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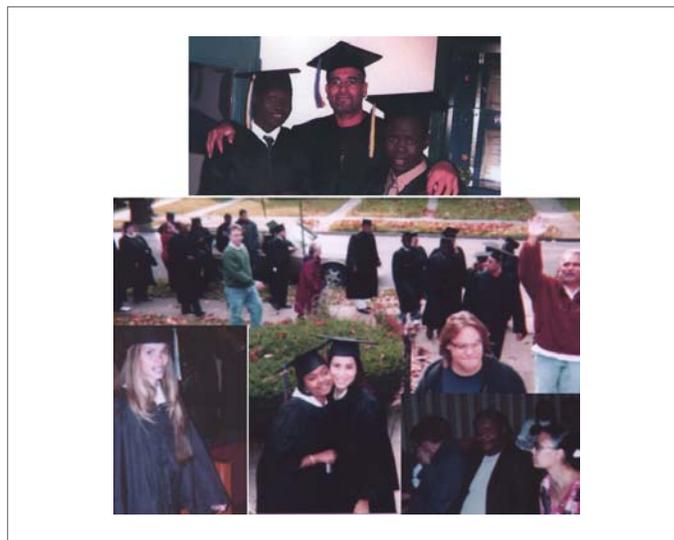


Graduation Gives Students Another Chance to Succeed

Tri-County OIC gives people another chance to succeed. That slogan came to life during OIC's graduation ceremony on October 25 as scores of OIC students stepped forward to receive their diplomas, telling stories of fresh starts and new hopes.

Many of the graduates were parents who wanted to set good examples for their children. Some of them had overcome incredible obstacles to get to this day. Some of them just wanted to say thanks for helping them fill the void in their lives. For all of them, the day's triumph was clear: they had made it, and they were proud.

GED classes have long been a staple of OIC's services. The classes give students who dropped out of high school a chance to prepare for the GED test, which has five parts: Language Arts-Reading, Language Arts-Writing, Social Studies, Science, and Math. Students must pass all five parts and earn enough total points before they are awarded a GED. The tests are far from easy, and suc-



Just a few of the Class of 2003 at St. Paul Baptist Church

cessfully earning a GED is a major accomplishment. Last year, OIC became a GED test site, enabling it to provide another service to its own students as well as to the community at large.

The High School Diploma Program is a relative newcomer to OIC, having begun in 2001. Based on a program created by Cumberland Valley School District more than 25 years ago, the High School Diploma Program offers another alternative for people who want to finish their high school education. The program, which is a collaborative effort between OIC and the Harrisburg School

District, has two components. One is academic and consists of math and English classes. The other is life skills and consists of 180 competencies that must be completed through research, analysis, and community awareness.

When high school dropouts talk about what

OVER 200
PEOPLE
ATTEND OIC'S
ANNUAL
GRADUATION
CEREMONY

“I thought the graduation was especially meaningful this year. It was very touching.”

**OIC
Voices**

The OIC Lending Library Is Open

The OIC Lending Library, located at OIC's main site on 6th and McClay Streets, opened its doors November 5. The purpose of the library is to provide all OIC students and their families with educational materials. OIC Staff is also welcome to check out materials. But everyone using the library must have a Lending Library card to check out materials. (See Angela Blair for your card.)



they missed by not graduating, they often mention a long-held dream to don a cap and gown and walk across a stage to receive their diploma. The graduates of Tri-County OIC had that chance on October 25. And, with that dream fulfilled, they were ready to pursue their next dream of attending college, starting a new job, or preparing for a promotion. They had proved to themselves that they could finish something they started. Now they were ready to move on.—by Annette Reiff



A Purpose-Driven Life

On our recent trip to Las Vega, Nevada, for the OIC National Conference, I was reminded of the importance of having a Purpose Driven Life, as I listened to the many speakers reflecting on the life of Reverend Dr. Leon Sullivan, the founder of OIC's of America. He was a Christian preacher who was given a vision by God that not only gave purpose to his life, but to the lives of many as well. I began to reflect and meditate on how God has given us all a powerful purpose for living.

The first OIC was founded in 1964 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. From its beginnings in an abandoned jailhouse, OIC has grown into an international movement that serves the disadvantaged and under-skilled of all races and backgrounds. OIC now has nearly 60 affiliates across the country and several affiliates and interest groups in England, Poland, and Africa.

As I thought about the life and legacy of Reverend Dr. Leon Sullivan, I realized that the most important ingredient for finding such a purpose is having a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Most of the speakers at the convention were family, friends and co-workers who had worked beside Dr. Sullivan. They spoke of the countless hours of prayer spent in searching the mind and heart of God for purpose and direction. As the Bible declares in Jeremiah 29:11 “only the Lord knows the thoughts and plans that He has for you.”



Through prayer, Dr. Sullivan discovered God's plan for his life. It was a plan that, through the OIC movement, has touched the lives of countless millions. But the lesson to be learned from Dr. Sullivan's example is not that great individuals turn to God

for direction. The lesson here is that all of us can and should turn to God for direction. We are all capable of achieving great things, as Dr. Sullivan achieved, if we only ask God to help us find the purpose of our lives.

