Ocean Inc. Recognized at the 30th Annual Whitesboro Reunion and Family Festival “Pearls of Wisdom” in Cape May, New Jersey

At the “Pearls of Wisdom” Festival, O.C.E.A.N., Inc. President/CEO Channell Wilkins and the agency Board of Trustees were recognized by Bernie Blanks, President/CEO of the Concerned Citizens of Whitesboro, Inc. for providing continued and valued support of the Whitesboro Community Food Pantry and the Science, Technology, Engineering, Medicine and Math (STEMM) Program newly introduced to the community this year by O.C.E.A.N., Inc. and as a result of funding through the NJDCA Community Services Block Grant.

In attendance were Oprah Winfrey, guest speakers including Educator, Author and Businessman Stedman Graham, Middle Township Police Chief Christopher M. Leusner, Dr. Barbara Gaba (Keynote Speaker) and the first African American Woman President at Atlantic Cape Community College, Mayor of Middle Township Michael Clark and other invited guests.

(Con’t on Page 5)
Cathy Casperson, the Education Supervisor at the O.C.E.A.N., Inc. Manchester Head Start Center has retired after 34 years of service to the agency.

She played many roles and at one point was a home visitor during her career. She became a classroom teacher and finally an education supervisor the title she held upon retirement. She was very instrumental in the growth of the Head Start Program here at O.C.E.A.N., Inc.

All staff at O.C.E.A.N., Inc. wish her the best in her retirement years!

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**New Technology Coming Soon!**

**Digital Response Strategy Marketing** - The goal is to pinpoint income-eligible customers and prospects of the agency on their smartphones at specific locations and showcase the services offered at O.C.E.A.N., Inc. The idea is that the more times we run ads about O.C.E.A.N., Inc., the more likely people are to have the agency at the top of their consciousness when they require services. Direct response marketing, is trackable, measurable and designed to evoke an immediate response from specific geographic zones and compel targeted income-eligible customers to take some specific action, such as opting into our email list, picking up the phone and calling for information about services or being directed to the O.C.E.A.N., Inc. web page.

**Audience Response System** - In an effort to increase agency surveys and to supplement the Community Assessment data, O.C.E.A.N., Inc. has purchased an Audience Response System used to survey audience responses in real time at public forums, regional meetings and other agency events. The tool will improve audience engagement and foster an active learning environment to increase awareness about the residents and their community needs.
A Private Sector Solution to the Opioid Epidemic

As the opioid epidemic continues to ravage the country, the private sector is working to change the landscape of addiction treatment for the better

In 2016, 20.1 million Americans had a substance use disorder. Two million of them were addicted to opioids – including prescription and illicit drugs. Opioid overdoses ravaged America, taking the lives of over 42,000 people in 2016 alone, marking a 25 percent increase from 2015 and making it the worst year on record.

This isn’t just another statistic. It represents lost loved ones and it’s an added reminder of how addiction differs from other chronic illnesses. Even though addiction can be managed effectively with medical treatment, only 1 in 10 Americans with this disease ever receives care and the few that do, often receive substandard care or advice that is not based on research.

Incentivizing quality and access

Recognizing this gap, Shatterproof, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing the devastation the disease of addiction causes families, adopted a businesslike approach and brought together insurers, providers, advocates and other stakeholders to improve access to quality treatment. As a result of the work of this Task Force, 16 insurance companies representing more than 248 million individuals agreed to adopt National Principals of Care for the treatment of addiction.

By signing on to these standards, insurers have committed to identifying, promoting and rewarding addiction treatment that is shown to improve a patient’s life. Together, they will use their market influence to incentivize high-quality practices while making a strong statement: addiction will be treated with the same urgency and respect as other diseases.

“Addiction will be treated with the same urgency and respect as other diseases.”

Modeling healthcare solutions

The Task Force is also working to bring transparency and credibility to the system of addiction treatment. Recognizing that family members and friends often don’t know where to direct a person in crisis for the best type of treatment, they are adapting strategies from other healthcare sectors. This will help consumers locate care, help insurers decide which providers to include in their networks and help programs identify any areas for improvement.

Addiction is not a moral failing or a character flaw, and it is necessary that we take steps as a society to reverse the long-ingrained stigma associated with this disease. Improving access to treatment that saves lives is the only way to prevent more tragedies by changing the landscape of addiction treatment in the US and removing barriers and moving toward proven medical treatment.
O.C.E.A.N., Inc’s New Subrecipient
MudGirls Studios

O.C.E.A.N., Inc. is pleased to announce the award of a job training grant to MudGirls Studios. After visiting the studio, Channell Wilkins, O.C.E.A.N., Inc. President/CEO provided funding to assist in the growth of their job training program. The goal is to add more at-risk income eligible women to the training program in the hopes they will join as studio artisans.

