



OPPORTUNITY PROJECT, INC.

A Clubhouse Program Empowering People with Brain Injury

OP NEWS

The Opportunity Project Newsletter • Fall 2018



Brain Injury Programs, Prevention & Awareness

THANK YOU FOR A GREAT YEAR!

2018 HIGHLIGHTS

How potential meets opportunity:

- ▶ The Vocational Unit
- ▶ Nutrition, Health and Wellness
- ▶ Community Integration and Occupational Therapy Units
- ▶ Brain Injury Awareness Month 2018

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Message from the Chairman



Marc E. Berson, Esq.
Chairman

2018 marks the 24th year Opportunity Project has been providing programs and services for people with brain injury. There were many challenges and great successes over the past year. We have come a long way from our founding in 1994 where we started with a one day a week program, to where we are today, the first and only free standing Clubhouse program in New Jersey. I am always impressed by the success of our programs and our creative and dedicated staff who assist members in achieving their goals.

Since our last newsletter in 2017, unfortunately there have been significant changes within the State that reduced funding while more services are required. In 2018, we are pleased to report that OP continues to receive Medicaid NJ FamilyCare funding for eligible members; the State Medicaid

MLTSS program has approved us to offer Cognitive Group Therapy; Horizon NJ Health and Amerigroup will fund Cognitive Group Services; and we are an approved vendor to receive the TBI Fund of NJ. We are very fortunate to have loyal donors and supporters like you, enabling us to not only meet these challenges but to expand the services we have been providing to our members.

After 19 years of dedicated service to the Clubhouse, our Executive Director, Carol Albanese, has retired. The entire Board, staff, members and their families thank Carol for her continued support and hard work on behalf of OP and brain injury survivors everywhere. The staff continues to provide wonderful support that enables the Clubhouse to continue to thrive, providing programs and services each day for brain injury survivors. A formal search is being conducted for Carol's replacement.

As you read OP News, you will see reports, pictures and comments from our members- brain injury survivors- who are succeeding in their journeys. OP'S annual brain injury awareness events and fundraising activities continue to be a critical part of the Clubhouse's efforts. Our 2017 Annual Golf Classic raised over \$274,000 and Brain Injury Awareness Month events continue to grow, focusing on community and corporate brain injury awareness. Thank you to our dedicated local, regional and national partners for continuing to support OP in serving people with brain injury since 1994.

OP'S Clubhouse has served hundreds of adults with brain injury and the demand for these services continues to grow. With increased membership, we are adding 1-3 new members per month with help from referral partners such as Kessler Institute, JFK Center for Head Injuries, Brain Injury Association of NJ, Medicaid, TBI Fund of NJ and Mount Bethel Village. Membership is life-long and our doors are always open. Despite diminished government funding we continue to adapt and expand our services with fewer funds. No member is ever denied services due to lack of financial resources.

It is only with your support that we are able to grow and to fill the gap in programs and services for our members and the brain injury community. We look forward to the future with anticipation and thank you for all that you do for Opportunity Project.

Marc E. Berson
Chairman



*Opportunity Project Founders:
Marc E. Berson, Lisa Goldman and Rita Yohalem.*

Member News



I'm Jim, OP member and Communications Chair of the Opportunity Project Member Committee (OPMC). This is our second year of the OPMC, providing a powerful voice for OP members and all brain injured adults. Committee tasks include peer mentoring, event planning and fundraising activities which empower us and provide hands-on vocational experience.

We are proud to report that in 2018 we hosted 5 successful car washes and raised money to fund our annual bowling trip and Halloween party. We continued to improve member participation and productivity by implementing member ideas such as the Daily Task Checklist. And finally, we enjoyed attending a First Aid Workshop where we learned useful safety tips.

Jim

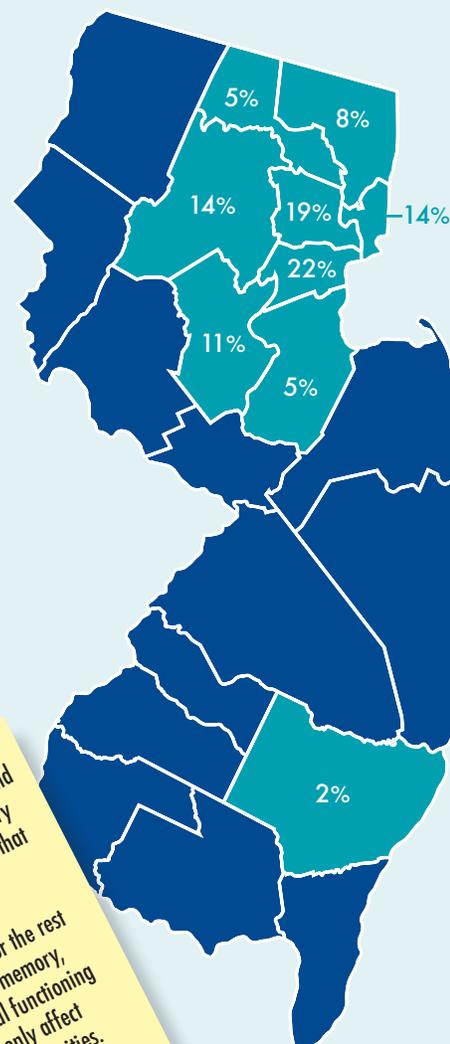


Thank you Millburn Short Hills First Aid Squad for improving our first aid skills!



