



Our Piece of the Pie.
*Empowering Youth To Succeed In
Education and Employment*



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Table of Contents

- The Status of Young People in CT 3
- Message from the CEO and Board Chair..... 4
- Meet Our Leaders 5-6
- Our Mission 7
- Who We Are 8
- Service Areas and Impact..... 9-10
- Our Program Areas 11-14
 - Aye Aye’s Digital Success..... 11
 - Digital DividEND 12
 - OPPportunity Academy..... 13
 - Introducing Clinical Services 14
- Youth Success Stories 15-16
- Champions of Youth 17
- OPP In the Community 18
- Our Supporters 20-24



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
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



Brenda Colon
*OPPportunity Academy Youth
Development Director*



Sam DeCarlo
*Director of
Workforce Services*



Tameka Grant-Mack
*OPPportunity Academy
Principal*



Amilcar Hernandez
Director of Finance



Sara Houldcroft
Director of Grants



Veronica Maldonado
*Director of Organizational
Development & Capacity*



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



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)

”





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

Hartford
HealthCare



THE CAUSEWAY AGENCY

SmithBrothers.
Be sure.

Whittlesey
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

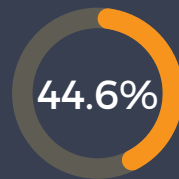
| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Total Revenue | 8,094,073 |
| Program Expenses | (6,489,418) |
| Supporting Services | (1,389,061) |
| Total Expenses | (7,878,479) |
| Revenues and Support Over/(Under) Expenses | 215,594 |
| Other Income/(Expenses) | (12,237) |
| Change in Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions | 203,357 |
| Change in Net Assets With Donor Restrictions | (169,905) |
| Change in Net Assets | 33,452 |
| 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

PROGRAM SERVICES



Personal Development
\$1,399,403



Employment
\$3,513,260

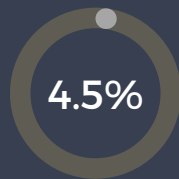


Education
\$1,167,542



Clinical Services
\$52,077

ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT



Data & Accountability
\$357,136



Fundraising
\$393,993



Management/General
\$995,068

Our Supporters

Individuals

Steven Adamowski

Courtney Adger

Drew Andrews

Jennifer Beaulieu Munzner

Djuana Beamon

Stephanie and Michael Balin

Alex Bellino

Robert H. and Phyllis Berman

Amanda Billiot

Beth Boehm

Erin T. Bolduc

Jenna Bronson

Bert Bronson

Peter Brzezicki

Edward Budd

Rosa Capó

Abu Carter

Julia Cash

Liz Lowell Cash

Dr. Noel Casiano

Janelle Chase

Stephen X. Coates

Adhlere Coffy

Andrew J. and Ruth Cohen

Smitesh Davé

Girard Dawes

Elizabeth Dietrich

Lynn Dolan

Leah Farrelly

Janice Flemming

JT Foster

Daphna Fuhr Dylag

Linda Gale

Ralph Gilliard

Karen Gross

Chelsie Guerrero

Carl Harding

Sheveran Hardy

Duncan Harris

Andrea Hawkins

Marcell Hodge

Wilson James

Dr. Bernard and Gale S. Kosto

Lisa Letourneau

John N. Little

Michael Longo

LaWanda Mallory-Scott

Markella Martial

Kelly McBride

Keith McHale

Kenneth McManus

Keith Merritt and Sherry Coelho

Meghann Michalak

Lisa Michaud

Lucius E. Miles

Dennis Mink

Donnie Moro

John Motley

Joelle Murchison

Christine Murray

Patrick Murray

Jeffrey Myshrall

Karina Nieves

Robert Norman and Laura Craco

Kim Oliver

Erica Palmer

Michael Parkin

Jennifer Pasion-Blocker

Alicia Perez

Our Supporters Continued...

Individuals

Brewster and Judith Perkins
Rosa Plaza
Raphael L. Podolsky
Ayana Pusha
Dorreen and Neville Radway
John Rannestad
Bob and Marilyn Rath
Elizabeth Rath
Chelsea Reis
Ruth Reymundo Mandel
Dave Ricker
Kevin Rivera
Hector M. Rivera Jr.
Shawnee Ro
Andrew Rochester
Steven Rothman
Mary Ruby
Carole Savitsky
Stephanie Scott
James F. and Kirsten Shea
Jeffrey Shoham

Alejandro Sierra and Gladys Rivera
Lindsay Simonetta
Donna Sodipo
Dominique and Rick Soto
Ruth Sovronsky
Janet S. Stulting
Rashani Swaby
Nathan Swaim
Donna Swarr
Michelle Taylor
Anne M. and Brian Thibeault
Thomas Valliere
Armena Walsh
David Weiner
Stephen H. and Shelia Wells
LaTasha Williams
Michael Williams
Kimberly Williams-Rivera
Paige Williams-Menard
Kevin Wojcik



Our Supporters Continued...

Government

Bloomfield Public Schools
CHEFA (State of Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority)
City of Hartford
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

Corporations

American Rigging
Carmon Community Funeral Homes
Collins Aerospace
Express Kitchens
Hartford Healthcare
Merrill Lynch
Prudential Financial
Smith Brothers
The Causeway Agency
Walmart
Webster Bank
Whittlesey & Hadley, P.C.
Workers' Compensation Trust

Our Supporters Continued...

Foundations

AmazonSmile Foundation

Amplify Fund at The M&T Charitable Foundation

Annie E. Casey Foundation

Bank of America

Betty Knox Foundation

Berkshire Bank Foundation

Bissell 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

Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund

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

Schwab Charitable Fund

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



BOARD

Rashani Swaby - *Chair*

Carl Harding - *Vice Chair*

Meghann Michalack - *Treasurer*

Smitesh Davé - *Secretary*

Alex Bellino

Dr. Noel Casiano

Steve Coates

Margot Early

Nikki Johns

Banning Rauls

Kevin Rivera

Jonathan Stryjek

Nate Swaim

PROGRAM AREAS

Digital DividEND

Clinical Services

Financial Capabilities

Hartford Youth Service Corps

OPPportunity 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 Fioreck, and Chelsea Reis