Through funding MudGirls Studios will also develop their online store in order to be able to offer their goods in the national marketplace. Production is running high in the studio and they have already increased their workforce to eight women. Mudgirls Studios are a diverse team of women spanning across race, ethnicity, generations and life experiences.

The students at Mudgirls recently worked diligently to shape, roll and cut clay to form tiles by hand for a large mosaic. They made 1,800 tiles to complete their collective project to contribute to the neighbor in the city: the Stockton University campus in the Chelsea neighborhood of Atlantic City.

“Every piece has to be perfect,” said Donna Gaskins, one of the women working on the project. The women behind the mosaic are part of MudGirls Studios in Atlantic City, a nonprofit that empowers economically disadvantaged and homeless women in the city through the creation of ceramics and pottery.

As part of a partnership with the Atlantic City Development Corp., their work is featured around a fireplace in a first-floor student lounge in a residential building at Stockton. The idea is to connect Stockton students with the Atlantic City community, said MudGirls founder and leader Dorrie Papademetriou. “We want people to know that people have incredible potential, and given the chance to explore that potential, great things can happen,” she said.

The idea behind the mosaic is “land to sea,” representing the area between Stockton’s two campuses — one in the Pinelands and one at the shore, Papademetriou said. It includes different colors, patterns and textures to represent earth elements, such as grass, sand and water.
The Whitesboro, New Jersey annual reunion had it all. A centenarian celebrated her 100th birthday, a historic postmark was unveiled, gospel music choirs performed, a presentation to the Community Action Agency O.C.E.A.N., Inc. -- and Oprah Winfrey was there to see it.

Winfrey's longtime partner, author and podcaster Stedman Graham, is a native of Whitesboro, an unincorporated community within Middle Township, New Jersey. Graham is also the executive director and a founder of the community organization Concerned Citizens of Whitesboro.

During the event, Oprah had no plans to give a speech, but following a talk by Middle Township Police Chief Christopher Leusner about the department's focus on intervention and education, she was inspired to take the stage and share her thoughts on the connection between adverse childhood experiences and crime.

When Winfrey started a school for girls in South Africa, the school initially had trouble teaching the girls because of traumatic events from their childhoods, she said at the reunion.

"The question isn't what's wrong with them, which is what so many teachers might say," Winfrey said at the event. "The question is, 'What happened to you?"' Winfrey also praised Leusner and the township police for their work.

"There would be no taking the knee, no protests about police departments in America, if all the police departments took on the idea of addressing what happened to you as a child," she said. "I want to applaud you for having the insight, the wisdom and the vision to ask the question, and treating young children like human beings."

It's not Winfrey's first time dropping in at the festival provided by the Concerned Citizens of Whitesboro. She also appeared at 2013's reunion with Stedman, where she was the keynote speaker and brought along her friend Gayle King, Journalist to the event.

The town was founded in 1901 by attorney George Henry White and others, who wanted to create an African American residential community that was far from the discrimination the population had encountered in southern states at the time. ♦
Congressman Christopher Smith Visits O.C.E.A.N., Inc.

Congressmen Christopher H. Smith (R-4th District) recently visited the LEAP Early Head Start Program in Lakewood to visit with families during a Socialization Activity.

Also in attendance were Channell Wilkins, O.C.E.A.N., Inc. President/CEO, and the LEAP Board Vice Chair Sam Rabinowitz.

Socialization events are individualized to address the developmental level of the participating Head Start child as well as goals, needs and resources of each family. The environment for group socialization is a key ingredient in the success of socialization experiences.

O.C.E.A.N., Inc. Awarded Grants

O.C.E.A.N., Inc. was awarded funding for the Fatherhood Initiative, Speech Therapy and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Programs through PNC. The ACE program is new at O.C.E.A.N., Inc. Head Start and the agency will address the needs of children from disadvantaged families and engage the entire family unit as a result of funding.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE’s) are stressful or traumatic events including abuse and neglect and may also include household dysfunction such as witnessing domestic violence or growing up with family members who have a substance use disorder.

Childhood experiences, both positive and negative, have a tremendous impact on future violence victimization and perpetration and lifelong health and opportunity. Adverse childhood experiences have been linked to risky health behaviors, chronic health conditions, low life potential and early death.
O.C.E.A.N., Inc. Hosted a Press Conference for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding

“It gives us a great sense of satisfaction to better coordinate two great programs to benefit low-income residents who need help improving the safety their home’s environment and its efficient use of energy,” said BPU President Joseph L. Fiordaliso.

“Often one program or the other is prevented from making needed improvements due to issues that lie outside either program’s criteria or for health and safety barriers.

This agreement will bridge that gap and help those who need our help.” The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (Board) and New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) have teamed up to better coordinate the delivery of two separate programs with similar missions to assist low-income families and individuals to improve their home’s energy efficiency in an effort to conserve energy, provide a safer dwelling environment, and reduce monthly energy bills.

