Ozark Opportunities, Inc. (OOI) is a private, non-profit community action agency established in 1969. Our mission is “to partner with organizations, families, and individuals to provide services and empowerment opportunities for those with limited means to improve their quality of life.”

Our six-county service area includes Baxter, Boone, Marion, Newton, Searcy and Van Buren counties, encompassing nearly 4,000 rural and rugged square miles. Many families travel in excess of 50 miles to access services.

OOI is governed by a tripartite eighteen (18) member Board of Directors representing public, private, and low-income sectors. Each county in our service area is represented by three (3) Board members, one from each sector.

OOI offers several opportunities to low-income individuals and families. All services are centered around two Strategic Commitments:

- Family Stabilization
- Family Development & Empowerment

Family Stabilization is an overarching approach to working with individuals and families to get them stabilized or out of crisis. This is the crucial first step to getting people of limited means to a safe and stable situation to allow them to focus on the future instead of the crisis of the moment.

Family Development and Empowerment is a two-fold approach. As individuals and families develop skills necessary to become self-sufficient, their self-confidence increases and they become empowered to take active roles in their lives; making decisions that directly affect their families and the community at large.

Breaking the cycle of poverty takes willpower and perseverance. OOI strives to provide opportunities to assist families through several steps in the process of self-sufficiency.

Last year 23,218 individuals received services provided by OOI. This included assistance in the following areas: employment, work supports, education (adult & child), family development, family stabilization and emergency assistance.

Breakdown of all those assisted (23,218), by percentage, in relation to OOI service area.
Ozark Opportunities, Inc. provides 80 employment opportunities and provided approximately $600,000 in employee benefits that included medical, dental, retirement and Air Evac. OOI was also responsible for contributing over five and a half million dollars ($5.778 M) in economic activity in our local communities supporting local business while helping our communities most vulnerable citizens; our children, our elderly, our disabled, and our impoverished.

All the individuals and families we assist are considered ‘vulnerable’ because they are low-income. Those that are elderly, children, or disabled are among the most vulnerable of those we help. 12% of the working age adults were disabled.

33% of the households we assisted have children in the home. Of those families with children, approximately half are single parents. Of the single parent households, 90% are single mothers and 10% are single fathers.

Education is considered a critical step in the process of breaking out of the cycle of poverty. OOI supports individuals and their families in obtaining this goal through SUCCESS and Head Start programs and activities.
You will notice in most instances OOI assisted more individuals than the reported number of low-income in that county. This is due to the population and individuals in poverty data coming from census data which is captured every ten years. People in poverty move often. OOI data is captured live, in other words, it is updated each time an individual comes into the office.
**Family Stabilization Programs:**

**Non-Emergency Utility Assistance:** The *Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program* (LIHEAP) is a federally funded program that helps low-income households cope with the high cost of heating fuel and electricity in the form of monetary assistance paid directly to utility companies.

**Emergency Utility Assistance:** This is a sub-program of the *Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program* that helps low-income households establish utilities (gas or electric) or to alleviate an energy-related emergency such as disconnected service, shut-off notice or depleted heating fuel.

**Stability Program:** Created to assist with a variety of emergencies and collaborative efforts. Assistance provided included housing deposits for homeless families, payment of late rent/mortgage to prevent homelessness, eye glasses, purchase of roofing materials so a partner could replace a roof of an elderly individual so she could stay in her home.

**Vehicle Repair Loans:** Zero percent interest revolving loan where applicants could borrow up to $500 to get repairs done to their vehicle. Loans had to be repaid within a year and all repayments went towards future loans.

**SUCCESS:** This is a Family Development program, but often families that enroll are in crisis and before they can focus on short and long-term goals to make changes to become self-reliant the emergency need must be addressed first. Emergency needs may be addressed within the agencies or by collaboration with community partners.

**Head Start:** This is a Child Development program, and like SUCCESS, families may be experiencing a crisis that needs to be addressed before their children can focus on learning. Emergency needs are addressed by the agency or through collaboration with community partners.
STABILITY TO DEVELOPMENT—> —> Often, “stabilization programs” are seen as a “hand out.” What many do not realize; however, is that when someone applies for assistance there is a high degree of interaction between the individual seeking assistance and our staff. This interaction leads to referrals and a more holistic approach to helping those in need by addressing multiple challenges instead of just the immediate emergency.

