

2015-J4018

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Oswego County Opportunities on March 3, 2016

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize that the quality and character of life in the communities across New York State are reflective of the concerned and dedicated efforts of those organizations and individuals who would devote themselves to the welfare of the community and its citizenry; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Oswego County Opportunities on Thursday, March 3, 2016; and

WHEREAS, Oswego County Opportunities (OCO) is a private, nonprofit human service agency which serves 20,000 people each year through more than 50 programs providing assistance for the homeless, educational services, health care for the whole family, independence for the disabled, safety for the abused, support for youth, and transportation for all, as well as meals for the elderly, disabled and youth; and

WHEREAS, In 1964, the Congress of the United States passed the Economic Opportunity Act for the purpose of "eliminating the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty"; the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) was given the task of developing and carrying out a national strategy to end poverty by working with and through main public and private institutions at the national, state, and local levels; as a result, Community Action Agencies were being formed across the Nation as a local system to address and end poverty in local communities; and

WHEREAS, In June of 1965, Resolution No. 46 was passed by the County Board of Supervisors (now known as the Oswego County Legislature), under the leadership of Supervisor Eugene Saloga; the resolution permitted the

establishment of a local agency to receive OEO monies and operate local anti-poverty programs; and

WHEREAS, Shortly thereafter, concerned county officials and individuals set about to establish an agency to fulfill the goals of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and the County Legislators Resolution of 1965; in March of 1966, Oswego County Opportunities (OCO) was chartered; and

WHEREAS, On March 15, 1966, OCO was incorporated as a not-for-profit human services agency, as a result of President Lyndon Johnson's Economic Opportunity Program; and

WHEREAS, Members of the original Board of Directors included Herbert VanSchaack, Arthur J. Clawson, Frances T. Sullivan, W. Harlow Stratton, Marguerite B. Lincoln, and Francis R. Mirabito, all of whom were signees of the original charter; and

WHEREAS, Unfortunately, with the organizational goal accomplished, interest waned; however, during this stage of inactivity for OCO, a new agency, working primarily with migrant farm laborers, known as Oswego County Interfaith Ministry of Concern, Inc. became chartered; they received OEO Migrant (Title III-B) Funds for the first time in 1969; and

WHEREAS, Interfaith Ministry soon realized the need for a year-round working agency that it could use as its base for summer migrant work, and thus, set out to reorganize OCO; and

WHEREAS, The reorganization plan was developed at a special OCO Corporation Meeting on December 14, 1970; a new Board of Directors was chosen to serve until the annual meeting in April of 1971, when a full slate of Directors would be elected; and

WHEREAS, In December of 1970, a group of original OCO Board Members began to seek grants to provide poverty-related services in the County;

six months later, OCO received its first program grant from OEO migrant funds for \$17,000, and in August 1971, the agency received a grant from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare for \$60,000, to estab-

lish an out of hospital Family Planning Center; and

WHEREAS, In 1972, OCO held its first Annual Meeting and published its first Annual Report; the number of dedicated employees at OCO has grown considerably over the years; in 1974, there were 20 employees working for OCO; and

WHEREAS, Today, OCO ranks among the top six largest private employers in Oswego County with over 580 employees and 2,000 volunteers; this vital agency is funded primarily by both Federal and State dollars along with fee-for-service revenues and local support; more than 90 cents of every dollar goes directly to program services; and

WHEREAS, Currently, under the luminous leadership of Executive Director Diane Cooper-Currier, OCO consists of four departments: Health and Nutrition, Community Services, Residential Services and Corporate (Administrative) Services; what began as a venture in faith, now is a strong, vibrant agency which actively and effectively strives to build partnerships which improve the quality of life and create successful communities; and

WHEREAS, For the last 50 years, OCO sought to renew the life of its own community hand in hand with those who were the tired, the poor, the discouraged and the disadvantaged; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that when organizations of such noble aims and accomplishments are brought to our attention, they should be celebrated and recognized by all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Oswego County Opportunities on March 3, 2016; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Diane Cooper-Currier, Executive Director, Oswego County Opportunities.