Through the improved coordination of these two programs, NJDCA can assist in remedying some substantial health and safety issues, while the NJBPU can concentrate on the core mission of implementing energy conservation measures. In addition, the BPU’s Comfort Partners is able to cover some barriers that limit the WAP from doing more comprehensive weatherization work.

NJ BPU President Joseph L. Fiordaliso and Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver, DCA Commissioner were introduced by O.C.E.A.N., Inc. President/CEO Channell Wilkins who stated that “this was an ongoing coordination of these two agencies that will create additional services throughout the coming years….services that will assist New Jersey residents beyond just low-income residents.”

(Continued on Page 9)
Eagle Scout Project at the Brick Head Start Center

Scout Dominic Dlugosz of Boy Scout Troop 33 completed his Eagle Scout Project at the Brick Head Start Center. Eagle Scout is the highest achievement in the scouting program. Only four percent of Scouts are granted this rank after a lengthy review process. The requirements necessary to achieve this rank take years to fulfill and require a scout to complete a project like the Wall Photo Mural completed by Dominic.

O.C.E.A.N., Inc Awarded Housing Trust Funds for the Tuckers Walk New Construction Project in Tuckerton

O.C.E.A.N., Inc. was awarded the Housing Trust Fund federal grant administered by NJDCA to help start the Tucker’s Walk low-income housing for veterans and the disabled project in Tuckerton Borough. The funding will allow the development of the first four units to be constructed.

The project, which was approved on April 2017 by the Tuckerton Planning Board, consists of up to 24 rental units in six pods of four units each, and each pod will be built as more funding becomes available. O.C.E.A.N., Inc. will retain ownership and stewardship of the land and units and will provide laundry facilities and a community center.

“The project which was selected and awarded funds by NJDCA will help some of our most vulnerable citizens find high-quality, safe housing,” said Lt. Gov. Sheila Oliver, commissioner of the N.J. Department of Community Affairs. “Providing affordable housing to low-income persons with special needs is a critical part of the equation for reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness in New Jersey. The awarded project will have a positive effect on the quality of life of disadvantaged people in our state.”

The Housing Trust Fund program provides up to $400,000 in subsidy per unit (based on need and bedroom size). The maximum per project award was $700,000. DCA’s Division of Housing and Community Resources has committed some of its own funding for this initiative by contributing project-based rental assistance vouchers to the selected projects when they are complete.

The HTF was established in 2008 after Congress passed the Housing and Economic Recovery Act. This is the second time DCA has received HTF dollars for affordable housing production. In 2017, DCA awarded HTF funds to six developers for projects that are currently underway that will benefit approximately 25 households that include individuals with special needs.
“The coordination of services announced will allow us to help people whose homes would otherwise be indefinitely put on a waitlist due to lack of funds,” said Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver, DCA Commissioner. “Now, we have more resources to provide maximum weatherization services that will ultimately lead to healthier, safer homes for low-income residents.”

The MOU sets out the coordination of activities, services and funding between the Board’s Comfort Partners program and DCA’s WAP. The Comfort Partners program is funded through New Jersey’s Clean Energy Program and is administered by the investor-owned electric and natural gas utility companies. Comfort Partners help to make low-income residents’ homes more energy efficient by installing cost-effective energy efficiency measures and health and safety measures as appropriate and providing energy use information and counseling for the clients.

“Residents with incomes at or below 225% of the federal poverty guidelines qualify for the Comfort Partners program. Since launched in 2001, the program has helped nearly 109,000 families to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, making their homes warmer and safer while reducing their monthly energy bills.

Midway through the Press Conference, a short video presentation was viewed by the audience which included remarks from Darlene Taylor, a homeowner in East Orange, NJ who received weatherization and energy efficiency assistance through the Pilot Program.

“The core responsibility and goal of both organizations is to provide assistance to the residents of New Jersey who have limited means and are struggling to get by.” “This partnership is a massive step forward in achieving that goal on a much larger level” said Mike Hussey, O.C.E.A.N., Inc. Weatherization Director. By pooling the resources of both programs, we have expanded our ability to help families that may not have qualified for our services individually. In working with Comfort Partners, those families can now receive the help they so desperately need. This was proven in the very first home O.C.E.A.N., Inc. and Comfort Partners weatherized through the pilot program.

A single mother was living in a home in which the attic was full of dangerous mold and she was struggling to pay her energy bills. Through the pilot program, we were able to perform a joint audit with Comfort Partners and create a plan that would change her life. We completely remediated the mold issue and through weatherization we drastically lowered the burden of her energy bills according to Hussey.

