

*Serving the Indian Valley,  
North Penn and  
Pennridge Communities  
with a comprehensive  
continuum of  
social services  
since 1970*



# Keystone Opportunity Center

Providing Help • Offering Hope



Spring 2012 Volume IV, Issue 1

[keystoneopportunity.org](http://keystoneopportunity.org)

## Creative Community Groups Design New “Face” for Keystone

A new updated facade graces the Main Street office of Keystone Opportunity Center thanks to lots of creative ideas, hard work and patience. Windows were replaced, walls repaired and re-stuccoed, and additional lighting installed in preparation for the grand finale that will feature six large mixed media art panels—“The Faces of Diversity”—decorating the front windows.

A dedication open house is being planned for the community to view the panels up close. The dedication will be held on June 23 at 10:00 a.m. just prior to the Souderton Borough 125th Anniversary Parade which will take place along Main Street at 11:00 a.m. Watch the Keystone


Opportunity Center web page—[keystoneopportunity.org](http://keystoneopportunity.org) and local papers for details about that event.

According to Brenda Oelschlager, Development Officer, the windows will be filled with a series of six panels using paint and tile mosaic designs to represent the diverse community and variety of services provided by Keystone Opportunity Center. The project was initiated three years ago when Keystone Opportunity Center was created with the merging of Indian Valley Housing and Indian Valley Opportunity Center. The idea for the art panels was to convey a sense of the mission of Keystone through imagery created by many community members and present a fresh new look for the organization’s headquarters at 104 Main Street.

“It has been a wonderful collaborative effort,” remarked Oelschlager who explained how Keystone has been working with the Souderton/Telford Main Streets group and borough on their revitalization program; the Community Arts Initiative- a sub-committee of the Indian Valley Arts Foundation and their “Bring Art to Main Street” goals; the local service clubs such as the Souderton-Telford and Harleysville Rotary groups that provided funding; and the many students involved in the placing of the tiles. “Coming together on this




Gabrielle Lembo was one of several Souderton school students who helped set the tile for the six “Faces of Diversity” panels depicting the services of Keystone Opportunity Center.

project from so many different perspectives has been challenging, but it is the essence of what Keystone does on a daily basis—working together with many groups and individuals in the area to provide help and offer hope to families in need,” she said. 

Go to [www.keystoneopportunity.org](http://www.keystoneopportunity.org) to see the “Faces of Diversity” photo gallery and details of the art project in process.

## Community Collaboration is Focus for Keystone

As we begin to emerge from the winter months into spring, we continue to look at the economic recovery projections. Everything indicates that we are in a slow growth recovery period that may last for another three years. This is a real concern to the Keystone Board and staff members as we continue to see the need for housing assistance, food and other services increasing. Low to middle income families are finding it difficult to find and retain housing and employment in these economic times.

As you review this newsletter you will read about the opportunities, challenges and changes that have taken place or will be happening at Keystone Opportunity Center this year. We continue to look for ways to do more with less and partner with other organizations as we work hard to be good stewards of our available resources. Our focus for this year is collaboration. See how many opportunities Keystone has found to collaborate with the community, organizations and businesses as we strive to serve our community. As always we thank you for your continued support. 

E. Richard Aichele III  
Executive Director

## Keystone Receives Chamber Community Service Award

Members of the Keystone Opportunity board and staff were on hand to receive the 2011 Charles H. Allebach, Jr. Community Service Award presented at the Indian Valley Chamber of Commerce annual banquet in January. Executive Director Rich Aichele noted that the need for Keystone services continues to grow, but the community continues to be supportive of the organization’s mission. 



Keystone staff and board members were grateful the organization was recognized as a strong community partner providing help and offering hope to those in need. Left-right: Nancy Gingrich- board chair, Janet Panning- board, John Lyon- board, Rich Aichele- executive director, Brenda Oelschlager- development officer, Sue Zomberg- Interfaith Hospitality Network coordinator, Ruth Walters- board.

## Transitional Housing-Social Services Staff Expands to Address Increased Needs



Elizabeth Bertolet joined the Keystone staff in January 2012 as a Transitional Housing Case Manager. Her easy-going personality and passion for the mission of Keystone make her a welcome addition to the organization.

