp.org

Kim Johnson
Senior Director of Development & Strategic Initiatives
Kim.Johnson@opp.org

Rosa Plaza
Senior Director of Human Resources
Rosa.Plaza@opp.org

Kimberly Williams-Rivera
Senior Director of Management Information Systems & Performance
Kimberly.Williams-Rivera@opp.org
“I have come a long way from where I was. Thank you to ALL the staff members of Our Piece of the Pie for believing in me when everybody doubted me. – Ebony B.”
Mission

Our Piece of the Pie, Inc. (OPP®) empowers youth with the key competencies needed to overcome barriers and succeed in education and employment.

Who We Serve

Our Piece of the Pie’s targeted population is young people ages 14-24 in Greater Hartford and Eastern CT who have one or more of the following risk factors: under-credited and over-aged, child welfare involved, justice-involved, low-income and unemployed or under-employed.

Theory of Change

Our Theory of Change is a transformational tool that connects... WHAT OPP does, WHO OPP targets for services, WHY OPP does its work, HOW OPP expects to be held accountable and achieve its results.

Deliberately Developmental Organization

A way of working together to develop an agency-wide culture that demands transparency and learning where everyone is working every day on developing themselves, one another and our youth. At OPP, everyone builds our culture. Errors are treated as opportunities for growth and everyone is responsible for encouraging others to learn and grow.
Who We are

OPP YOUTH AGE GROUP

18% 14-15 years old
42% 16-18 years old
28% 19-21 years old
12% 22+ years old

OPP YOUTH GENDER

Male 51%
Female 48%
Non Binary, Trans Male/Female <1%

OPP YOUTH ETHNICITY

Asian 1%
Black or African American (non-Latino) 53%
Hispanic or Latino 40%
Multi-racial (non-Latino) 1%
White (non-Latino) 4%
Unknown/Other 1%

OPP STAFF ETHNICITY

Asian 3%
Black or African American (non-Latino) 39%
Hispanic or Latino 26%
Multi-racial 6%
White 26%

OPP BOARD ETHNICITY

Asian 8%
Black or African American (non-Latino) 25%
Hispanic or Latino 16%
White 50%
OPP Service Areas

Young People Need SUPPORT to Develop & Succeed
- Goal Setting
- Barrier Reduction and Problem-Solving
- Healthy Habits: Life Skills
- Healthy Emotional Management Skills
- Financial Capabilities

Young People Need OPTIONS to Learn & Progress
- Alternative Education: OPPortunity Academy – a place where students can fit in and succeed!
- Tutoring and Homework Help
- Post-Secondary Opportunities including 2 and 4-year degrees
- Vocational credentials (e.g. Phlebotomy, CNA, CNC Machinist, Guard Card)
- Strengthen youth connection to their academic setting

Young People Need SKILLS to Earn & Grow
- Learn how to get and keep a job
- Service-Learning Projects
- Internships
- Job Placement
Impact of OPP in FY23

1,006 YOUTH SERVED

1,528 PERSONAL GOALS COMPLETED
BY 418 YOUTH

4,984 SERVICE LEARNING HOURS COMPLETED

1,514 COMPLETED HOURS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

$1.6M RECEIVED IN YOUTH WAGES/STIPENDS FOR WORK EXPERIENCES

382 YOUTH ACHIEVED INTERMEDIATE EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION OUTCOMES

176 YOUTH MET LONG-TERM OUTCOMES BY EARNING A POST-SECONDARY CREDENTIAL AND/OR RETAINING EMPLOYMENT FOR ONE YEAR
Aye Aye Aung has developed confidence and accomplished many goals in his first year with OPP. He was introduced to OPP by his brother Tun Tun, which led Aye Aye to join our Hartford Youth Service Corps (HYSC) landscaping crew. Now Aye Aye is a part of HYSC’s Digital DividEND program, in partnership with Hartford Healthcare and the City of Hartford. He notes he is passionate about working with electronics “I have learned how to refurbish, identify all the components, and troubleshoot a computer. The staff members here like Ms. Kim keep me motivated and wanting to learn more.”

