



OCCHC/SteppingUP celebrated 37 years of service to extremely low-income families and also its first year under the leadership of Nora Mendez in 2014! Mendez, former Deputy Director and former OCCHC tenant, was appointed by the Board of Directors, succeeding founding Executive Director emeritus, Allen Baldwin, who remains with the organization in an advisory capacity. Mendez, along with a team of dedicated staff, Board of Directors, volunteers and

families, continued to fulfill the organization's mission "to transition extremely low-income families towards greater self-sufficiency by assisting them with housing and education". Generous support of OCCHC/SteppingUP allowed the program to expand its services to extremely low-income families.

Always determined to provide affordable housing for more low-income families, OCCHC serves as the Trustee for the ETHIC Housing Trust. This collaboration with The Salvation Army, Riverside Charitable, American Riding Club for the Handicapped and Second Baptist Church Homeless Coalition continued its efforts in the planning of over 500 affordable units in the Great Park area of the City of Irvine. A busy 2015 awaits the collaboration as construction could begin soon. In an effort to stabilize at-risk neighborhoods where residential properties are in distress, OCCHC's Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) focused on the acquisition, rehabilitation and sale of Real Estate Owned (REO) and/or abandoned properties. OCCHC has rehabilitated 8 homes and sold to families below 120 of AMI. OCCHC collaborates with organizations such as Taller San Jose where OCCHC was the lead developer in its creation of HOPE Builders. In 2014, OCCHC cooperated with the City of Fullerton and purchased a condominium that now houses a mother and daughter enrolled at CSUF. OCCHC also purchased an office building that will reduce expenses and create a stable presence to assist more families and children for years to come.



In addition to owning & managing affordable housing, OCCHC provides units for Thomas House Family Shelter and American Family Housing. OCCHC builds upon the continuum of care for at-risk families.

This past year, 18 families transitioned out of OCCHC's affordable housing, which allowed OCCHC to provide safe and stable homes to 113 individuals coming from motels, transitional housing (such as Thomas House and Families Forward), overcrowding and substandard living, building upon the continuum of care for at-risk families. While OCCHC provided affordable housing to assist 226 families in need, it also provided the necessary services to assist in fighting poverty through its signature program, SteppingUP. The program encourages low-income families to improve their education, job skills, health care and financial literacy through three components: Family Mentoring, College Awareness Program and Testing Services.

Family Mentoring

In 2014, Family Mentoring served approximately 1,900 at-risk individuals with one-on-one assistance, referrals, budgeting, credit counseling, financial literacy and more:

- ✦ Hosted 34 workshops focusing on topics such as health and nutrition, workforce development, financial planning, debt management and more
- ✦ Collaborated with Orange County United Way for the second year as part of the EITC initiative and filed taxes for 118 families who received over \$135,000 in refunds!
- ✦ Received 307 toys from the OC Toy Collaborative and 32 bikes from Great Park Neighborhoods and delivered them to 75 families in time for the holidays
- ✦ Held its first Christmas Cheer event with 147 in attendance where families brought their favorite dish including green bean casserole, lasagna, *pozole*, *arroz con leche* and *horchata* to share with neighbors
- ✦ Hosted its first of many Career Expos that will assist OCCHC families and the surrounding community by creating a pathway to greater self-sufficiency with nearly 100 participants
- ✦ 41 families completed their First Time Homebuyer seminar in collaboration with NeighborWorks Orange County or Consumer Credit Counseling and are working with Family Mentors in areas such as financial planning, job training and credit counseling to become first-time homeowners. Since its inception in 2003, Family Mentors have helped 55 families break the cycle of poverty by becoming homeowners!



Family Mentoring also worked with 112 families providing one-on-one mentoring sharing that 26 families opened new bank accounts, 53 families improved their budgeting skills and 16 individuals increased their credit score!

College Awareness Program (CAP)



As a result of your generous support, *SteppingUP's* College Awareness Program (CAP) expanded from serving 325 students to 480 students. For the first time, CAP introduced its program into the elementary school level, pairing volunteer mentors with fifth-graders who lived in a neighborhood where 70% of residents 25 years or older lack a high school diploma. The program's commitment to reducing the high school dropout rate and encouraging a higher education was evident with 33 high school graduates in 2014 obtaining over \$85,000 in scholarships and all currently enrolled in college!



- ✦ CAP provided over 10,000 hours of academic advising and 80 educational excursions including 16 college tours, 8 community service events, 5 literacy campaigns throughout the year & collaborated with various organizations including: Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services, Human Options and Hermanas Unidas
- ✦ CAP students, advisors and parents organized weekly fundraisers raising over \$15,000 in support of CAP's Northern California College Tour
- ✦ CAP hosted its 4th Northern California College Tour, exposing 40 students to 11 universities including: UC Berkeley, UC Davis, Sacramento State, San Jose State, Holy Names University and Stanford
- ✦ CAP's annual Career Day exposed 115 students and 45 parents to 30 volunteer professionals! Academic advisors prepared students in creating resumes, reviewing interview tips and reviewing professional attire
- ✦ During the summer, CAP created *SteppingUP2Stem* to engage and excite students about studying and pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering and math and also continued its leadership academy, inspiring students to be active leaders
- ✦ CAP's PADRE component grew connecting over 100 parents with resources in the community and to each other in an effort to help their children succeed in their academic future
- ✦ *SteppingUP's* Scholars Savings Program received a grant of \$2,500 from California Republic Bank, continuing to encourage students to save for their college education where *SteppingUP* will match every dollar saved up to \$500 each year. We now have 65 students who have opened a savings account with more than \$55,000 deposited into their accounts!

CAP now celebrates 163 graduates who continued onto higher education after completing high school. Of those, 5% have completed their post-secondary education, 46% are currently attending a 4-year university and the remaining are attending a community college, trade school or are members of the Military.

Testing Services

Testing Services was established in January 2014 and already has made a huge impact on the communities it serves. The newest addition to *SteppingUP* delivered intensive test prep services and catered scholarship opportunities that make pursuing higher education a realistic and tangible goal for students. In its first year, Testing Services dedicated more than 535 hours to helping over 175 students achieve the best possible score on required exams needed for university admission. Some of Testing Services' highlights include:

- ✦ Average increase of 137 points on the SAT, with the highest increase at 500 points
- ✦ Highest score achieved: 2170
- ✦ Prepared 12 cohorts of students while collaborating with other exceptional nonprofits such as AISS, El Viento, and Girls, Inc
- ✦ Highest merit based scholarship received by student: \$32,000

Since *SteppingUP's* inception in 2003, Family Mentoring has assisted 55 families in becoming first time homeowners, has grown to serving more than 1,900 individuals annually and will continue that growth to serving approximately 2,500 in 2015. CAP has maintained its commitment to reducing the high school dropout rate in Orange County and encouraging higher education for at-risk youth since 2006. The program has served 1,307 6-12th grade students of extremely low-income families with 163 students graduating high school on time and continuing onto college. With the addition of Testing Services, *SteppingUP* will expand to serving 550 students in 2015 and make higher education a tangible goal.



***"I had no plans of going to college.
I wanted to give up but Daphne, my Academic Advisor, believed in me and my potential."
– Naomi, CAP Alum 2014***