Transitional Housing-Social Services Director Allegra Cressman is glad to have Elizabeth Bertolet on staff to assist with case management for transitional housing clients and social services needs. "It's been a tough year due to many changes in housing funding and programs. We've been working with a reduced staff as well, so having someone with her experience and background join us is a blessing," she said.

Bertolet is familiar with Keystone's service area, having grown up in the Pennridge area. Her family still lives locally, but she has spent most of her adult life in Philadelphia, living, working and attending church in the city. Her work experience includes 15 years in foster care case management with Bethanna, a faith-based group located in Southampton.

When she began looking at Keystone as a possible employer, she was attracted to the "one-stop shop" idea of social services. "I checked our Keystone's web site and was impressed with the number of services provided and the quality of volunteer involvement. It really is a community organization" she said. She enjoys helping meet the basic needs of people at the grassroots level. "I fully support the goal of folks becoming empowered to become

self-sufficient. Keystone does a good job at helping that happen," she added.

Bertolet is a graduate of Christopher Dock High School with a Bachelor of Science in Sociology and Social Work, minor in Psychology. She is currently in a Masters Program on Restorative Practices in Counseling with the International Institute of Restorative Practices. 



Volunteers with the North Penn United Way spent a "Day of Service" on January 23, 2012 working with Keystone on a property being transformed into a housing unit. The building is owned by Univest Corp. of Souderton and many of the volunteers were Univest employees and their families. Univest continues to be a strong community partner with Keystone.

### Keystone Housing Facts for 2011

**Transitional Housing** provided housing and case management for 23 households, serving 37 adults and 47 children

**Social Services** addressed 2,000 Community assistance phone calls in 2011, providing information and referrals to callers. Average time per caller- 20 minutes.

**Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing (HPRP)** program provided help to prevent 13 households from losing their homes and assisted 16 households to relocate to affordable housing situations. A total of 37 adults and 51 children were served in Bucks and Montgomery counties.

**Holiday Giving** community donations included 273 thanksgiving meal packages with over \$7,000 in food gift cards included. Keystone housing, food pantry, education families and homebound clients were provided with meal bags and gift cards. Approximately 125 families received Holiday gifts provided by donors who "adopted" a family.



Students at Salford Hills Elementary School participated in the district-wide food drive for Keystone held in February. Each school was asked to contribute items from a pre-designated list to help the pantry stock its supplies of certain items and prevent shortages.

## Food Pantry Faces Major Reduction in Government Supplies


While the Keystone food pantry has been blessed with an abundance of community contributions through the holiday season and into 2012, the news from its government sources is not good according to Pantry Coordinator, Cindy Dembrosky. According to recent reports, local food pantries can expect to receive up to 75% less of certain items from their county and state sources.

Dembrosky says it has been about four months since Keystone has received any meat deliveries, but the pantry has been able to provide meat for clients thanks to discount purchases through government agencies. "With community donations of cash and gift cards, we have been able to work with the local grocers and meat

packing companies to purchase other products at discounted prices and continue to provide our clients with protein," she commented. Local stores and food suppliers also donate items to the pantry.

She added that the community support has been tremendous and helps keep the pantry shelves full, noting that there are several food drives being planned by local groups, including the May 12 Stamp Out Hunger campaign by the postal service. She encourages interested donors to check with the pantry or visit the web site ([www.keystoneopportunity.org](http://www.keystoneopportunity.org)) to find out what items are most needed and when. Cash and gift card donations are also welcomed at any time.

"We try to provide a well-balanced assortment of products so families can prepare healthful meals," said Dembrosky. "That's why we request people to donate specific items from our lists or provide cash so we can purchase things in bulk," she added.

The pantry currently serves approximately 220 households in the Souderton Area School District. 

**Keystone Food Pantry Now Open Thursday Evenings—5:00-7:00 p.m.** Provides easy access for pantry clients unable to pick up during daytime hours. Donations to the food pantry will also be accepted on Thursday evenings.

## Family Literacy Program Expands for 2011-2012 School Year

Thanks to a state-wide re-allocation of education funding, the Keystone Opportunity Center Family Literacy program received additional funds for the 2011-12 school year that allowed it to more than double its capacity.

