



**IF LIFE BECOMES
A HIGH WIRE ACT**

**WE PROVIDE A
SAFETY NET**

ORION 
Communities
Neighbors **Helping** Neighbors

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

At Orion, we believe all individuals deserve equitable access to life's basic needs. We offer hope for individuals and families experiencing hardship due to poverty, disability, or illness by addressing immediate crises and supporting discovery of individual pathways to long term self-reliance.

Executive Director's Message



At Orion, the individuals and families with whom we work are often in the precarious situation of having to make extremely hard life decisions. Do I spend money on food *or* rent this month? Should I purchase heating oil *or* healthcare for my family? Do I repair the car so I can get to work *or* pay the internet bill so my children can do their schoolwork? With challenging economic conditions, Orion is experiencing an increasing number of people who are living paycheck to paycheck. It only takes one unforeseen hardship, like the loss of a job, a sudden injury or health issue, an unexpected bill, or the death of a spouse or partner to threaten their safety, security, and well-being.

This is why Orion exists. We are here to ensure that in these challenging life moments that our neighbors in need can receive essential support to overcome crisis, find long-term self-sustainability, and be less vulnerable in the future. And this is why I was excited to join Orion at the end of 2023 and why I'm excited everyday by the work our incredible staff team and volunteers do.

Orion has been meeting the needs of our most vulnerable neighbors for the past 46 years. In the past 10 years, Orion has been a rising star in the community as it has grown yearly to meet the evolving and increasing challenges faced by those in the community. I am privileged to lead Orion into the next ten years, and to continue the incredible legacy of neighbors helping neighbors in their most desperate times of need. Together we can ensure that Orion's star continues to rise, that we continue to effectively pivot, and that individuals and families can find hope amid crisis. Thank you for walking with Orion Communities the past 10 years, and for committing to continue the journey with us. It is an exciting time to be a part of Orion.

Keith Wilburn

A 10 Year Journey

2014 After closing for one week, Orion reopens with volunteers for 20 hours a week and sees 15 clients each month.

2015 Hires part time staff and increases to 35 hours a week serving 65 families each month. Hosts the first annual Music For Everyone.

2016 Moves to new office and is open for 40 hours a week. Partners with other organizations to launch Code Blue Shelter and create affordable housing task force.

2017 Creates STARS program which provides literacy, digital literacy, and STEM programming for students to help close economic gaps.

2018 GLAD program for single mom's launches. Orion grows to work with 200 + families a month, providing \$7,000 in direct aid.

2019 Provides hotel stays for families moving from homelessness to permanent housing and launches first STARS summer camp.

2020 Orion stays open during the pandemic providing computer and internet access. Is a founding member of the Chesco Bridges Coalition.

2021 Co-hosts Chester County Affordable Housing Summit and averages \$18,000 a month in distribution of direct aid to families in need.

2022 Orion expands STARS and hotel program and grows to serve 1450 households with average aid of \$250 per family.

2023 Partners to form Allies for Housing in Chester County and co-hosts elder summit to support seniors. Sees a 30% increase in new families served.

Our Board of Directors

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In 2023, Orion provided essential services to 1,888 households in Chester and Montgomery Counties. This comes to over 4,600 individuals, which means Orion impacted the lives of approximately 18 individuals every single workday, an increase of 30.12% from the previous year.

Immediate Crisis Relief

Bridge Case Management

Orion's case managers are available to receive requests for support. They listen to determine what is needed, work with clients to develop a plan, and help clients access the necessary resources to address their immediate crisis. In 2023, Bridge case managers addressed **3,506 requests from households in need of support.**



Community Emergency Fund.

In 2023 case managers provided over **\$140,000 in direct aid to 1,888 households in crisis.** The three primary areas of need were ensuring housing security through rental support and down payments, utility assistance, and help with transportation so individuals could access employment and essential services.

ROOFS / HEAT Programs

The ROOFS program distributed over **\$200,000 to help 105 households** transition from homelessness to permanent housing through short-term hotel stays. The HEAT Program provided essential heating oil and propane to **75 low-income households** to ensure they stayed warm through the winter.



Resource Distribution

Orion collected over **\$40,000 worth of clothing, personal hygiene products, tents, and other resources** throughout the year which were distributed to neighbors in need. During the **Warmth for All Program**, volunteers and staff collected over **1,000 winter coats, hats, gloves and blankets** which were distributed to the community in December.



Long Term Self Reliance



Getting Ahead (in a Just Getting By World) and GLAD (Gutsy Ladies Achieving Their Destiny)

Orion provided two empowerment classes for adults in 2023. The first Getting Ahead class had **11 participants graduate from**



the program. This 8-week class provided training, mentoring, and discussions with the goal of helping individuals better understand poverty and reach financial stability. Orion's GLAD program had **10 single mothers attend** and provided support, education, and empowerment to help them overcome life's obstacles and reach their full potential.

STARS After-School and Summer Programs



Our STARS Program offered three 8-week sessions of after-school STEM training and literacy classes, and three weeks of STEM summer camp. All of this programming was at no-cost to families and referrals were made in partnership with the Phoenixville Area School District. **60 children from the community** attended at least one session throughout 2023, more than doubling the number of attendees over the past two years.



