

PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

OIC strives to help youth in the workplace

NEW BRITAIN

By **CIARA HOOKS**
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Opportunities Industrialization Center of New Britain has been servicing the city for almost 50 years, offering local youth and young adults employment and



"Career Training for Youth and Young Adults"

Opportunities Industrialization Center of New Britain, Inc.

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Christopher Godfrey
Board President

Paulette Fox
Executive Director

training opportunities.

Located at 114 North Street, OIC provides services to prepare the youth ages 11 to 24 for the future workforce. The middle school youth, 6th-8th grade, meet four days a week after school and the high school after school program meets three days a week with Friday being strictly for high school students.

"OIC operates all year round," said Paulette Fox, executive director. "We take one week off the last week of August to do cleaning and so staff can exhale."

OIC utilizes the Career Competency System, which is the 12 work base skills that youth, young adults and people need in order to be successful in life at work and in school.

OIC has been rooted in New Britain since 1971 with its first graduation of what they used to call trainees in 1972.

"The employers that work with OIC at that time was Northeast Utilities," Fox said. "They hired everybody that graduated from that first training group and I think that's nice; that type of stuff doesn't happen today."

OIC is the oldest employment and training program in New Britain and the country.

"In 1970 Connie Wilson Collins, Alton F. Brooks and Emma Pierce heard about OIC and they traveled to Philadelphia and had



Courtesy photo

Parent orientation at OIC.

the opportunity to meet Rev. Leon Howard Sullivan, and when they got back to New Britain, they decided to organize an OIC and Connie Wilson Collins wrote the first grant for \$25,000," Fox said.

Over the decades OIC has worked with and spread its influence to nearly three generations.

"We are incorporated, and the board is still made up of people who are committed to making a difference in the lives of people, helping people to help themselves – that's our mission it will continue to be our mission and we will continue to be a viable asset in the community," Fox said. "It'll be 37 years for me (with OIC). I now have grandparents whose grandkids are in my program, as well as parents whose kids are in our programs. So that makes me feel

good – we're intergenerational."

Fox shared one thing that makes the organization unique is they are considered a second chance program.

"I get those youth who are really struggling in school, behavioral problems or just youth who don't feel like people care about them," Fox said. "One of the things that OIC does well and will continue to do is we let our youth know we care about them. We have procedures and structures and I think that's important; we're consistent and we have a great relationship with all the parents."

OIC's national office, OIC of America, has 33 affiliates throughout the country. As executive director, Fox attends quarterly meetings, where they talk about what is going on around the country.

"We've been blessed to still be operating during the pandemic," Fox said. "I think it's the type of staff you have where people want to come to your program, especially kids. And Patrice Hill, who is a seasoned youth coordinator, knows the parents and even when the schools closed last March, we kept our kids as well as the parents engaged through Zoom, Facebook, social media and text messages."

OIC reopened June 1 for in-person summer youth employment and learning and will be doing it

again this year. They will also be bringing back 6th grade camp for 5th-graders who are going into 6th-grade, and 9th-grade camp for 8th-graders transitioning to 9th grade.

OIC can be found online at newbritainoic.org or call 860-224-7151.



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