

## Program Notes - Staff Notes

### Staff Anniversaries

The following EOC staff members will be celebrating anniversaries this winter:

Lorraine Smith—15 years in January

Crystal Branstrom—20 years in February

Chuck Byler—15 years in February

Thank you for all your hard work and dedication.

### New Head Start Policy Council

EOC Head Start welcomes the following new members to its Head Start Policy Council for 2006-2007:

A.J. Jackson (McClintock Center), Kim Hayes (Seneca Center), Sherry Brewer (Lottsville), La Tisha Markham (Youngsville), Jodie Schmader (Sheffield), Tammy Pantle (Tionesta), David Durstine (Seneca), and Kim Hunt (Forest County).

Head Start also welcomes the following Community Representatives: Deanna Duffee, Erin Pillar, Barb Smith, Amy Wickert, and Terri Allison.

Thank you so much for lending a hand!

### New EOC Officers for 2006—2007

Congratulations to EOC's new officers of the Board of Directors: Maureen Skerda, President; Karen Davis, Vice-President; Stephanie Freitag, Treasurer; and David Leininger, Secretary.

Also a fond farewell to James Swanson, who is leaving the Board after many years of dedicated service. Thanks, Jim!

### Anti-Predatory Lending Workshops Available

Warren-Forest EOC, in conjunction with Pennsylvania Housing and Finance Agency, is implementing workshops to educate individuals on the practices of Predatory Lenders and to help people avoid these situations. If you or your group is interested in learning about Predatory Lenders and how to avoid them, please contact Community Services at 726-2400 to schedule a workshop for your group or to attend one of our agency workshops.

### GANE Program Gets Publicity

Congratulations to Dave Sherman, GANE program coordinator, for the great write-up in the February 20 Times Observer.

### Behind on Mortgage Payment?

Having a home is a dream for many people. But when times are tough and you fall behind on your mortgage payment, your dream becomes a nightmare. You are faced with a financial crisis. Which bills do I pay first ... Mortgage, Gas, Electric, Water, Phone? Your decisions could put you into foreclosure and losing your home.

EOC Community Services may be able to help you before you get to Foreclosure. We can help you evaluate your circumstances and help you prioritize your finances. We are here to help support you through this crisis.

If you unfortunately have received your Act 91 foreclosure notice, EOC Community Services can assist you in completing a HEMAP (Homeowners Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program) Application. This program is sponsored by Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency and may provide you with a loan to assist you through your time of crisis. The application temporarily stops the foreclosure process while you file your application with PHFA to see if you qualify for their loan program.

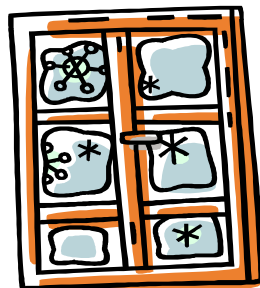
If you are in one of these circumstances, please contact EOC Community Services at 726-2400 for assistance.

### \$ Energy Grant Program

In threat of utility termination or has your utility been shut off? Customers with Penelec, Pennsylvania American Water Company, or Columbia Gas who meet the eligibility requirements can apply for a grant program. This program assists the customer in maintaining or restoring service. Customers must apply first for LIHEAP and LIHEAP CRISIS before they would be eligible to apply for the \$ Energy Program. For more information on this program and other utility assistance programs, contact EOC Community Services at 726-2400.

### Weatherization Applications Being Accepted

Sign up now for weatherization! Even though spring is just around the corner, applications are being accepted for Warren-Forest EOC's Weatherization Program. Weatherization is a program that assists homeowners and renters with modifications to make the house or apartment more energy efficient thus creating a reduction in heating costs. Applicants must meet income guidelines and provide the necessary documentation. Contact Community Services at 726-2400 for an appointment.



Winter 2007  
NEWSLETTER  
Volume III, Issue I

Warren-Forest Counties  
Economic Opportunity Council  
1209 Pennsylvania Avenue West  
PO Box 547  
Warren, PA 16365  
814-726-2400  
FAX 814-723-0510  
800-231-1797  
www.wfcaa.org

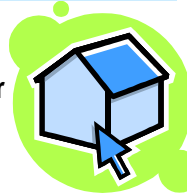
#### In this issue:

Supportive Housing	1
Note From Executive Director	2
Senator Scarnati and HS	
Warren Regional Main St.	3
Doris Swan Retires	
Program/Staff Notes	4

### Housing

#### Workshop for People with Disabilities

Thursday, March 15, 2007  
10:30 AM to 1:30 PM  
Warren and Forest Human Services/Friendship House  
27 Hospital Drive  
North Warren, PA 16365  
Reservations: Call Chuck Giambone at 814-838-7222 or 800-530-5541, Ext. 119



## Warren - Forest Counties

# Economic Opportunity Council

*Your Community Action Agency*

## Supportive Housing: Homes with a Helping Hand

What is Supportive Housing? Since EOC just initiated its Supportive Housing Program last September, many people in the community may not be aware of what it's about.

Here's how EOC's new housing specialist, **Melissa Hey**, explains Supportive Housing: "It is an opportunity for those who have a disability and are facing homelessness to find suitable housing and live independently." The major goals, as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), are to achieve residential stability, increase skill levels and/or income, and obtain greater self-determination.

But it's not always easy. "In order to accomplish these goals," Melissa says, "it takes the willingness of the client along with the help of caseworkers and other service providers." For example, basic skills—such as cleaning, budgeting, and grocery shopping—are taught through Supportive Living (Department of Human Services). Individual goals are established during client meetings with mental health caseworkers and the Housing Specialist. Clients are then supported to achieve these goals.