Family Development & Empowerment:

Once emergency needs are met, extensive family development can be the focus of our families in their journey to break the cycle of poverty and become self-reliant. The mission of SUCCESS is to assist participants to Succeed at Understanding and Conquering Challenges to Establish Stability and Self-reliance. SUCCESS is a program that helps individuals & families restore their sense of self-respect and hope to help them to reclaim their dreams of a better life through educational classes and goal setting. SUCCESS also promotes a healthy interdependence with the rest of the community; family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, social, educational, spiritual, and medical providers. This in turn promotes an increased feeling of self-worth.

How does SUCCESS work? This program is based on the needs and wants of the household. Individuals and families establish a partnership with a family development worker who assists in developing goals that will help them become self-reliant. A written Family Development Plan is created that identifies and builds upon a family’s strengths in order to pursue and accomplish the goals set by the family. We generally work with three (3) short-term goals at a time. Short-term goals are goals that can be accomplished within a six-month period. Long-term goals (goals that will take over six months) are encouraged and can be broken down into several short-term goals.

Participants have the opportunity to attend seminars that cover a wide range of interesting topics and provide learning experiences in a fun and informal environment. Participants are encouraged to share thoughts and ideas.
Program Outcomes– 2015 Program Year

- **Employment:** 93 individuals who were unemployed obtained a job, 77% had maintained that employment for over 90 days while 10% were approaching the 90 day mark when the program year ended. Of the 19 who were already employed, 53% obtained an increase in income.

- **Education:** 87 individuals achieved educational goals. Of those, 33% obtained pre-employment skills training, 15% completed college, and 5% obtained their GEDs.

- **Work Supports:** 256 individuals obtained work support goals. 43% had housing needs; of those, 45% obtained emergency rent/mortgage payments and 55% obtained safe and affordable housing. 48% obtained health care services, and 9% obtained access to reliable transportation.

*S.U.C.C.E.S.S. in Action!!!*
OOI Board Chairman Jim Sprott presents SUCCESS Participants with certificates of completion.
**Child Development & Empowerment (Head Start):**

**Education:** Head Start truly gives children the opportunity to learn, prepare and build School Readiness Skills that will prepare them for Kindergarten. For the 2014-15 school year, Educational Statistics (from beginning of school year to the end of the school year) are as follows:

**Increases in Areas of Development of OOI Children:**

- Social Emotional Development: 14%
- Physical Development: 3.8%
- Cognitive Development: 15.3%
- Literacy Development: 20.4%
- Mathematical Development: 12.8%

**Volunteers:** 2,065 volunteers participated in the Head Start Preschool Program (2014-15). Of these volunteers, 836 were current or former Head Start or Early Head Start parents. The remaining volunteers are other family members, community partners and area professionals that support the program.

**Father Involvement:** Head Start is passionate about the impact that Father/Male involvement has in the lives of children, and takes that commitment seriously. Fathers and other positive Male role models (grandfathers, uncles, step-fathers, community members, etc.) are welcomed and encouraged to participate in activities involving the children. 302 children had someone represent them in various Father Involvement activities throughout the 2014-15 school year.

**Supporting Families:** Head Start staff work diligently with families to provide encouragement and support in providing resources and referrals for family needs throughout each school year. The following statistics show some of the impacts we had with our Head Start families in the year:

- **1,071 Adults** participated in Head Start associated activities; 662 of them being Parents or Former Parents. This is more than the number of enrolled children(!)
- **46.5%** received Health Education.
- **3.2%** Got assistance with emergency/crisis intervention (food, clothing or shelter).
- **4.3%** Help with Adult Education such as G.E.D. programs and college selection.
- **2.8%** received Job Training assistance.
- **1%** were assisted with housing assistance; such as subsidies, utilities, repairs, etc.
Ozark Opportunities, Inc. Head Start Locations 2015-16

****BAXTER COUNTY****

COTTER

Head Start Address:  P.O. Box 70, (physical: 208 Lucille St.), Cotter, AR.  72626-0070
Head Start Phone/Fax:  870-435-5040  1 Room; 20 slots.

MOUNTAIN HOME HEAD START

Head Start Address:  1414 Post Oak Rd (Rooms 1 & 2), Mtn. Home, AR. 72653  5 Rooms; 96 slots.
ROOM 1:  Head Start Phone:  870-425-2123
ROOM 2:  Head Start Phone:  870-425-9111

NORFORK HEAD START

Head Start Address:  215 Mildred Simpson Dr., Norfork, AR.  72658-8498
Head Start Phone:  870-499-5611  2 Rooms; 30 slots.