The program, which serves pre-school children and their parents with kindergarten preparation classes for the kids and English Language Learner, parenting and health education sessions for the adults, now includes about 40 families. Family Literacy runs its four-day a week sessions at two locations September through June. The classes at Souderton Mennonite Church have been running for many years.

The new location, at the North Penn Boys and Girls Club, provides access for families in the Lansdale area. With the expanded program, Family Literacy added five new teachers and a case manager, Janet McBride, to help family members in need of social services.

McBride joined the Family Literacy staff in September at the beginning of the school year. She has spent the first semester learning about the families and becoming familiar with Keystone's many opportunities for clients. Her



background includes teaching and community development at the Haven of Peace Academy in Dar Salaam, Tanzania where she spent 10 years with her family. She is fluent in Swahili and works comfortably with non-English speaking community members. She has a Master of Arts in Biblical Studies with a concentration in Counseling and feels her skills are a good match with the mission of Keystone. She lives with her husband and family in Blooming Glen. 🏠



Photo left: Janet McBride, the Family Literacy case manager meets with individuals and families to provide additional assistance with their class learning as well as with life lessons.

Photo top: Family Literacy children at the new North Penn Boys and Girls Club location enjoy the many activities and learning experiences in the kid-friendly environment.

## Community Groups Partner with Keystone at New Independent Learning Center

With the start of tax season, Keystone, along with the AARP Tax Foundation and the North Penn United Way VITA (Volunteer Income tax Assistance) program opened a new computer center at the Indian Valley Public Library. The private office space, provided by the library, was fit with furniture and computer equipment by Keystone Opportunity Center for use as an Independent Learning Center.



Harold Mellott, a certified AARP tax volunteer, assists a community member with income tax preparation at the new Keystone Independent Learning Center located at the Indian Valley Public Library.

computer for other research and educational purposes. These sessions will be staffed with qualified Keystone instructors.

A third piece of the Learning Center includes a community volunteer team who will staff the center at designated times for any Keystone clients or community members in need of assistance using a computer. The benefit to users will be the ability to ask questions and get

assistance from the knowledgeable volunteers. Two community organizations will be providing the volunteers—the Souderton High School FBLA service club and the local Rotarians, who also provided funds to open the center.

According to Aichele, the goal of the Learning Center will be to encourage Keystone clients and community members to use the computers for learning and to improve their employability. "We hope many will take advantage of the free assistance that will be available to help them along the way to self-sufficiency," he said.

Check the Keystone website- [www.keystoneopportunity.org-for-Learning](http://www.keystoneopportunity.org-for-Learning) Center hours and information. 🏠

Knowing that the use by Keystone clients would not require all the available hours at the center, Keystone worked with the volunteer tax groups to set up a schedule that allows them to utilize the computers and space to assist eligible community members with tax preparation. According to Keystone Executive Director Rich Aichele, the partnership is good for the community served by all the organizations. "We're working together to deliver services to community members in need of the expertise each group can offer," he said.

By mid-March, Keystone will begin scheduling time for its Adult Education and Family Literacy students to participate in on-line computer training sessions, use Rosetta Stone English Language software, seek assistance in employment searches or utilize the

## "Smile Day" and Free Haircuts Provide a Special Community Connection

It is exciting when individuals and businesses want to give back to the community and choose to do so through Keystone. Family Literacy students are grateful too. In February, some families took their children for a free dental exam at Weaver Reckner Dental Group's "Smile Day." Others got free haircuts at Chrysalis Hair Design, a Keystone neighbor on Main Street in Souderton. Linking it to literacy back in the classroom, staff followed up with a session on writing thank you notes to these generous community partners. Other Keystone clients also participated in "Smile Day" and receive hair care at Chrysalis when the owner opens the shop to Keystone once a month. 🏠



A Keystone family visited the dentist on "Smile Day" in February. Weaver, Reckner, Reinhardt Dental Associates opened its doors at their Souderton office to provide free dental services for children whose families are unable to afford regular care.

# Keystone Interfaith Hospitality Network Celebrates 15th Year of Housing the Homeless

For the past fifteen years, the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) has been serving the homeless population in Upper Bucks and Montgomery counties with caring congregations providing a place to sleep, healthy meals, and friendly companionship to those in need. During those 15 years 472 people were welcomed by IHN including 261 children.

