



**Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc.**

**2014-2015 Annual Report**

**“Providing Equal Service & Support to Diverse  
Communities Throughout Mercer County”**



## **OUR MISSION**

This mission of the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. is to ensure equal access and opportunity for African-Americans and others in need to empower individuals to cultivate and exercise their full human potential. The Shenango Valley Urban League implements its mission through advocacy, bridge building and program services.

## **OUR VISION**

Our vision is a community where all citizens have equal opportunity to achieve their fullest potential, where everyone contributes to improving the quality of life and shares in prosperity.

## **MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM PRESIDENT/CEO AND BOARD CHAIR**

The Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. prides itself on being an outlet for individuals in need through our health & welfare, housing, and education services. As it is our mission to encourage and empower individuals in Mercer County to reach their full potential, we will continue to advocate for social justice and equality for all individuals. Through our programming, we will continue to make great impacts on youth and adults and provide them with the education and resources that are necessary during their time of need. With many obstacles such as unemployment, and lack of food, the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. strives to provide supportive outreach initiatives and programs in the areas most needed by the community. Furthermore, the partnership with the United Way of Mercer County is invaluable and through co-branding efforts we will collectively work toward lifting families out of poverty. Through these efforts, the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. Board of Directors and staff will continue to focus on serving diverse populations throughout Mercer County.



**SHENANGO VALLEY URBAN LEAGUE, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Executive Committee**

Diane Gardner-Board Chair

Jeremy Coxe

Denise Jarrett

Ronald Heiman

**Members**

Sam Bellich

Mark Malcolmson

Kavon Wright

Lee Wishing

Joseph Walsh

Rocco Russo

Riley Smoot Jr.

**Administrative Staff**

Dr. Erin R. Houston-Interim President/CEO

Virginia Gibson-Thurman-Fiscal Director

Mark Thompson-Housing Director

Elizabeth Chapman-Housing Assistant

Elizabeth Lampkins-WIC Director

Cornelius Holmes-WIC Fiscal Administrator

Lori Graham-Administrative Assistant

## EDUCATION

Through community outreach and academic focused programming, the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. Education Department strives to promote education and excellence in its works. Our focus and work in education during the 2014-2015 fiscal year are highlighted below:

### **MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY OF REMEMBRANCE**

Held at the City of Farrell Municipal building, the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. observed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Viewing this day as a “day on” and not a day off, we invited the community to honor the work, memory, and legacy of Dr. King while youth, Christian Walker and Malachi Newell, members our the Urban League’s Nulites program reflected on how the leadership of Dr. Kings has impacted their lives today. The keynote address focused on racism and social injustices of today was given by Rev. Dr. Angel De La Cruz, Senior Pastor of Word Centered Presbyterian Church, Sharon, PA.

### **AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH**

#### **MOVIE DAYS**

In celebration of African-American History Month, on Tuesday nights, the Urban League sponsored “Movie Matinee” in collaboration with the Community Library of the Shenango Valley. Each movie focused on the struggles of racism and segregation that is part of the history in the African-American culture. Youth participants of the Urban League’s Nulites program participated by preparing complimentary popcorn, pop, and water for moviegoers. Films that were shown included “Cry Freedom,” “Freedom Song,” and “The Good Lie.”

#### **BLACK HISTORY ESSAY CONTEST LUNCHEON**

The 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Black History & Heroes Essay Contest was held throughout several local school districts in Mercer County. Fifth and Sixth grade students submit essays on their favorite African American hero and detail how they have impacted the culture and society overall. First place and honorable mention winners are honored at an annual luncheon that rotates each year to a different school district. This contest provides students, parents, and the community an opportunity to learn about many civil rights leaders and African American inventors.

