



Our Piece of the Pie<sup>®</sup>  
*Empowering Youth To Succeed In  
Education and Employment*



# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT





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# The Status of Young People in Connecticut

The journey from childhood to adulthood can be challenging, and for some young people, it is a very difficult path. Too many youth are at-risk of not graduating from high school. Too many young people are disconnected from employment and postsecondary education. A recent report commissioned by Dalio Education illustrates the extent of this moral and economic crisis here 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

# 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, OPPportunity 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. OPPportunity 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*.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

**Hector Rivera, Jr.**  
President & CEO



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

**Rashani Swaby**  
Board Chair

# Meet our Leaders



**Hector Rivera, Jr.**  
President & CEO  
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Interim Chief Operating Officer  
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**Brenda Colon**  
*OPPportunity Academy Youth  
Development Director*



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**Tameka Grant-Mack**  
*OPPportunity Academy  
Principal*



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**Markella Martial**  
*Director of  
Workforce Services*



**Reva Mingo**  
*Director of  
Clinical Services*



**Diondra Robertson**  
*Director of Youth  
Development Services*

“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.”



Our Piece of the Pie.

## 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.

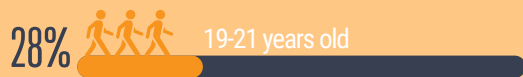




# Who We are



## OPP YOUTH AGE GROUP



## 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 of any race         | 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% |
| Multiracial                            | 6%  |
| White                                  | 26% |

## OPP BOARD ETHNICITY

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

# OPP Service Areas

## Personal Development

**Young People Need SUPPORT  
to Develop & Succeed**

- Goal Setting
- Barrier Reduction and Problem-Solving
- Healthy Habits: Life Skills
- Healthy Emotional Management Skills
- Financial Capabilities



## Academic Achievement

**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



## Workforce Development

**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

**4,984**  
SERVICE LEARNING HOURS COMPLETED

**1,528**

PERSONAL GOALS COMPLETED  
BY 418 YOUTH

**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's Digital Success

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.



# DIGITAL DIVIDEND

## HELPING HARTFORD STAY CONNECTED



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.

**13**  
**THIRTEEN**  
YOUTH ENROLLED IN  
FIRST COHORT

**130**  
COMPUTERS DISTRIBUTED  
TO THE COMMUNITY

**54%**

YOUTH CONTINUED IN  
INTERNSHIP OR  
WORKFORCE  
OPPORTUNITIES IN IT

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)

”





# INTRODUCING CLINICAL SERVICES

58%

OF YOUNG ADULTS REPORTED THAT THEY LACKED “MEANING OR PURPOSE” IN THEIR LIVES

\*According to a 2023 Report from Making Caring Common -Harvard Graduate School

\*According to a survey completed in the State of Connecticut in 2022

70%

OF YOUTH REPORTED THEIR MENTAL HEALTH WAS “NOT GOOD” IN THE LAST MONTH.

“  
**I do struggle greatly with mental health issues. I had a therapist for 3 years. But I recently lost my insurance so I no longer have a therapist and now my mental health is declining.**  
”

## 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.

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.**



# 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.



OPP Eastern Team pictured left to right: YDS Jenna Bronson, Youth Raylla, YDS Jessica Garcia, and WDS Jean Paul Accede

# 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 sponsors

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Be sure.

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Forward Advising™

**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



# OPP IN THE COMMUNITY



April 28, 2023



August 21, 2022



September 25, 2022

**DOMINGO!**  
HARTFORD

2023 HARTFORD MAYORAL CANDIDATE YOUTH-LED FORUM

PRESENTED BY:



October 8, 2022



March 31, 2023

**OPP YOUTH CAREER FAIR**



# Financial Summary

For the year ending June 30, 2023

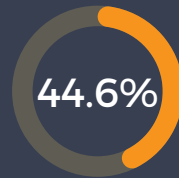
|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>Total Revenue</b>                            | <b>8,094,073</b>   |
| Program Expenses                                | (6,489,418)        |
| Supporting Services                             | (1,389,061)        |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>                           | <b>(7,878,479)</b> |
| Revenues and Support Over/(Under) Expenses      | 215,594            |
| Other Income/(Expenses)                         | (12,237)           |
| Change in Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions | 203,357            |
| Change in Net Assets With Donor Restrictions    | (169,905)          |
| <b>Change in Net Assets</b>                     | <b>33,452</b>      |
| Net Assets at the Beginning of the Year         | 1,087,430          |
| <b>Net Assets at the End of the Year</b>        | <b>1,120,882</b>   |

## DETAILS OF EXPENSES

### PROGRAM SERVICES



Personal Development  
\$1,399,403



Employment  
\$3,513,260



Education  
\$1,167,542

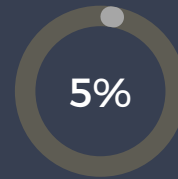


Clinical Services  
\$52,077

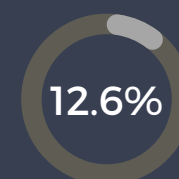
### ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT



Data & Accountability  
\$357,136



Fundraising  
\$393,993



Management/General  
\$995,068

# Our Supporters

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Department of Children & Families  
Family Health International  
Hartford Public Schools  
OJJDP (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention)  
United States Department of Labor - Growth Opportunities  
Youth and Family Services Old Saybrook

## Community Partners

Advanced Behavioral Health  
AFSCME Union Local 1214 (Charter Oak State College)  
Bethany Lutheran Church  
Capital Workforce Partners  
Center For Children's Advocacy, Inc.  
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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Carmon Community Funeral Homes  
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Express Kitchens  
Hartford Healthcare  
Prudential Financial  
Smith Brothers  
The Causeway Agency  
Walmart  
Webster Bank  
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Workers' Compensation Trust



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Amplify Fund at The M&T Charitable Foundation

Annie E. Casey Foundation

Bank of America

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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

Dalio Education

Dime Bank Foundation

Ensworth Charitable Foundation

Farmington Bank Community Foundation

George A. & Grace L. Long Foundation

Give Lively Foundation Inc.

H.A. Vance Foundation

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (HFPG)

J. Walton Bissell Foundation

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



November

THURSDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> AT 5:30 PM

2024



Scan for online registration  
or visit [www.opp.org](http://www.opp.org)

To learn more about sponsorships, contact Kim Johnson at [Kim.Johnson@opp.org](mailto:Kim.Johnson@opp.org) or 860-761-7347





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## ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE & YOUTH CENTER

20-28 Sargeant Street  
Hartford, CT 06105  
(860) 761-7300



## PROGRAM AREAS

**Digital DividEND**

**Clinical Services**

**Financial Capabilities**

**Hartford Youth Service Corps**

**OPPportunity Academy**

**Pathways to Careers Initiative**

**Post Secondary**

**Work to Learn**

## 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