It is never too late to pray for such direction.—by Pastor Alfred D. Sloan

Tunnel Greenhouse to Open in Spring 2004



This tunnel greenhouse is located in State College and is used as a research and education model.

Think Spring! That's what the OIC Tunnel Greenhouse partners are doing. The partners, OIC and Penn State University, are one step closer to constructing a greenhouse on the OIC back parking lot, located on Jefferson Street, behind the OIC building. The Tunnel Greenhouse, which has long been a vision of the OIC Executive Director, Jeffrey Woodyard, and master gardener and staff member Bob Hardin, will be a reality by Spring 2004. The project has received a grant from the Erbe Trust and Penn State University, and already work has begun designing the facility. The greenhouse will be located on Jefferson Street in the parking lot behind the OIC building.

The Tunnel Greenhouse will serve as a gathering point for students and their families, as well as staff. Children participating in the Even Start program will learn basic developmental skills by working with plants. Adults will have the opportunity to learn about container gardening. Everyone will have the opportunity to enjoy the fresh vegetables grown in the greenhouse. And, having a "green zone" in the Jefferson Street neighborhood will brighten up everyone's day.

Of course there is still much work to be done before the greenhouse is ready for the public. The parking lot needs to be cleared of shrubs and debris, the greenhouse needs to be constructed, containers need to be built and planted, and the area needs to be secured. The project team is looking for staff and volunteers to help. If you are interested in learning more about the Tunnel Greenhouse project, contact Bob Harden at OIC.— by Jeffrey Woodyard

An OIC Student Success Story

My name is Mary Hardy. I am married. I have three children. I first heard about OIC in the fall of 2002. I met Carol Hardin who told me about the GED classes and other OIC programs. Carol taught a class at the United Methodist Church from 1 to 3 in Middletown.

I did not live close enough to any of the OIC sites to make the trip to and from class practical, but I still wanted my GED. So, I moved to Middletown in January, 2003 and started class January 6. For the first month and a half, my son and I walked to the church to class. Sometimes the walk was almost unbearable. It was well over three miles and some days we were shivering from the cold no matter how bundled up we were. In February, we moved closer to the church and I was better able to focus on my studies.

The first test I took was the GED writing test. In the spring, I found a job, but I still kept up with my studies and by the end of the summer, I had passed four tests and I was ready to take the last of the five GED tests. On September 8, 2003, I took my Social Studies test. Two weeks later, I found out I had passed. I had earned my GED, and on October 25, I received my GED diploma from OIC.— by Mary Hardy

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We're on the Web!
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We Train People for Life

Workplace
Programs

OIC Volunteer Program Highlights

United Way Day of Caring— On September 5th, volunteers from the private sector descended on non-profits all over the Harrisburg area to lend a helping hand. Tri-County OIC was blessed with 22 energetic workers from Capital Blue Cross and Keystone Health Plan Central. One team of go-getters cleaned and organized the classrooms and public spaces at our adult learning center while another group got books, games and all kinds of interesting educational materials ready for our new lending library. The window washing team shed new light on the OIC, and a final group of volunteers painted base coats on chairs that are being decorated and auctioned off to support our Family Literacy Program. All the staff and students at OIC thank the United Way and the helping agencies for this gift of caring.

Community
Corner

Volunteer of the Year— Linda Ekelman began volunteering with the OIC in January 2002. She and her husband John Routa sorted books, stained bookshelves, and took on the large task of coordinating the OIC's first Day of Caring in September 2002. They attended meetings with the Volunteer Center, planned and organized the day's tasks, scoured all the home improvement stores for needed supplies, and supervised the work team.

Linda started out as a teacher's aide/tutor for the Saturday class and added on a lot of one-on-one tutoring during the week with a number of students. During the 2002-2003 school year, she logged in over 200 tutoring, helping dozens of students with their GED subjects. Linda took particular interest in working with our Sudanese students. She helped these young men understand the idioms and allusions of the English language as they prepared for their GED tests. This year at graduation, two of her Sudanese students received their GED diploma. Other students she tutored in the Saturday class also received their GED.—by Vicki Hoffman

New OIC Site at the Hershey Outlets

Tri-County OIC now has an auxiliary center at the Hershey Outlets. The center serves both employers in the retail, tourism, and lodging industries as well as individuals interested in careers in those industries. "Our primary focus is on helping employees develop and/or improve their customer service skills through training and certification programs in order to help them succeed in their chosen profession," said Jeff Woodyard, Executive Director of OIC.

OIC will offer a variety of customized, industry-specific training programs in Customer Service and Sales to both workers already employed and to those seeking employment. In addition to customer service and sales classes, OIC will also offer customized pre-employment workshops designed to give potential employees a taste of what it would be like to work in their establishment. In addition to customer service training and industry specific classes, the center will also provide additional adult education opportunities for adult learners seeking to improve their chances for success.

All basic skills training classes, including basic skills customer service training, are free of charge. Fees may be charged for more comprehensive training classes and would be determined by the nature of the training and the number of learners who participate.—by Peter Bellis

OIC Workplace Programs Statistic

During the 2002-2003 program year, OIC helped 42 people find jobs through its many workplace education programs. Of those 42 people, 21 were still on the job after twelve months.