"With everyone working together, we are beginning to see some success stories already," adds **Patricia Lobdell**, EOC Community Services Director. "Since September, some consumers have already moved out of the transitional units into a home or apartment of their own choosing. In some cases the people that have been served were better equipped to make decisions that affect their day to day living, and some have gained employment. In those cases the client made the decision to be successful, and therefore got the most from the program."

Still others are moving from transitional Supportive Housing (which limits occupancy to two years) to secured apartments in permanent Supportive Housing. "This means that clients continue to reap the benefits of having support services on a regular basis," Melissa explains. The permanent Supportive Housing apartments offered are in conjunction with Housing and Neighborhood Development Services (HANDS) of Erie, and are known as Warren Anthems and Presidential Place. Applications for these and other HANDS apartments are available through EOC. Assistance with filling out the applications is available.

Melissa participates in an eight-county consortium that tries to identify and address housing needs within the area. In addition, both Melissa and Patricia are coordinators for the Local Housing Options Team (L-HOT) in Warren and Forest Counties. The team is comprised of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Drug and Alcohol Representatives, as well as members from the Housing Authority of Warren County and Community Resources for Independence (CRI). They meet monthly to further pursue housing options and identify barriers related to those with disabilities.

"We are planning a public workshop for March 15 that will create awareness among service providers as to all the housing options that are out there (see sidebar). We're hoping to discuss new options too," Patricia states. "We are really interested in looking into education with private landlords, so as to possibly open up more housing options within the private sector."

For more information on Supportive Housing or the upcoming workshop, contact Melissa Hey, Housing Specialist, at 814-406-7356.

### A Note From Our Executive Director

Welcome to the sixth issue of the Warren-Forest Counties Economic Opportunity Council Newsletter.

As usual, we have many things going on. In January, we (finally!) submitted our Warren County Regional Main Street application to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and Pennsylvania Downtown Center. It's been a long, complicated—but rewarding—effort to get this application completed. The process has involved many players besides EOC coming together to help revitalize our smaller communities and support new business growth. I'd like to particularly thank all the new Regional Partnership Movement volunteers from Sheffield, Sugar Grove, Tidioute, and Youngsville, who have been instrumental in getting this initiative off the ground.

Bob Raible

This newsletter was financed by a grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.

## THE PENNSYLVANIA SENATE OF 2040?



Pennsylvania State Senator Joseph B. Scarnati III (R) reading to a Head Start class at the EOC's McClintock Center on November 29, 2006.

## Warren County Regional Main Street Program Q & A

This past January, Warren-Forest EOC submitted its application for a regional Main Street Program. But many may not be clear on what it's about. Here are some answers.

### What is the Warren Regional Main Street Program?

The Warren County Regional Main Street Program represents a grassroots effort to preserve and strengthen smaller communities in Warren County. It emphasizes organization at the local level; promotion and marketing of what makes us unique and desirable to residents, businesses, and visitors; and good design, so as to make Warren County's downtowns more attractive places for living and working.

The Program will be administered by EOC, with participation from the following communities: Sheffield, Sugar Grove, Tidioute, and Youngsville. The local volunteers spearheading this effort are organized into a group known as the Regional Partnership Movement (RPM). A full-time, professional coordinator will also help move things along.

### Why a Regional Main Street Program?

Warren County's smaller communities are in dire need of a Main Street program. The City of Warren has been able to improve its downtown over the last several years through a coordinated Main Street effort, but the smaller towns have languished because of a lack of funding and technical expertise.

This is particularly unfortunate, because Warren County's small town Main Streets have been disproportionately affected by countywide depopulation and economic decline. A high number of older buildings are vacant or underutilized. Many are in relatively poor condition and/or suffer from ill-conceived "band aid" modernizations. Streetscape improvements are either unaddressed or incomplete due to funding limitations. Although there have been efforts over the past twenty years to address these issues, it's been on a sporadic, non-coordinated volunteer basis as none of these towns has the funding or size that would justify a full-time planning or development staff. According to Pennsylvania DCED, only 14.8% of the county's municipalities even have a planning commission. Without adequate planning, development lags and potential state or federal funding is left on the table. The result is further population loss as people—especially younger, educated residents—relocate elsewhere.



Scene from downtown Sheffield

### What Projects are being Planned?

Commercial façade improvements (utilizing historic preservation principles) will be one of the first major initiatives. Also downtown streetscape improvements, such as historically appropriate and attractive lighting, landscaping, and street furniture and plantings.

Other projects will include a regional revolving loan fund, enhanced regional tourism planning, the creation of a market information data base for Warren County entrepreneurs, and similar initiatives.

## Doris Swan Retires After 21 Years

**Doris Swan**, a case manager with EOC's Community Services, is officially retiring on April 13, after twenty-one years with EOC.



"There have been a lot of changes since 1986," Doris says. "Lots of new programs. But not a lot of staff turnover. The staff is what I'll miss about this place. They're really wonderful people." But there's one thing Doris won't miss. "The drive down here!" she laughs. Doris currently lives in Chautauqua County, New York. What does she plan to do after retirement? "Zero!" Doris claims. But then she makes it clear that she'll actually be very busy. "I want to travel and move to Florida. I'm going to get out my easel and keep it out instead of putting it away. And also take long walks and get a dog."