



SOUTH ORANGE | MAPLEWOOD COMMUNITY COALITION ON RACE

Our Vision:

To achieve and sustain the benefits of a thriving, racially integrated, and truly inclusive community that serves as a model for the nation

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2013 Annual Report

Our Integration Journey

Throughout 2013 we heard from a range of groups and individuals beyond our borders seeking information on diverse communities and programs that support racial integration. We talked to a doctoral student at Vanderbilt University who wanted to study towns that faced demographic change and worked intentionally to foster integration. She told us that we really are a prime, enduring example of successful integration, and her study focused almost exclusively on our community. We also spoke with researchers at the Oak Park Regional Housing Center in Illinois, whose goal is to expand housing options for people of all races. To better serve their region, they are creating a toolkit of pro-integrative strategies. Once again we heard that we are one of the only communities in the country today with a dedicated organization to work on integration.



New Program! The Civic Engagement Institute

We are excited to share our work with other groups. At Building One America's National Summit we heard that many communities are struggling with racial and ethnic isolation. Our main message to them is that there is power in this grassroots work. We are most effective when we get neighbors to talk to one another; get parents to discuss their concerns about raising their kids in a diverse community; bring leaders together to deepen their understanding of issues like the achievement gap or how to increase racial inclusion in civic roles; market the towns to people of all races and backgrounds; get families to think about race, about building cross-race friendships, about sharing a life together in a community that cares for and respects people whatever their background.



2013 Celebrating Integration Awards Dinner

We asked residents at our 2013 Conversations on Race to help us consider new pathways to integration. That conversation has yielded exciting new initiatives: the trustees of the board established task forces to investigate improving youth engagement in our mission, creating more opportunities to bring people together in conversations and in social interactions, considering whether the 'inclusive' aspect of our mission extends beyond a race focus, improving communications, and developing resources for community conflict resolution. We're ready to move forward on the recommendations of the task forces in 2014.

Have a look inside at the highlights of our 2013 journey to foster integration and consider joining us in 2014.

2013 Highlights...

The 12th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Celebration

Junius Williams, Director of the Abbott Institute in Newark, lawyer, scholar, writer, and talented musician, wove all of his talents into the telling of his personal journey with the Civil Rights Movement. He described how he worked with SNCC in the "Battle of Montgomery," where he was part of a college delegation from Massachusetts, and he punctuated some of his commentary with freedom songs that had the entire audience singing and clapping with him.

Jazz music from the Bufford School Faculty Band, led by drummer Greg Bufford, filled the Morrow sanctuary. In addition to the combined choirs of Voices in Harmony, First Baptist, and Morrow Memorial, there was a special performance by Genesis Voices, a young women's group from First Baptist Church of South Orange.

Following the Observance, the Volunteer Fair included local organizations seeking future volunteers. There were also 'instant impact' activities: Rent Party Backpack Pals filled 100 backpacks with weekend necessities for local families in need; children worked on art projects for special needs students at Horizon School, donations of food for MEND and yarn for Emily's Hats for Hope were collected, and more. Community giving was inspiring!



Performances of *Gertrude McFuzz* by Dr. Seuss, and *Stand Tall Molly Lou Melon*, by Patty Lovell.

These performances engaged 260 children and their families in learning the basics of opera, and entertained them with song, dance and stories of self-worth and inclusiveness, artfully told by mezzo soprano Lori Brown Mirabal and Broadway actress Emily Zacharias, both of whom are SOMA residents. Maplewood Community Band Director Tom McGee conducted a nine piece chamber orchestra, and world music musician Ahmondylla Best played the African-originated shekere. The dancers were from the Columbia High School Special Dance Company and New Jersey Ballet.

The children were captivated by the stories, the singing, the instruments, and the dancing. The entire show was written by Lori Brown Mirabal, directed and choreographed by Ruthanna Graves McQueen, and produced by Doreen Oliver and *Opera Soup Productions*. This *Integration through the Arts* program was made possible in part by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, and administered by the Essex County Division of Cultural and Historic Affairs, SOPAC, HK Foundation, and the Fraentzel Foundation.