Children's Book Distribution

Studies suggest that the single most important factor influencing a child's early educational success is an introduction to books and being read to at home prior to beginning school. Orion distributed over **12,000 children's books in 2023** through its 14 giving libraries in the community, 9 partner organizations, and several schools.

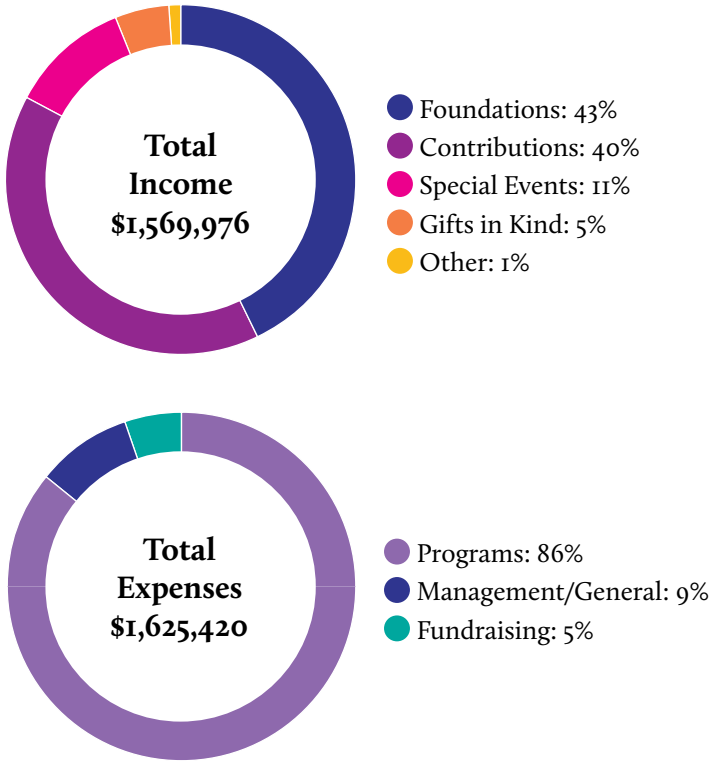


Technology Resource Center

Clients can use technology and get support from staff to find employment, enroll in medical benefits, request personal documents, and access additional resources. Orion provides access to computers, internet, fax, printers, charging stations and phones in the technology resource center.

Financial Report

Adjusting to the new realities of a post-pandemic world, Orion is looking to continue its needed services and maintain the quality of its programs. In the face of these increasing needs, we are implementing ongoing strategies to reduce the deficit of the past two years. We appreciate your generous support as we navigate this new world.



	2022	2023
Total Revenue Support:	\$1,306,589	\$1,569,975
Total Expense:	\$1,349,412	\$1,625,420
Change in Net:	\$(42,823)	\$(55,445)
Net Asset at End of Year	\$612,297	\$556,853

Audit provided by Bond, Pezzano, & Etze, PC

Thank You to our Volunteers, Donors, and Partners

The staff and clients of Orion are incredibly grateful to all our supporters for your incredible generosity this past year. **So much was accomplished and so many lives were impacted because of you.** Thank you for making a difference in our community.



Looking Ahead

Orion is experiencing record numbers of requests for support from individuals and families experiencing crisis at the start of 2024. Growing inflation, cuts to government funding, rising housing costs, and stagnant wages all contribute to the growing challenges faced by many. There are many needs, but the primary one faced by our neighbors is access to affordable housing. Orion continues to provide direct resources while also participating in and contributing to community forums which address the systemic issues. Orion will continue to listen at the street level, provide direct support to address gaps and stabilize families, and work with our community to develop solutions to systemic challenges. With your support we can continue to effectively address the needs of our most vulnerable neighbors.

How You Can Help



Volunteer

In 2023 Orion partnered with **155 volunteers who contributed 4,405 hours.** These amazing volunteers tutored students in our after-school programs, organized and distributed books



and essential resources, provided food and mentoring in our empowerment programs, helped to renovate our office space, prepared mailings and assisted with information tables at community events. There are so many meaningful ways to get involved at Orion, and we are so thankful to all of our energetic volunteers who contributed their time, talents, and resources to enable us to meet community needs. Please consider joining us in 2024!



Donate

Our generous donors, corporate sponsors, and partner organizations enabled Orion to distribute a total of over **\$350,000 in direct aid to over 4,600 individuals in need in 2023.** It is only because of these incredible people that Orion is able to provide all of the programs and resources to meet the needs of our most vulnerable neighbors. Together we can change lives for the better.



Partner

Orion collaborates with countless community non-profits, churches, businesses, and organizations to ensure that our neighbors in need receive the best possible care and support. We are proud to partner closely with local organizations like Ann's Heart, Open Hearth, PACS, Good Samaritan Services, Phoenixville Free Clinic, Phoenixville Senior Center, Phoenixville Police Department, Career Link, Phoenixville Community Health Foundation, Phoenixville Clergy Association, and many, many more. If you'd like to find out ways that your organization can collaborate more closely with Orion, please reach out. We are always looking for new ways to partner.

For more information:

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