It's a beautiful day to make money for our member fund.

OP MEMBERS SERVED IN THESE NEW JERSEY COUNTIES



About the Clubhouse

Recovery from brain injury is a lifelong process. OP's Clubhouse Program provides a supportive environment for recovery and reintegration back to family and community. We offer support, encouragement, challenge and experiences to assist our members in adjusting to and creating a new life.

Our Program is divided into units, which incorporate operations and activities.

- **Cognitive and Community Integration Unit:** Activities and training in cognitive skills, transportation planning, community resources, plus banking and shopping skills.
- **Nutrition Unit:** Awareness and education on proper nutrition and wellness.
- **Occupational Therapy Unit:** Improves member's ability to perform tasks in their daily living and work environment.
- **Social Work Unit:** Assists members with funding, housing, transportation and other life issues that affect their quality of life.
- **Vocational Unit:** Work evaluation, work adjustment training and supported job coaching/long-term follow along programs.

As per the CDC, Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a major cause of death and disability in the United States. TBIs contribute to about 30% of all injury deaths. Every day, 153 people in the United States die from injuries that include TBI.

Those who survive a TBI can face effects that last a few days, or the rest of their lives. Effects of TBI can include impaired thinking or memory (e.g., personality changes, depression). These issues not only affect individuals but can have lasting effects on families and communities.

LEADING CAUSES OF BRAIN INJURY FOR OP MEMBERS



Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is an external blow or jolt to the head or body. Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) is caused by a loss of oxygen to the brain after birth due to medical causes. Examples include stroke, hypoxia and anoxia.

OP Program Spotlight: The Vocational Unit

Thanks for making this another record breaking year! Because of you OP members obtained paid employment, received accolades and celebrated 100% job retention!

Employment for people with brain injury is critical to reclaiming their lives. Research indicates that individuals with brain injury have a 71% average job retention rate. Thanks to you 100% of our members are successful at their paid employment positions!

The OP vocational program ensures vocational success for our members by providing support every step of the way and allowing OP members the time they need to heal. Members build job readiness skills by performing prevocational tasks at the Clubhouse and at off-site volunteer partnerships. These experiences result in success at paid employment jobs matching members' skills.



Catherine, Roselle Public Schools, Special Ed Teacher
"I am honored to help others in my new job as a teacher. Thanks OP for helping me succeed."



Timothy W., Weis Markets, Produce Associate
"I'm great at organizing produce and meeting customers. I practiced these skills at OP."



Matt L., The Newark Beth Greenhouse, Sales Volunteer
"Selling produce at the Farmers Market is a good step in my journey to paid employment."



Ginny, JSDD WAE Center, Assistant Art Teacher
"I won the NJ Jefferson Award for outstanding community impact and public service!"



Bob, Home Depot, Store Associate
"I was awarded the Home Depot Homer Award for greeting customers and selling the deal of the day!"



Davante, Home Depot, Store Associate
"I was awarded a plumbing scholarship based on my success at Home Depot. Thank you Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and OP!"

Thank you to our employment and volunteer partners for your support!

- Arts Unbound
- Carpet House
- Home Depot
- La Strada Millburn
- Millburn Free Public Library
- Montclair Art Museum
- Montclair YMCA
- New Eyes for the Needy
- Rite Aid
- Rockn' Joe of Millburn
- Saint Hubert's Animal Welfare Center
- Sage Eldercare
- The Newark Beth Greenhouse
- WAE Center
- Whole Foods
- Weis Markets

Thank you to The Provident Bank Foundation for your donation!



"We are happy to support Opportunity Project's wonderful mission and Vocational Program!" - The Provident Bank Foundation.

If you're interested in becoming an employment or volunteer partner, please contact Tom Shea, PsyD Vocational Counselor t Shea@opportunityproject.org

Nutrition, Health & Wellness

Research indicates that a well-balanced diet with adequate vitamins, minerals and antioxidants nourishes the brain and improves cognition. The OP Nutrition Unit provides formal awareness and education on proper nutrition. Staffed by a full-time Nutritionist, the goal of the program is to assist members in making informed nutrition decisions, the result is better brain functionality and overall wellness.

Members participate in individual and group nutrition education, meal planning and healthy cooking classes, led by OP's Nutritionist and various partners. Cooking group has become a highlight of the day for many of our members!