### **SHENANGO VALLEY URBAN LEAGUE FRANK J. NAGY SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

#### **SCHOLARSHIP FUND ESSAY CONTEST**

The Education Department conducted its fourth essay contest for a \$1,000 scholarship award. High School Seniors from throughout Mercer could submit an essay responding in 500 words to the question, “how you have demonstrated leadership ability both academically and socially and what role you have played in making a positive impact in the urban community. “Essay submissions were submitted from the following high schools in Mercer County: Sharon, Hickory, Farrell, Greenville, Sharpsville, Jamestown, Kennedy Catholic, and Reynolds. After a committee of community judges read and scored the essays a first place winner was selected. Michael Funera, a senior at Hickory High School was the 2015 recipient and winner of the Frank J. Nagy Scholarship and was recognized and awarded at Hickory High School’s senior recognition day. The scholarship fund provides financial support to a deserving Mercer County

student and highlights our commitment to education.

### **URBAN SCHOLARS & EDUCATORS AWARDS**

The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Urban Scholars & Educator Awards Scholarship Fundraiser was held to recognize five excellent students (grades 9-12) and five educators (K-12) in Mercer County. Also, funds raised benefitted the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. Frank J. Nagy Scholarship Fund. **Nominations of faculty** (K-12) were made by School Board members, Superintendents, Principals, or any school administrator/official. **Nominations of students** (9-12) can be made by Faculty, School Board members, Superintendents, Principals, or any school administrator/official.

For the Distinguished Urban Educator of the Year and Distinguished Urban Student of the Year Awards only Superintendents could make nominations.

### **EDUCATOR CATEGORIES**

#### ***Above and Beyond Award (2014-2015) (2 winners)***

This educator goes above and beyond and does more than is asked of them. They are a positive example to other faculty and also volunteers in the community. Any educator is eligible for this award regardless of years served.

#### ***Rising Star Award (2014-2015) (2 winners)***

This educator shows promise as an up and coming educator in the district and have employed creative teaching strategies early in their career. The individual has served 10 years or less as an educator.

#### ***Distinguished Urban Educator of the Year (2014-2015) (1 winner)***

This seasoned educator has demonstrated their passion for students and has served 11 or more years as an educator. Over the years they have employed exceptional teaching strategies, increased student achievement, demonstrated concern for students, faculty/staff, and is committed to high standards of professionalism. The recipient of this award can only be nominated by the Superintendent.

### **STUDENT CATEGORIES**

#### ***Brains & Brawn Award (2014-2015) (2 winners)***

This individual is a student-athlete who has demonstrated leadership abilities on and off the court/field. This individual maintains high grades and also excels in extra-curricular activities. To be eligible for this award, the student-athlete must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 and be in grades 9-12.

#### ***Future Innovator Award (2014-2015) (2 winners)***

This is a student who excels in STEM related courses demonstrating high academic achievement in the areas of science, technology, engineering, or mathematics. This student must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 and be in grades 9-12 to be eligible for this award.

***Distinguished Urban Student of the Year (2014-2015) (1 winner)***

This student is a graduating senior who demonstrates leadership ability, respect, and is actively involved in the community. This student is also active within the school district and participates in school sponsored activities such as sports, student council, drama, or other clubs and organizations while maintaining high grades. This student must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 and be a senior (grade 12) to be eligible for this award. The recipient of this award can only be nominated by the Superintendent.

**SUMMER YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM**

The Summer Youth Apprenticeship Program provides Mercer County students (age 12-15) an opportunity to job shadow different career fields and earn a stipend. First beginning in the mid 1990's, this program has impacted many students, the majority of whom have graduated high school and have gone to college or military. This program operates from the end of June-mid August each summer and works with students on developing leadership skills, social skills, and life skills. Components of the program include, one-on-one interviewing, weekly enrichment group sessions, lunch with leaders series, career camp, and job shadowing. Students who successfully complete the program receive a stipend, achievement awards, commemorative t-shirt, and certificate of recognition at the conclusion of the program.