Strength Through Diversity Book & Poetry Scroll

The 2013 "Strength Through Diversity" workshop series marks the third year that the Coalition on Race has offered residents an opportunity to share their points of view on racial integration and learn new skills using the visual arts as part of our *Integration through the Arts* program.

Adults and high school students were invited to express their experience of our diverse community by creating handcrafted books that included personal haikus and collages of personal photos. Professional artists led the six free workshops in collage, poetry, and bookmaking construction: Chuck Miley led the book making, SK Duff taught haiku, and Mansa Mussa instructed participants on how to create collages.



Conversations on Race: How Are We Doing?

Board Chair Fred Profeta started this year's "Conversation" by inviting community members to share their thoughts on what the Coalition should continue doing, change, and start doing. He explained that the Coalition would always be true to its mission of racial integration and that, within that mission, the organization wants to be responsive to emerging issues.

Executive Director Nancy Gagnier provided context for the discussions by talking about where our towns fit into national integration trends. Citing recent studies, she noted that while the country is increasing in diversity, in most metropolitan areas racial groups are increasingly isolated from one another. Gagnier shared how pro-integrative strategies used by the Coalition are consistent with those suggested by an Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity study to maintain stable integration.

In small, facilitated group discussions, people discussed new and current strategies like marketing and communications, conflict resolution, youth engagement in the integration mission, developing social opportunities across racial boundaries, and offering more opportunities for small group discussions on race-related issues.



Freedom Riders and Talking about Civil Rights, Nonviolent Action, and Creating a More Inclusive Society

We were chosen by the NJ Council for the Humanities as a host for a community-based discussion program that encourages dialogue on issues central to civic life in New Jersey. Over 60 people gathered to watch selections of **Freedom Riders**, a film that documents the story of people—black and white together—who test and challenge segregated buses and facilities in the South in 1961.

Tom McCabe, South Orange resident and Visiting Professor of History at Rutgers, talked about the history and guided the discussions. Participants gathered in small groups to discuss how the experiences of the freedom riders relate to our experiences of racism and race relations today. Our thanks to the Maplewood Memorial Library and the South Orange Public Library for partnering with us. We are especially indebted to the NJ Council for the Humanities for providing our community with this opportunity.



The Schools Committee Hosts Cultural Competency Workshop, BOE Candidates Forum, & Preschool Open House

Cultural Competency—what is it and why might it help people living in a diverse community? This is what we addressed in a workshop that included a presentation by Cultural Anthropologist Dr. Alice Baldwin Jones, interactive scenarios designed to challenge participants' cultural understanding, and small group discussions.

At its 8th **Annual Board of Education Forum** the Schools Committee asked the candidates to address topics that included the racial minority achievement gap, the Middle Years IB Program, the importance of cultural competency in professional development, and recruiting and retaining a more diverse staff. The questions were related to the committee's goal that the school district be stably integrated overall and students of all races be expected and encouraged to excel.

The **Preschool Open House** is offered to encourage early childhood education and kindergarten readiness. Parents visited with 26 local area preschools. There were even a handful of prospective parents planning ahead for daycare programs! Thanks to Renee Joyce of South Orange-Maplewood Schools for her presentation on what to look for in a quality childcare and preschool program.



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Celebrating Integration: Forging New Paths to Inclusion

Over 130 guests dined, mingled, danced, and joined together to honor **Dr. Phylis Peterman and Ellen Greenfield**, as well as the work of the Coalition, at our annual dinner held October 5th at the SOPAC Loft. These two women have contributed decades of volunteer work to support our towns, and much of their effort has been toward building an integrated community. Ellen chaired the Coalition's Marketing Committee for a number of years and is a part of *Integration through the Arts*. Phylis was a Coalition Trustee and serves as the president of the South Orange Civic Organization. As they accepted their awards, both told wonderful stories of raising families here and of the variety of ways they have worked on integration.