Nearly 40 congregations and thousands of volunteers have helped make families feel at home when they have no place to call their own. Keystone Opportunity Center hopes to continue and expand this tradition of helping as it works with local congregations and the national Family Promise model for the IHN shelter program.

According to IHN Director Sue Zomberg, 2012 promises to be a growing year for the Indian

Valley and Upper Bucks Interfaith Hospitality Networks. "We already have commitments from four new congregations who are willing to take on Host Congregation roles. Silverdale Brethren in Christ served in January as a support church with Grace Bible in Souderton. In March 2012, St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Telford is serving as IHN host for its first year. Later this year we will be preparing three new churches for their IHN role," she said.

As Keystone celebrates its 15-year history with the IHN connection, Zomberg is focused on the future as well. "This year we want to increase community and congregational support. Whether it be through increased giving from all 30+ churches, or by new volunteer efforts such as congregation or community members providing informative workshops on topics beneficial to our guests, by sponsoring a special event to benefit our families, or by planning a



## Open House

Celebrate Keystone Interfaith Hospitality Network's 15th Year IHN Anniversary

**Sunday, April 29th 2:00-5:00 p.m.**  
at Zwingli United Church of Christ  
the area's first IHN host congregation

- Tour the newly constructed guest suite at Zwingli
- Learn about Keystone's housing programs
- Visit with IHN hosts, guests and Keystone staff

**Wile Avenue in Souderton Pennsylvania**

collection for needed in-kind donations" Zomberg added.

*The community is invited to a special IHN Open House. See above for details.* 🏠

## New IHN Case Manager Joins Keystone

The IHN program is fortunate to have a new Case Manager. Karen Zehr started with Keystone as IHN Social Worker in February 2012. She comes to Keystone not only with local Bucks County social service experience, but she was also the former IHN co-coordinator at the church where she grew up--Perkasie Mennonite.

According to Zomberg, "Karen has first-hand knowledge of the IHN programs and has stepped right into the case manager role. We are excited to have her here," Zomberg said.

Zehr grew up in the Pennridge community and graduated from Christopher Dock High

School. Her parents still live in Silverdale. She attended Eastern Mennonite University with a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work. She has experience working with seniors as well as children in a variety of settings including Souderton Mennonite Homes.

After serving as the IHN coordinator at her home church for seven years, Zehr felt like the IHN case manager was a good fit for her. "I felt like I could jump in and start a new phase of my career at Keystone. It is a family-friendly place to work and there are great people here all working for the same thing," she said. Her husband and five sons live in Telford and attend Salford Mennonite Church. 🏠



Karen Zehr, Keystone's new IHN case manager spends time with guests and their families at the IHN Day Center.

## Interfaith Hospitality Network Facts

Current churches involved with IHN as hosts or support congregations: • 31

Total individuals served in 2011:

- 54 people from 17 families including 33 children

Who we served:

- Four- two-parent families
- Two- single women
- Eleven families headed by single mothers

Why they needed help:

- Job loss/less income caused eight families to become homeless
- Domestic violence was the root cause for four families
- Five families came from doubled up homes or overcrowded conditions
- Only three adults had a job upon IHN entrance

Where did they go after Keystone IHN?

- 13 families moved into Keystone housing programs
- Two were terminated for rules violations
- Two families remain in IHN awaiting housing program openings
- 15 of the 17 heads of households left IHN with jobs!

To learn more about the Keystone Opportunity Interfaith Hospitality Network programs contact Sue Zomberg 215-723-5430x113 or [keystoneopportunity.org](http://keystoneopportunity.org)

## Walking Tours Provide Inside Look at Keystone

*"I never knew Keystone did so many different things in the community."*

*"The tour gave me a fresh look at what Keystone is all about."*

These are just a few comments from guests who have participated in the Keystone Walking Tours. The tours begin in May and are open to any interested community members. The one-hour visit includes a short presentation at the 104 Main Street headquarters, a walk along Main Street to view several Keystone program facilities and a tasty breakfast treat compliments of Main Street Java coffeehouse.

Space is limited, so please call ahead- 215-723-5430x121. All tours begin at 7:30 a.m. at the 104 Main Street office.