Armed with his Digital DividEND certificate and a connection through Hartford High School, Aye Aye secured an internship with Pratt & Whitney. As he worked in the Test System Engineering department in summer 2023, Aye Aye developed his knowledge of electronics and learned about various workforce opportunities before he entered his junior year of high school. In February 2024, he began an internship with Hartford Public High School’s IT department. Aye Aye’s long term goal is to earn a degree in mechanical engineering.
The Digital DividEND initiative is an innovative program that began in 2023, collaborating with Hartford HealthCare, The City of Hartford, and The Hartford Youth Service Corps.

Digital DividEND offers job training, internships, and a potential career path for youth interested in learning how to refurbish computers, which are then distributed free of charge to underserved Hartford residents.

Through Digital DividEND, youth are:
- Earning a certification in Google IT Support through online courses
- Gaining on-the-job training and knowledge
- Given opportunity for an IT internship at Hartford Hospital upon completion of their training
- Giving back to the community by refurbishing and distributing computers to first-generation college students and senior residents in the Hartford community.

130 COMPUTERS DISTRIBUTED TO THE COMMUNITY
54% YOUTH CONTINUED IN INTERNSHIP OR WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITIES IN IT
The mission of Opportunity Academy is to re-engage over-age, under-credited students in education, supporting them through mastery of the critical skills necessary for success in college, career, and community.

OA is designed to re-engage students in their own learning, where students earn credits at an accelerated pace, using mastery-based progression vs. the typical “time-in-seat” approach. The model integrates technology (blending learning), project-based learning, and extended learning time to ensure mastery of concepts aligned with the Common Core and district curricula standards. Academic supports are anchored by student supports including youth development and post-secondary preparation, helping remove barriers, providing long-term guidance focusing on academic success, and helping disconnected students to graduate.

53% of Hartford’s young people are at-risk of not graduating high school.

“OA was a good fit for me because of the support. Staff were very understanding that things happen in people’s lives that make them unfocused. Staff help them realign that focus. OA staff see a bright future in everyone. - Dynasty S.

Dynasty is employed at Hartford Healthcare as a phlebotomist. She graduated OA in 2023 and simultaneously earned her certification in phlebotomy.

“Coming to OA really had a great impact on me. At first I thought I would never graduate on time because I was behind but thanks to Ms. Colon and the whole OA community I did and early at that. I feel like they are my family now and I don’t ever want to forget them. - Alison D.

Alison is now an active participant of OPP’s Hartford Youth Service Corps (HYSC).
The OPP Clinical team offers a nurturing, safe, non-judgmental, and welcoming space. We strive to make sure people feel comfortable being their authentic selves.

Our team is culturally responsive and trauma-informed. At OPP, we utilize an individualized, person-centered, data-informed, and strength-based clinical approach.

Our team strives to assist people with discovering their purpose.

We believe that with the right services, living a life full of joy and peace is possible.

YOUTH ASKED... OPP LISTENED

Our Piece of the Pie is expanding its commitment to empowering youth by introducing vital clinical services to support youth’s holistic well-being. Officially launched in the fall of 2023, OPP Clinicians are recognizing the multifaceted needs of OPP youth. Clinical Services is making efforts to remove barriers to mental health, ensuring every young person enrolled in OPP services has access to the support they need to navigate life’s challenges and build a foundation for brighter futures.
Ebony’s Story

Ebony is a motivated youth who brings a positive presence to OPP. When she first joined OPP, she was unemployed and going through many personal struggles. “I really needed a job to keep myself surviving and thriving.” Ebony joined Hartford Youth Services Corps (HYSC) for job experience and financial stability. In OPP workshops, Ebony learned valuable life skills and created a sense of community.

Ebony excelled at her internship with OPP’s Pathways to Careers Initiative (PCI) department where she provided administrative support for PCI staff. When an Administrative Assistant position opened up at Whittlesey, PCI staff encouraged Ebony to apply. A long-time partner with OPP, Whittlesey valued Ebony’s internship experience and hired her.

Ebony aspires to be a social worker. She is currently majoring in community health at Capital Community College. When she completes her Associate’s Degree she plans to transfer to a four year school to get a degree in social work. Her long term goal? Become a Youth Development Specialist at OPP and give back to youth like herself!
Raylla’s Story
Eastern CT

Raylla, OPP Eastern’s new Youth Development Specialist (YDS), has been a part of the OPP family for six years. Her DCF social worker recommended OPP. After growing up in foster care with her sister, OPP gave her a place to connect with others and build a sense of community. Following a few years of participating in workshops and activities, Raylla took a break from OPP to take care of her son Axel. OPP’s doors are always open, and when Raylla re-engaged, she and her YDS Jenna immediately clicked. Raylla began working as a Work to Learn intern assisting with intakes and running orientations for her peers. Raylla gave birth to her second son Air, then returned to OPP with passion.