We were especially pleased that **Congressman Donald M. Payne, Jr.**, who was kept in Washington because of the federal government shutdown, took time out of his busy schedule to send his speech to us via video. He offered a wonderful tribute to the work of the Coalition on Race and called for an ongoing effort to make racial integration and true inclusion a priority in our region, state, and the nation. We also thank Assemblywoman Mila Jasey for her support and for bringing a legislative proclamation to the honorees.



Honoree Ellen Greenfield, Nancy Gagnier, Assemblywoman Mila Jasey, Honoree Phylis Peterman, & Board Chair Fred Profeta at the *Celebrating Integration Awards Dinner*



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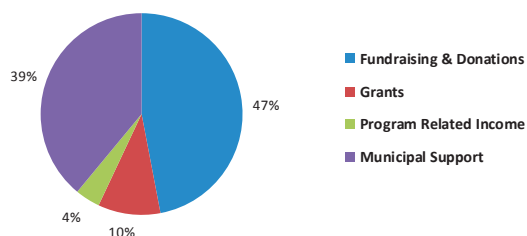
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Family Chiropractic Center of Maplewood
 Far Brook School
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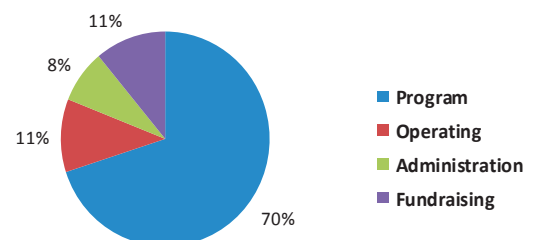
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2013 Income Summary
 Total Projected \$135,145



2013 Expense Summary
 Total Projected \$141,766





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Two Towns, One Great Community: A Virtual Video Tour



In 2013, to provide quality online marketing for prospective homebuyers, the Marketing Committee produced a promotional video that provides a virtual experience of our community. It showcases all aspects of our diverse community, including houses, neighborhoods, families, business districts, parks and recreation, arts and culture, schools, and more.

Marketing our two towns to prospective homebuyers has been an integral part of the Coalition's mission since its inception. One strategy of stable integration is affirmatively marketing the community to buyers of all races and encouraging them to make residential choices that promote racial integration. To that end, the Marketing Committee promotes the two towns through public relations and advertising campaigns, publicizes the benefits of integration, and develops the optimal ways to promote and sell our towns to prospective homebuyers. Part of that effort has included a fantastic guided tour of the towns, given by residents who are passionate about living here.

The *Two Towns, One Great Community* video truly captures the beauty and allure of this diverse community. It can be seen on the homepage of our website, www.twotowns.org.

We Are Ambassadors for Intentional Integration

Coalition staff and trustees have participated in efforts to support a regional focus on diverse and inclusive suburbs

Building One America Summit, Executive Director Nancy Gagnier attended the national summit in Washington, D.C., on the challenges faced by diverse, older suburbs and shared the pro-integrative approaches of the Coalition with 200 elected officials, researchers, and community leaders from across the country.

Together North Jersey & Building One NJ, . BONJ is working to make the voices of towns like South Orange and Maplewood be heard in both Trenton and Washington, DC.

Executive Director Nancy Gagnier gave the keynote address entitled "The Future of Integration in the Post-Civil Rights Era" at the **South Orange Civic Organization's** 43rd annual celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Attracting a Diverse Membership, that was the theme of the workshop we presented to the Junior League of the Oranges & Short Hills board members to support their efforts to racially diversify the leadership and membership of their organization.

Home Improvement Loan Program

The Financial Incentives team developed a new pro-integrative loan program, to be offered beginning in 2014, to support strong, integrated neighborhoods. The objective of this Home Improvement Loan is to increase the pool of interested home buyers for all neighborhoods by improving property maintenance and neighborhood appearance. This low-interest loan program assists homeowners with exterior home improvements that enhance curb appeal, increase home values, and improve the marketability of neighborhoods.