# Adult Education Department Sees Growth in 2011-12

*Capacity has nearly doubled from the previous year*

With the shift in the state education budget, many adult education programs were discontinued for the 2011-12 school year. Keystone remains one of only four non-profit educational organizations funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The adult education programs at Keystone include free classes in English as a Second Language (ESL), GED, and Civics.

According to Adult Education Director Susan Clauser, Keystone's student capacity has nearly doubled from the previous year with 391 students currently registered for 17 classes. "We've added five new teaching staff members and expanded our administrative office to include an Adult Education Case Manager—Gee Hendricks, and an In-House Professional Development Specialist—Patrice Karcher," she said. "The goal behind all adult education has become employability and job improvement for under-employed community members," she commented. The addition of a case manager and development specialist will help students be more prepared for jobs and provide opportunities for teachers to advance their skills as well.

With four additional classes for various skill levels offered at several different times and locations, the program is more accessible to many students. The additional grant funds have allowed Keystone to sub-contract a smaller organization—The Open Line in Pennsburg—to

provide more options for GED classes.

While the school year is far from complete, Keystone is proud of the many improvements and accomplishments that both students and staff have achieved so far. In the English Language/Civics classes 15 students passed their U.S. citizenship test. As of January 2012, all ESL, EL/Civics and Family Literacy instructors completed ESL Assessment Training.

### **New ESL class provides learning opportunity for seniors**

A new ESL class titled "Senior Survival English" has been piloted at the Advanced Living retirement community at Schwenkfeld Manor in Lansdale. Veteran ESL teacher Melanie Swartley has been enjoying her young-at-heart students. The group numbers about 12 regular attendees from a variety of cultural backgrounds including Chinese, Korean, Iranian, and Lebanese.


"When we started the class in September, each group kept to themselves," explained Swartley. Now we are all friends," she said with a big smile. Many of her students were smiling as well. "We love Melanie. She is such a good teacher," said one student in clear crisp English. "She makes us feel comfortable about speaking English. She



Melanie Swartley facilitates fun conversations in the new Senior Survival ESL class held at Advanced Living Retirement Community.

speaks slowly and clearly so we can understand," said another with confidence.


One student remarked, "The class helps us get better with our English. We want to be fluent and understand. It is hard, but Melanie keeps it fun," she said.

When Keystone recognized the large number of immigrant parents moving into the area with their American children, the organization also realized an underserved population with cultural barriers. According to Clauser, "Creating the Senior Survival ESL class has been a long-time goal. I am excited we have been able to offer it," she said. "Just going grocery shopping and being able to read labels or visiting a doctor and understanding how to treat an illness is something many of us take for granted," she said. This class addresses those everyday language dilemmas and more. 

## Adult Education Case Manager Provides New Opportunities for Students

When Georgieana "Gee" Hendricks moved to Perkasie a year ago she began teaching ESL and Literacy with Keystone as a way to acclimate herself to her new surroundings. With a background in teaching, a Master of Education and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages certificate, experience as a small private school principal and as Director of Community Education for a New Jersey nonprofit group, she was the perfect candidate for the new Keystone case manager position which was created for the 2011-12 school year.

Her desire to immerse herself in her new community and her passion for teaching others has opened many doors of opportunity and experience for the students she serves. Not knowing the local transit system, she eagerly contacted the Mobility Hotline and took a trial run bus ride with a student to check out the "Travel Training" program. She felt it could benefit many Keystone students in need of transportation to jobs and school.

She has contacted the Pennsylvania Welcome Center to learn about programs and resources available for new residents and passed along much good advice to Keystone students. As she learns, she hopes to help Keystone families become better integrated into their communities and more able to live independently as productive citizens. 




"Gee" Hendricks, Keystone's new Adult Education Case Manager, works with an ESL student hoping to attend cosmetology school. Hendricks has met individually with this student and many others to assist with writing job applications, practicing interview skills and developing other skills for employment or job improvement.

## Development Specialist Works with Keystone Teachers

Patrice Karcher started her career with Keystone as a volunteer ESL tutor, then advanced as a teacher of several levels of ESL and Civics classes. While she continues to teach ESL students, she is also teaching ESL teachers and providing development opportunities for staff members to better serve the students.