**FALL GIVE BACK**

Student participants in the Nulites program participated in a community service project to understand the importance of service learning. Youth and staff member of the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. collected canned and non-perishable food items during our Holiday Food Drive and donated the items to the Community Food Warehouse. Also, youth collected specific items for Joshua's Haven City Mission, a homeless men's shelter during our Annual Secret Santa Christmas Gift Collection. The items were a part of the shelter's "wish list" and helped defray costs of having to purchase the items themselves.

**COLLEGE FAIR**

The Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. hosted a college fair at Farrell High School to allow students the opportunity to learn about higher education and get information from colleges and universities in the region. The fair was open to all school districts grades 7-12. Colleges and Universities represented were Thiel College, Carlow University, Chatham University, Slippery Rock University, Geveva College, University of Pittsburgh, New Castle School of Trades, Laurel Technical Institute, Clarion University, La Roche College, Pennsylvania State University-Shenango, Grove City College, Westminster College, and Youngstown State University Financial Aid Office.



### **HOMELESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

The Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. has been designated by the Mercer County Commissioners to administer the HAP Program. The purpose of the HAP program is two-fold. First, the program assists Mercer County residents in need of acquiring or maintaining rental housing and second, the program provides funding to the Emergency Shelter Program administered by the Salvation Army.

The rent assistance component assists homeless persons with verifiable income to be placed into more permanent rental housing. For renters facing eviction and near homelessness the program assists the renter in resolving the necessary issues to maintain their current rental housing. The types of assistance consist of rental counseling, budget counseling, and a financial grant of \$300.00 toward the first month's rent or the delinquent rent.

Presently the financial assistance is capped at \$300.00 and is only available to clients in compliance with the guidelines of the program. All applicants must have a face-to-face interview with the Housing Counselor. Applicants must verify documentation attesting to the validity of their situation and income. The Housing Counselor contacts the landlords to validate the information and to seek the landlord's approval of the proposed housing remedy. Once a client has been assisted, the client is not eligible for financial assistance for a period of two years. During the 2014-2015 fiscal year (July-June), the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. assisted 139 individual rent cases which supported a total of 341 Mercer County resident adults and children.

In the Emergency Shelter Program administered by the Salvation Army, emergency shelter is defined as housing individuals facing imminent crisis with temporary overnight housing up to a period of one week. For the 2014-2015 fiscal year, the Salvation Army provided housing for 425 Mercer County adults and children. The amount of money sub-granted from the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. to the Salvation Army was \$7,741.00.

### **HEMAP PROGRAM**

The Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. is certified by HUD (Housing and Urban Development) to provide mortgage default counseling to homeowners facing foreclosure. During the 2014-2015 fiscal year, the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. processed 28 applications to the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) for emergency mortgage loan assistance through the states Homeowners Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program. In October 2010, the Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. received a congratulatory Commendation Plaque from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency for providing 27 years of mortgage counseling service to the state's HEMAP Program.

## HEALTH & WELFARE

### “WIC & YOU: MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES TOGETHER”

#### **WIC (Women, Infants, and Children)**

The goal of the Health and Welfare Department is to provide quality service for all individuals applying or enrolled in Pennsylvania’s Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and to provide counseling, education, and follow-up for clients enrolled in the program.

A nutrition intervention program, the purpose of WIC is to help improve the diets of pregnant and breastfeeding women, and infants/children who are at nutritional risk. This is achieved through the provision of nutritious foods high in protein, iron, vitamin C, and calcium that are excellent for brain development and strong bones, and muscles. Nutrition education is available in addition to purchasing nutritious food with a WIC voucher. The program’s goal is to influence lifetime nutrition and health attitudes for the entire family unit. The program is funded through a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Health.



**BY THE NUMBERS**   
**Client Demographics**

**HEALTH & WELFARE**

Provided service to over 4,055 clients/families each month.

Distributed 10,584 sets of Farmer's Market coupons that supported 1,603 children and 1,041 women.

Received continued funding in the amount of \$924,551.40 for fiscal year 2014-2015.