Michael Hussey, O.C.E.A.N., Inc. Weatherization Director discussed program goals.
Representatives from Region II including O.C.E.A.N., Inc. Head Start and LEAP staff participated in the Head Start Association Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico as Head Start celebrated its 50th Anniversary in November. The conference theme, “Being Agents of Change” was underscored through opening remarks provided by Ann Linehan, Acting Director, of the Office of Head Start.

Upper Photo: (L-r) Puerto Rico Governors wife Beatriz Rossello, Governor Ricardo Rossello with Mayra Gallegos, LEAP Transportation and Facilities.


O.C.E.A.N., Inc. Home Energy Staff provides Outreach in Ocean and Atlantic Counties

Lori Sigrist, Director of Ocean Inc. Home Energy provided an Outreach/Training event to the staff at Ocean Mental Health Services. Other Outreach events throughout the region included NJ Natural Gas, the Atlantic County School System, WIC, St. Francis - LBI, Fullfill, Public Libraries, coordinated efforts with NJ Shares and the Hurley Radio Show covering the Atlantic County Region.
O.C.E.A.N., Inc. teams up with Caregivers of Central Jersey and EZ Ride to provide the Senior Isolation Transportation Program

Ryde4Life Program Provides the Answer to Prevent Senior Isolation

Nobody relishes the prospect of aging without a spouse or family member at their side, without friends to help them laugh at the ridiculous parts and support them through the difficult times. Yet, that is just what many seniors face. As the baby boomer generation crosses the over-65 threshold, many of our aging loved ones are still feeling alone in the crowd.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau 11 million, or 28% of people aged 65 and older, lived alone at the time of the census. As people get older, their likelihood of living alone only increases. Additionally, more and more older adults do not have children, reports the AARP, and that means fewer family members to provide company and care as those adults become seniors. While living alone does not inevitably lead to social isolation, it is certainly a predisposing factor. Yet another important consideration is how often seniors engage in social activities.

More than 40 million who are 65 and older carry a drivers’ license. But driving is more than just a passion or a pastime: It’s a lifeline. Studies show that giving up driving increases a person’s mortality risk and makes seniors more likely to land in nursing homes and suffer from depression. Yet the average American man outlives his ability to drive by six years; the average American woman, by 10 years.

Ocean County is home to the largest number of seniors in New Jersey. With these and other local statistics in mind, O.C.E.A.N., Inc. teamed up with Caregiver Volunteers of Central Jersey and EZ Ride to launch the Senior Isolation Prevention Program.

“The problem is that seniors have very limited and difficult transportation options according to Channell Wilkins, Ocean Inc. President/CEO. Almost three-quarters of seniors live in areas with few—if any—transportation alternatives, which means their options for remaining mobile begin and end in their own driveway. We have decided to partner with Caregiver Volunteers of Central Jersey and EZ Ride and take advantage of their Ryde4Life program to provide free rides for seniors and help them to be more active, get to the doctor appointments or just attend social activities. The goal is simple – help seniors to be engaged and live longer, happier lives.”

According to Lynette Whiteman, Executive Director of Caregiver Volunteers of Central Jersey, “This option will be such an added bonus to the income-eligible seniors we assist. Our volunteers provide medical transportation which is greatly needed. Adding the opportunity to spend time with friends, attend religious services or even visit with a loved one in a Nursing Home will greatly help reduce feelings of isolation. We are very grateful to O.C.E.A.N. Inc and EZRide for this partnership.

Currently over 700 members participate in the EZ Ride’s Ryde4Life program. The Ryde4Life program was designed to bridge the digital divide for the older population and EZ Ride’s partnership with Lyft allows users without a smartphone to schedule rides on demand. The service is available seven days a week including all holidays.”
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732-244-5333
Fax: 732-349-4227

Branch Offices Home Energy/Weatherization
P.O. Box 1029
Toms River, NJ 08754
732-244-2351
Fax: 732-244-9041

Lakewood Office
507 River Ave
Lakewood, NJ
732-942-3405
Fax: 732-942-3405

Pleasantville Office
2 West Glendale Ave
Pleasantville, NJ
(609)-677-8202
Fax: (609)-677-8202

Atlantic/Cape Office
Galloway Office
76 W Jimmy Leeds Rd
Galloway, NJ 08205
(609) 677-6801

O.C.E.A.N., Inc. Kids-Head Start Centers

Barnegat
1 Ocean Ave.
Barnegat, NJ 08005
Tel: 609-660-9101
Fax: 609-660-9768

Berkeley Township
264 First Ave.
South Toms River, NJ 08757
Tel: 732-341-7557
Fax: 732-341-5492

Brick Township
503 Adamston Rd.
Brick, NJ 08723
Tel: 732-477-1155
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Atlantic City Location
1125 Atlantic Avenue 6th Fl, Ste 624
Atlantic City, NJ 08401-4806
Phone: (609) 345-1359
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Housing Counseling—Ocean
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Manchester, NJ 08733
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Fax: 732-657-2456

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