We used fruits and veggies that we planted in the OP garden to prepare these meals!



Thank you The Newark Beth Greenhouse, Karen and Lorraine for teaching us about organic gardening!

**Thank you to the Merck Foundation
for the grant in support of OP's Nutrition and Wellness Program.**

ROASTED BUTTERNUT SQUASH RECIPE

Ingredients:

1 each	Butternut Squash, peeled and cubed
1 C	Pecans
1 C	Walnuts
1/2 C	Pumpkin seeds
2 each	Granny Smith Apples, cubed with skin
1 C	Cranberries, dried
2 tsp	Nutmeg
2 tsp	Clove
2 tsp	Cinnamon
2 TBL	Olive Oil
1 tsp	Salt

Method of Preparation:

1. Toss all ingredients in a bowl until coated with seasoning and oil. Place on a non-stick tray.
2. Roast in the oven at 400° for 25 to 30 minutes.



Community Integration and Occupational Therapy Units

Recovery from brain injury is a lifelong process. The OP Clubhouse provides support for recovery by assisting members in pursuing meaningful connections and roles in one's community. The Community Integration and Occupational Therapy (OT) Units focus on socialization, maximizing independence and improving performance of daily activities. These skills are vital components for recovery and reintegration back into life.

OP Counselors assist members to be active participants in the community and to reach their full potential by focusing on maximizing performance of daily tasks and overall well being. OT sessions emphasize skill remediation, task modifications and health and wellness.



My fine motor skills are improving significantly!



Thank you Montclair Art Museum for helping us to improve our motor skills and creativity with the "Creative Recyclables" project!



We completed the "Employed and Enabled" course at Kean University. Thank you OT staff!



I mastered the one-handed shoe tying technique thanks to Mike, OP's OT Counselor!

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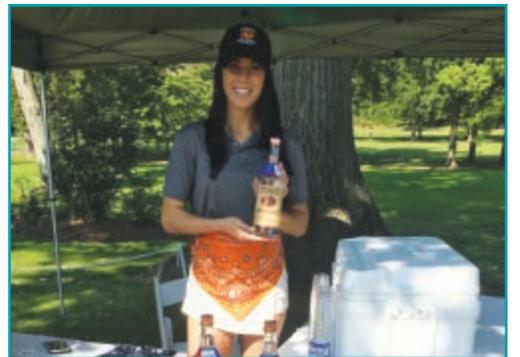
The Golf Classic raises funds that go directly towards



our brain injury programs and awareness activities.



In 2017 we raised over \$274,000!



**Thank you for making Brain Injury Awareness Month
our most successful event raising over \$45K!**

Funds go directly towards our brain injury programs and prevention.

Brain Injury Awareness Month launched with Millburn Mayor Cheryl H. Burstein's proclamation declaring March 2018 Brain Injury Awareness Month in Millburn. The community visited our information table at the Millburn Free Public Library and various companies hosted a Blue Jean Day in support of our brain injury programs.

Thank you Blue Jean Day participants: The Fidelco Group, Lester Schwab Katz & Dwyer LLP, Mandelbaum Salsburg and Jersey City Medical Center—RWJ Barnabas Health.

We hosted our 4th Annual Healthy Brain, Healthy Me (HBHM) Day

HBHM Day featured health and wellness presentations, a rejuvenating yoga class and brain-boosting food tastings at the Clubhouse. The Millburn Police Department took home the trophy at the Battle of the Badges Cook-off against the Millburn Fire Department. Over 150 guests attended the event sponsored by U.S. Trust Bank of America Private Wealth Management and Bank of America Merrill Lynch. Thanks to you, the Cook-off raised over \$5,000.



Mayor Cheryl H. Burstein presented the Brain Injury Awareness Month Proclamation at the OP Clubhouse.



Thanks Mandelbaum Salsburg for hosting a Blue Jean Day!



OP members thank you for a great Cook-off!



Thanks and congratulations Millburn Police Department



Thanks Chief Echavarria and the Millburn Fire Department

**Thank you
to all of our sponsors!**



HBHM Day Sponsors

Newark Beth Israel Medical Center
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**To participate in March 2019
Brain Injury Awareness Month
email:**

jlondon@opportunityproject.org



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Member of the Month Award

The Member of the Month award recognizes the dedication and progress made by the nominated member. Members and staff select the Member of the Month and we proudly display the award at the OP Clubhouse.

Congratulations to recent award recipients: **Jim, Denis, Mark, Matt S., Lexi and Karma.** We are proud of your commitment and exceptional progress in achieving your goals!



We are proud to receive the Member of the Month award for our outstanding achievements.



Your support has made
an everlasting difference.

Please consider a
tax-deductible gift by
December 31st.

Mail your gift in the enclosed
envelope or visit
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jlondon@opportunityproject.org

Thank you!

