

## Progress 2012: We Continue Helping Lift People out of Poverty



*Diane Cooper-Currier, Executive Director*

Oswego County Opportunities, Inc. (OCO) has been serving Oswego County since 1966 with programs that include: crisis assistance and counseling; health care; nutritional program such as Meals on Wheels and WIC; educational services including Head Start and after-school programs; residential services for youth, the homeless and developmentally disabled and mentally ill adults; outreach; transportation; job training; and more.

“Given the economic challenges at state and federal levels of government, OCO was fortunate to sustain 99% of our program services despite experiencing some funding reductions in such areas as Family Planning, homeless services, crisis intervention and education services,” said Diane Cooper-Currier, OCO executive director. “OCO also expanded its meal service in 2011 to include a summer feeding program to children in 7 of the 9 school districts in the county. This assured that children who might not otherwise receive a regular, nutritional daily meal could have a nutritional lunch and snack during the summer and not go hungry.

“More people, more than ever, are struggling to meet their basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and healthcare. OCO is working with many community partners to assure individuals and families have access to these basic needs that everyone is entitled to,” she continued. “Assistance to the homeless, nearly homeless, hungry and ill is our focus and we will look for opportunities to bring resources to this community to help with these needs.

OCO’s focus for 2012 is sustaining the services that are available in Oswego County; not only those offered by OCO, but those offered by other organizations as well. “The health and human service system relies on the variety of programs available in Oswego County. When one is eliminated or decreased the demand on the remaining services increases,” Cooper-Currier stated. “While funding may be decreased or eliminated, the needs do not go away, so it is important to support all services in this community to help keep families safe, housed, well fed and healthy.”

The community can support OCO through volunteering with programs like Meals on Wheels. Tax-deductible donations also are accepted. “We invite the community to get involved in our annual bowling tournament fund raiser. This year’s theme is the ‘OCO Bowl O’Gold,’ set for Saturday, March 10, at Lakeview Lanes in Fulton,” Cooper-Currier said. “Organize a team of bowlers, become a sponsor, donate a door prize, and be sure to come over and join the fun.” OCO also is hosting the popular Scrabble® Fest on Friday, Sept. 21, at the Oswego Elks’ Lodge.

Proceeds from these special events directly benefit OCO programs and services. “In fact,” Cooper-Currier noted, “94 cents out of every dollar goes out to directly benefit those in need.”

For more information about OCO, program services, and upcoming special events, visit the agency’s website at [www.oco.org](http://www.oco.org) or call 598-4717.

## **OCO Transportation for Oswego County's Visually Impaired**

Laura Smith (r) and OCO Transit Driver Joanne Macomber greet Clara Dial at Towpath Towers in Fulton. OCO Transportation was picking up members of the Oswego County Visually Impaired (OCVI) to attend a monthly meeting. OCO Transportation Services logs more than 200,000 miles annually throughout Oswego County with its fleet of over 45 buses.



## **OCO Head Start Children Using their Imagination**

Students in a Cleveland Head Start class were photographed pretending to take a ride in a school bus. Head Start has been an OCO program for nearly 40 years, providing activities that help prepare Oswego County preschoolers for kindergarten.