****BOONE COUNTY****

HARRISON HEAD START

Head Start Address:  701 E. Prospect (downstairs), Harrison, AR.  72601-4419
Head Start Phone/Fax:   870-741-8757  5 Rooms; 95 slots.

ALPENA HEAD START

Head Start Address:  202 W. Whitaker, Alpena, AR.  72611-2918
Head Start Phone/Fax:  870-437-2267  1 Room; 17 slots.

VALLEY SPRINGS HEAD START

Head Start Address:  P.O. Box 640, (7349 School St.), Valley Springs, AR.  72682-0640
Head Start Phone:  870-321-7437  1 Room; 15 slots.

****MARION COUNTY****

FLIPPIN HEAD START

Head Start Address:  145 N. School Lane, Flippin, AR.  72634-8509
Head Start Phone:  870-321-7510  1 Room; 18 slots.

BRUNO PYATT HEAD START

Head Start Address:  4754 Hwy 125 S., Everton, AR.  72633-8036
Head Start Phone:  870-427-5661  1 Room; 18 slots.

YELLVILLE-SUMMIT HEAD START

Head Start Address:  PO Box 296, (300 W. 11th Street, #1)Yellville, AR.  72687-0296
Head Start Phone:  870-321-7437  1 Room; 18 slots.
**Ozark Opportunities, Inc. Head Start Locations 2015-16**

****NEWTON COUNTY****

JASPER HEAD START

Head Start Address: PO Box 82 (600 School St.), Jasper, AR. 72641-0082
Head Start Phone/Fax: 870-446-5818

1 Room; 15 slots.

WESTERN GROVE HEAD START

Head Start Address: 300 School Street, Western Grove, AR. 72685-9501
Head Start Phone/Fax: 870-429-8242

1 Room; 20 slots.

****SEARCY COUNTY****

MARSHALL HEAD START

Head Start Address: P.O. Box 1281 (110 Ruff Street), Marshall, AR. 72650-1281
Head Start Phone/Fax: 870-448-5883

1 Room; 16 slots.

ST. JOE HEAD START

Head Start Address: 250 S. Hwy 65, St. Joe, AR 72675-8278
Head Start Phone/Fax: 870-439-2210

1 Room; 17 slots.

****VAN BUREN COUNTY****

CLINTON HEAD START

Head Start Address: mailing: P.O. Box 398 (Phy: 1367 Hwy 95 W.), Clinton, AR. 72031-0398
Head Start Phone/Fax: 501-745-6905

2 Rooms; 30 slots.

SHIRLEY HEAD START

Head Start Address: P.O. Box 196, (Physical: 154 School Street), Shirley, AR. 72153-0196
Head Start Phone/Fax: 501-723-4301

1 Room; 15 slots.

**Head Start Contact Information: (870) 741-9406**

Richard T. Atkinson  
Head Start Director  
Ext. 235

Ryan Clayborn  
Program Manager  
Ext. 224
Outreach Office Locations

**Baxter County**
201 Combs Avenue
Cotter, AR 72626
Phone/ Fax: (870) 435-7888
tbuttry@ozarkopp.org

**Boone County**
406 Hwy. 43 East
Harrison, AR. 72601
Phone: (870) 741-2089
Fax: (870) 741-2090
tLemon@ozarkopp.org

**Marion County**
354 Hwy 62 East
P. O. Box 304
Yellville, AR. 72687
Phone/Fax: (870) 449-6250
Email: LLewis@ozarkopp.org

**Newton County**
506 West Court Street
(At the Health Dept.)
Jasper, AR. 72641
Phone/Fax: (870) 446-2222 or (870) 741-2089
Email: tLemon@ozarkopp.org

**Searcy County**
110 Ruff Street
Marshall, AR. 72650
Mailing: P.O. Box 473 Clinton, AR. 72031
Phone/Fax: (870) 448-2414 or (501) 745-2437
Email: mslack@ozarkopp.org

**Van Buren County**
100 Success Drive/P. O. Box 473
Clinton, AR. 72031
Phone/ Fax: (501) 745-2437
Email: mslack@ozarkopp.org

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OOI Professional Development Training Day Participants with Greg Gilbert (back center)