

## Open Access Connections Annual Report 2020

### Mission

Open Access Connections facilitates communication services to encourage self-determination and stronger community connections for people in need in Minnesota. We are the leader in finding innovative ways to use communications technologies to provide opportunities for people in need to forge new connections to the community and to one another. These connections enhance dignity and independence and contribute to success.

### Summary of Programs and Achievements

Open Access Connections primary service is our **Community Voice Mail** program. This service provides homeless and low-income Minnesotans lacking reliable phone access a consistent phone number to receive messages. Homeless and low-income Minnesotans are able to submit job applications, complete housing applications, and achieve other self-sufficiency goals. In 2020 we partnered with 318 nonprofit and local government programs to distribute 2,727 Community Voice Mail numbers to people in need across the state of Minnesota. 95% of our voice mail users were unemployed 74% were homeless. 61% of our voice mail users looking for work were able to find a job and 64% of our voice mail users looking for housing were able to find a home. 29% of our voice mail users were low-income families. 10% of our voice mail users are disabled and 8% are veterans.

### We also provided the following programs and services:

**Grassroots Outreach:** We trained 6 Grassroots Outreach workers, all of whom possess a history of homelessness and long term unemployment, to distribute our free voice mail services at Twin Cities nonprofit locations. This program distribute 110 voice mail numbers, strengthened relationships with our partner agencies, and provided relevant job experiences for our outreach workers. Through a partnership with enTouch Wireless we were also able to distribute 400 **Lifeline supported cell phones**, providing an additional communication tool for people in crisis.

**Generation 50+ Group:** The Generation 50+ Group provides a forum for older people with history of homelessness to discuss issues affecting their community, and work towards building solutions. We held 4 Generation 50+ meetings in-person and 8 over Zoom, engaging over 80 members. Generation 50+ Group members worked on affordable housing advocacy, 2020 Census outreach, and non-partisan civic engagement.

### Civic Engagement

We partnered with the State of Minnesota Demographics Office to train 14 Generation 50+ Group members to complete **2020 Census** outreach to typically undercounted communities. In total we completed 120 shifts of phone banking that reached over 1,800 people about completing the 2020 Census. We also registered and pledged 120 people to vote in the **2020 Election**.



**Organizational Response to COVID-19 Pandemic**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic we had to suspend our in-person Grassroots and Generation 50+ Group meetings. We adjusted our operations by expanding our office hours and by shifting our Generation 50+ Group meetings to Zoom. We are continuously monitoring the COVID 19 pandemic to ensure that our communications services are available to homeless and low-income people while also adhering to social distancing guidelines.

**Financial Breakdown**

Expenses for Open Access Connections were 84.3% program related, 9.8% management related, and 5.9% fundraising related.

44.3% of expenses are related to our Community Voice Mail program, 20% are related to our Grassroots Outreach project, 12% are related to our non-partisan civic engagement, and 8% are related our Generation 50+ Group.

**OPEN ACCESS CONNECTIONS  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
2020**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>AFFILIATION</b>
Debra Bean	Hennepin County Human Services & Public Health Department
Kimberly Carpenter	Securian Corporation
Simon Carvalho	Current Open Access participant
Charles Crowley	Metro Work Center, Inc.
Carol Erickson	Current Open Access participant
Tim Gothmann	Jewish Family Services of St. Paul
Monstuer Herring	Current Open Access participant
Gloria Johnson	Current Open Access participant
Ruth Johnson	Council on Crime and Justice
Cheryl Speeter Margoles	Speeter and Johnson Law Firm
Mike Menner	St. Stephen's Human Services
Manuel Moore	Current Open Access participant
Wayne Oliver	Current Open Access participant
Marcellus Rose	Current Open Access participant
Rohit Tandon	Mayo Clinic
Rose Ann Urman	Current Open Access participant
Tom Wolfe	Community Member

**Officers:**

Chair	Kim Carpenter
Vice Chair	Tim Gothmann
Treasurer	Charles Crowley
Secretary	Debra Bean
Executive Committee	Ruth Johnson
Executive Committee	Mike Menner
Executive Committee	Manuel Moore

42% of Board members are women



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Free communication tools for people in need

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47% are people of color

47% are current or former Open Access participants and are low income

All members donated to Open Access Connections within the last year.

**Executive Director:** Mark Erpelding