AURORA of Central New York
Annual Report 2011

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Serving People who are Blind, Visually Impaired, Deaf or Hard of Hearing

A United Way Agency of Central New York, Oswego & Cayuga Counties
Contract Agency of Onondaga County Office for Aging & Youth
AURORA’s Statement of Financial Position

Government Contracts  $1,321,545  
Program Fees  890,330  
United Way  111,368  
Donations  27,636  
Net Investment Income  268,698  
Fundraising  134,444  
Adaptive Equipment Sales  44,332  
Legacies  32,404  
Misc. Income  547  
Grants  33,157  
Total  $2,864,461

2011 Audited  

2010 Audited

Assets $3,326,954  $2,856,927  
Liabilities $ 348,554  $ 319,043  
Net Assets $2,978,400  $2,537,883  
Total $3,326,954  $2,856,927

Auditors: Buffington & Hoatland CPA

Estate, Gifts and Foundation Grants

We wish to thank the following organizations/individuals for their generosity and support of AURORA’s services:

Fred & Berthe P. Harder Foundation  
Flora Bernice Smith Foundation  
Welch Allyn, Inc.  
Key Bank Foundation  
The Rosamond Gifford Charitable Corp.  
Cultural Resources Council of Syracuse  
Louise B. Stickley Trust  
P. Drescher Co., Inc.  
Dept. of Ophthalmology Medical Service

Druger Eye Care  
Specialty Surgery Center of CNY  
H. Kenneth Fitzgerald  
Edwin & Delores Davis Fund  
The John Ben Snow Foundation  
Central New York Community Foundation  
DeBoer Fund  
Estate of Charles A. Gray  
Chester Hodnicki Trust

Funding Sources

• NYS Office of Vocational & Educational Services to Individuals with Disabilities  
• NYS Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped  
• NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities  
• Onondaga County Dept. of Aging & Youth  
• Onondaga County Authorized Agency  
• United Way of Central New York, Inc.  
• United Way of Greater Oswego County  
• United Way of Cayuga County  
• Fees for Service  
• Fundraising Events  
• Memberships & Donations  
• Corporate & Foundation Grants  
• Syracuse Veterans Administration Medical Center
Employer of the Year

Affordable Cleaning Service, based in Hastings, is our Employer of the Year. This business really “gets it” when it comes to hiring people with disabilities. The service specializes in general home, business and office cleaning as well as waxing, stripping and buffing of floors. Owner Rosemarrie Stone has hired some of our Deaf consumers to work for a variety of customers, including a post office, an apartment complex and an office building. Rosemarrie is flexible about our consumers’ transportation schedules and is also eager to learn about Deaf culture and the Deaf community. She sets a wonderful example for other employers.

Mattie Letham Community Leadership Award

Laura Smith embodies the spirit of the Mattie Letham Community Leadership Award in that when she sees a need, she goes about meeting it with, not a lot of fanfare, but a whole lot of determination and grace.

“I am a let’s pull together and take care of this” kind of person, Laura admits, and her entire life’s work speaks to that. She is “an arranger” who, as the SUNY Oswego Assistant Dean in Student Services and then as the Continuing Education Division Assistant Director, worked tirelessly to develop practical programs and support for non-traditional college students.

In addition to earning her Master's (M.Ed.) and Specialist (Ed. S.) degrees in Counselor Education, College Student Personnel, at the University of Florida in Gainesville in 1981, Laura also earned a Master of Arts (M.A.) degree in Adult Education at Columbia University in 1994. In 1998, Laura received the Outstanding Continuing Educator Award from the Continuing Education Association of New York.

We met Laura when she accompanied her friend and then board member Nellie Seymour to AURORA board meetings. It wasn’t long before Laura was nominated to the board herself.

Diagnosed with macular degeneration in 1997, Laura states that she treats her eye condition as a “fascinating aspect” of her life and refuses to dwell on the negative.

This attitude shines through in everything she does to help others with vision loss. Laura is the president and inspiring force behind the Oswego County Visually Impaired (O.C.V.I.) organization. She founded the Oswego County Book Club and continues to draw Oswego County residents with vision loss into the network of support and social opportunities provided through O.C.V.I.

Laura Smith is a creative negotiator who gets things done. When asked how she would like to be remembered, she said, “... as a friend who is willing to work for what you need.” Right now, she admits, “I have lots of friends and we help each other. It’s a mutual admiration society!” We at AURORA couldn’t agree more.
Excellence Award Recipients

**Nasser Fitwi**—Nasser came to Syracuse almost two years ago from a refugee camp in Ethiopia. Without the help of any vision at all, he had to learn his way around and adjust to a new culture, country and climate. From the very beginning, Nasser’s positive attitude helped him succeed in learning everything from mobility training to the use of assistive devices and how to navigate all of the systems that are in place to assist new immigrants to this country. He is now “paying it forward” by tutoring others in English as a Second Language and as a member of the United Way Speaker’s Bureau.

**Timothy Connors**—Tim, an 11th-grader at G. Ray Bodley High School in Fulton, says he’s up for the challenge of dealing with both cancer and blindness. It’s a relatively new challenge for Tim. He became legally blind just over a year ago due to the cancer, and he had a bone marrow transplant last year. Tim is still a member of his school’s varsity football team and, wears his jersey when he goes to games to cheer for his team. His spirit and determination are an inspiration to others not just at his school but in his community as well.

**Lindsay Ryan Anthony**—Lindsay, who has been Deaf all of her life, has a long history with AURORA. She worked in AURORA’s Summer Education Program and then joined AURORA’s Deaf Rehabilitation Services. During her time at AURORA, Lindsay held lunchtime sign language classes for staff, took part in our Deaf Awareness Week activities, and was always willing to do whatever was necessary to educate the community about Deaf culture. Lindsay is a member of the Deaf Advocacy Council of Central New York and works for Project EMERGE, a collaboration between ARISE and Vera House, where she advocates for people with disabilities who experience domestic and sexual abuse.

**Breanne Kisselstein**—Breanne, who is a senior at Cicero-North Syracuse High School, is dealing with the dual challenge of being hard of hearing and legally blind. That has not stopped her from maintaining a 9.0 GPA and setting her sights on college and a career in science. She is an active volunteer at her church -- Assembly of God in Brewerton -- where she works in the nursery, belongs to the youth group, and helps out wherever there is a need. She also spent this past summer working at the Aspen Athletic Club and recently enrolled in the Explore Your Future Program at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in Rochester. Her CBVH counselor, Beth Bigness, says Breanne is devoted to her family and friends and calls her a “positive, forward-looking, caring, personable, down-to-earth young lady.”
In Review

Program Accomplishments

14,779 hours of professional interpreting services were provided to 14 Central New York counties through the Marjorie Clere Interpreter Referral Service (MCIRS).

118 youth and adults received employment and placement services this year.

67 people received assessment and/or instruction in how to use adaptive technology for computer proficiency through the Adaptive Technology Center (ATC).

405 patients received comprehensive low vision examinations for a total of 560 hours of low vision service.

667 individuals learned new skills to manage in their homes, jobs and communities and completed orientation and mobility training to remain safe and independent.

776 people received social work support, information and advocacy to develop skills for coping and accessing community resources to deal with a loss in sight or hearing.

118 community presentations were made by staff and volunteers to educate about treatment, care and prevention of sensory loss and promote AURORA and its services.
AURORA’s Board of Directors for 2010-2011

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United Way