Following her internship, Raylla officially joined the OPP team as a full-time YDS. In her new role, she will have her own caseload of OPP youth and facilitate the new women’s empowerment group. Raylla’s next goal is to go back to school part-time to earn her undergraduate degree.
Champions of Youth
November 3, 2022
Bond Ballroom

Honoring:
Asnuntuck Community College
CVS Pharmacy
Brewster Perkins
Jim Shea

Recognizing OPP Trailblazers...
Bob Rath & Steven Adamowski
and OPP Program Alumnus...
Andre Rochester

Thank you to our Table Sponsors:
Collins Aerospace, Brewster & Judith Perkins, Aero Crane, Jackson Lewis P.C., Workers Compensation Trust, Dalio Education, Steve Coates, Express Kitchens, The Michalak Family, and John & Mary Little

Thank you to our sponsors:
Hartford HealthCare
Smith Brothers
Whittlesey

The Causeway Agency
Financial Summary
For the year ending June 30, 2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>$8,094,073</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Expenses</td>
<td>$(6,489,418)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting Services</td>
<td>$(1,389,061)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Expenses</td>
<td>$(7,878,479)</td>
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<td>Revenues and Support Over/(Under) Expenses</td>
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<td>Other Income/(Expenses)</td>
<td>$(12,237)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions</td>
<td>$203,357</td>
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<td>Change in Net Assets With Donor Restrictions</td>
<td>$(169,905)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in Net Assets</td>
<td>$33,452</td>
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</table>

Net Assets at the Beginning of the Year: $1,087,430
Net Assets at the End of the Year: $1,120,882

Details of Expenses

<table>
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<th>Program Service</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>Personal Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>Clinical Services</td>
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<td>Data &amp; Accountability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>$393,993</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management/General</td>
<td>$995,068</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the year ending June 30, 2023
Our Supporters

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United States Department of Labor - Growth Opportunities
Youth and Family Services Old Saybrook

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Capital Workforce Partners
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CICD Puerto Rican Parade
College Club of Hartford
United Way of Central and Northeastern CT
United Way of Middlesex
Women's Fellowship First Church of Christ Congregational

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Betty Knox Foundation
Berkshire Bank Foundation
Budd Family Fund at HFPG
Catalyst Endowment Fund at HFPG
Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT
Charles Nelson Robinson Fund
CHC (Creating Healthier Communities)
Chelsea Groton Foundation
Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut
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Dime Bank Foundation
Ensworth Charitable Foundation
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Jackson Lewis Foundation
Kate Family Foundation
Lincoln Financial Foundation
Lloyd G. Balfour Foundation
One4All Charitable Fund
SBM Charitable Foundation
Scripps Family Fund
TD Charitable Foundation
The Hartford Philanthropic Fund at HFPG
The M&T Charitable Foundation
TisBest Philanthropy
Tow Foundation
Travelers Foundation
Turner Family Foundation
OPP’s 2024 Champions of Youth
Yard Goats Club at Dunkin Stadium

Save the Date

THURSDAY 7TH  AT 5:30 PM
2024

November

Scan for online registration
or visit www.opp.org

To learn more about sponsorships, contact Kim Johnson at Kim.Johnson@opp.org or 860-761-7347
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Nate Swaim

PROGRAM AREAS
Digital DividEND
Clinical Services
Financial Capabilities
Hartford Youth Service Corps
OPPortunity Academy
Pathways to Careers Initiative
Post Secondary
Work to Learn

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE & YOUTH CENTER
20-28 Sargeant Street
Hartford, CT 06105
(860) 761-7300

YOUTH CENTER in Eastern CT
114 New Park Ave
Franklin, CT 06254
(860) 761-7300

Design by Chelsea Reis
Photography by Allegra Anderson Photography, LMG Photography, Shana Sureck Photography, Jennifer Fiereck, and Chelsea Reis