Patrice Karcher never expected to be doing what she's now doing with Keystone. Her interest in the organization began with a research project for grad school as she was working on her Education degree. She began volunteering as an ESL tutor, then subbing as a teacher. Her linear progression landed her in the new In-house Professional Development position which keeps her busy working with Keystone teachers.

"It wasn't in my plans," she says about her new position, "but I decided to take the opportunity. Keystone is a great place to be. This is where I want to be. I enjoy my continued teaching in the classroom, but appreciate being able to encourage those around me," she said.

Karcher is a local resident, graduate of Souderton Area High School and Temple University. She lives with her husband and two school-age children in the Lansdale area. 



Patrice Karcher



# Keystone Opportunity Center

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## SAVE THESE DATES

Be a part of Keystone's fun community events. Bring your family and friends along to help support the mission of Keystone Opportunity Center.

Check [www.keystoneopportunity.org](http://www.keystoneopportunity.org) for registration forms and more information.

### April 26th - "CELEBRATION OF HOPE" BANQUET & AUCTION

An evening of fun at the Indian Valley Country Club with dinner and live benefit auction including exciting prizes for willing bidders.

### April 29th - INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK 15th ANNIVERSARY

Join past and present IHN hosts, staff members and clients to learn about Keystone's homeless shelter program. Open-house will be at Zwingli UCC in Souderton, 2:00-5:00 p.m.

### May 12th - "STAMP OUT HUNGER" FOOD DRIVE

Watch your mailboxes the week of May 6 for details about this community collection.

### June 23rd - "FACES OF DIVERSITY" ART DEDICATION

Celebrate the unveiling of the mosaic art panels in Keystone's front windows with a pre-parade dedication at 10:00 a.m.

### July 9th - 9th ANNUAL GOLF OUTING

Gather a foursome and join the fun at the Talamore Country Club. Event begins at 12:00 p.m. with lunch and dinner at 6:00 p.m.

## Become a Keystone Key Holder

Seeking new donors—individuals, groups, companies or congregations to make a three-year giving commitment.

Call 215-723-5430x121 to discuss your "Key Holder" potential, or sign up at [www.keystoneopportunity.org](http://www.keystoneopportunity.org) under Donor Info: Key Holder Campaign

## Meal-A-Month Offers Good Food for a Good Cause

If you need a good excuse to eat out, Keystone invites you to participate in one or more of the Meal-A-Month opportunities. Various local restaurants have agreed to designate dates throughout the year and donate a portion of their sales to Keystone Opportunity Center. Treat your family, invite some friends and join the fun--no cooking or dirty dishes for you and lots of benefits for Keystone! Check the web site [www.keystoneopportunity.org](http://www.keystoneopportunity.org) for details about these dates and locations:



Members of Zion Mennonite Church had fun dining out at Red Robin for the Keystone February Meal-A-Month.

- APRIL 14** Applebee's- Quakertown- Breakfast only, tickets available at Keystone office
- MAY 7** Hawkeye's- Silverdale- Dinner only, call for reservations - 215-258-1300 mention Keystone to waitress/waiter
- JUNE 19** O'Grady's- Souderton- Breakfast, lunch & dinner, no tickets or flyer required
- JULY 11** Rising Sun Inn- Telford- Dinner, call for reservations- 215-721-4770, no flyer required
- AUGUST 11** Applebee's- Hatfield- Breakfast only, tickets available at Keystone office
- SEPTEMBER 11, 12, 13** Ruby Tuesday's- Lansdale- all day, flyer required



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A publication of...  
**Keystone Opportunity Center**  
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Souderton, PA 18964

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Please call or e-mail us at [office@keystoneopp.org](mailto:office@keystoneopp.org) to add or delete names from our mailing list, report duplicate copies, or request a newsletter for a friend.

E. Richard Aichele, III - Executive Director  
Brenda Oelschlager - Development Officer, Newsletter Editor  
Leinbach Design - Newsletter Design & Layout

*The mission of Keystone Opportunity Center is to help community members in need by offering a comprehensive array of social services that educates, encourages and empowers them to become self-sufficient.*

Find Keystone Opportunity Center of Facebook and "Like" us.

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