**HOUSING**

Provided rental assistance to 139 individual households. Cumulative total of 341 adults and children.

Provided mortgage foreclosure assistance to 28 households facing delinquency.

Emergency shelter assistance provided by the Salvation Army, subrecipient of the Urban League, to 190 individual households that supported a cumulative total of 425 adults and children. Provided financial support of \$40,330.00 in rental assistance and \$7,741.00 for emergency shelter.

**EDUCATION**

605 Students participated in the African American History & Heroes Essay Contest and Luncheon

14 student submissions for the Frank J. Nagy Scholarship Essay Contest

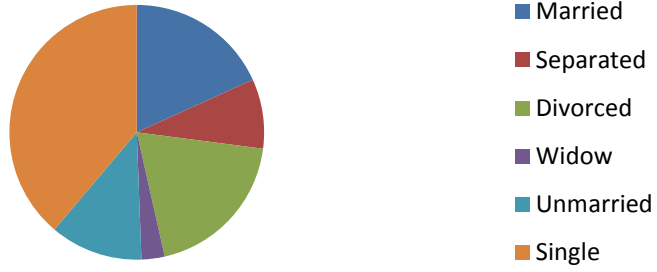
10 recognized (5 students, 5 educators) at the Urban Scholars & Educators Awards

30 attendees at the Movie Nights at the Library

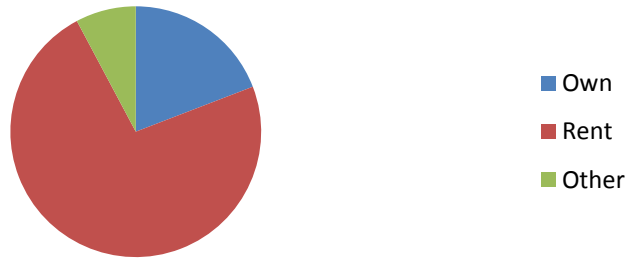
21 Students completed the Summer Youth Apprenticeship Program

14 Students participated in the NULITES (National Urban League Incentives To Excel & Succeed) youth leadership program

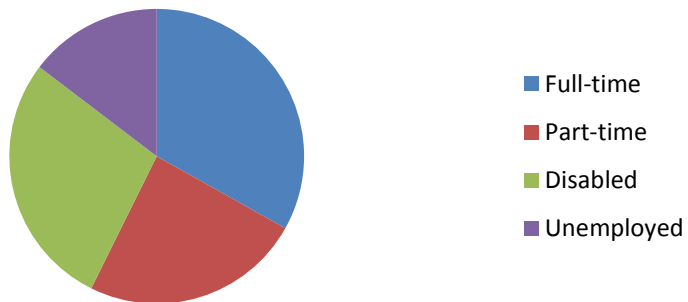
## Marital Status



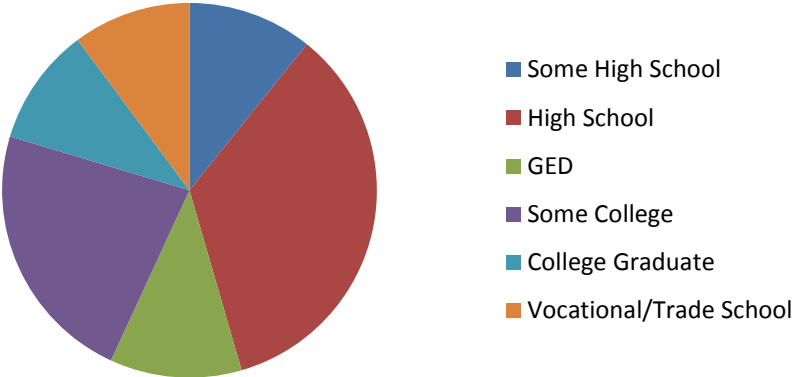
## Housing



## Employment



### Education



### Ethnicity

