

Welcome to the OCC Newsletter!

Oakwood Community Center (OCC) is thrilled to share the first edition of our newsletter - an important way for us to stay in touch with our community and share news, stories, events, petitions - all the things that make Oakwood tick. Our hope is that this communication and visibility into OCC builds community and that the newsletter evolves with your help. If there's something you want to know about, drop us a line. So please read, enjoy, and BE IN TOUCH!



Oakwood Community Center Newsletter

OCC'S MISSION:

Collaboration for the Common Good

At Oakwood Community Center, we envision a city where strangers become neighbors. We maintain the historic Oakwood building as a welcoming and nourishing space for bringing together members of our diverse community and cultivating a spirit of productive collaboration.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Earth Day Clean-up- Saturday,
April 21st 10 AM- 2 PM

Help give Oakwood Community Center a Spring Cleaning! Come pitch in to beautify Oakwood outside and in for Earth Day weekend. Many hands make for light work!

Soul Café, Italian Night-

Monday, April 23rd 6PM-8PM

Soul Café is a once monthly pay-what-you-can community dinner at OCC- all are welcome!

Ladies and Gentlemen...The Black Diamond Dancers!

On some evenings if the traffic is light, the pulsing music that booms from OCC can almost be heard from Hoosick Street. And then, like that, it stops. And a sharp, commanding voice replaces what's coming from the speakers, "We give everybody a fair chance at the dance. And we ask, 'how can we make this work for you?'"

The voice in between the beats belongs to Shaquana Johnson, founder and group manager of the Black Diamond Dancers, or one of the other coaches or choreographers.

Last year Shaquana wanted her daughter to join a dance team, but because the expense was surprisingly high, she decided to start one herself.

What began in the fall of 2017 as a startup dance group with 6 kids in a backyard has since expanded to a troupe of more than 30 dancers that meets three times a week at OCC to hone their dance skills and share a meal.

The main criteria for joining BDD is a sense of commitment. Some dancers are naturally stronger than others, but inclusion and support are what make the Black Diamond Dancers a thriving force. They believe that everyone has a place on the team. As Black Diamond coach turned manager Danielle Gourrier says, "We give everybody a fair chance at the dance. And we ask, how can we make it work for you?"

In February, the Dancers had their first competition in Albany. This

experience motivated the dancers to bring their game to the next level. Now, weeks later, they're reflecting, learning, practicing, developing into a better team...for the next competition. This spring and summer, the group plans to compete at events in Georgia and North Carolina. Shaquana is also working to set up



Shaquana Johnson, founder of Black Diamond Dancers

a two-day workshop this spring with an accomplished choreographer to give her team an added boost. Ultimately, every moment on the BDD journey is intended for the personal growth of each of its members. "My goal is to enrich lives through dance," Shaquana says, and that goal guides her mission and every step of Black Diamond Dancers.

If you want to know more about the Black Diamond Dancers and/or contribute to their work, please contact OCC. Donations are needed and appreciated.

BDD Facebook Link

<https://www.facebook.com/Black-Diamond-Dancers-869795143179330/>

OUR BOARD

Our committed leadership team helps run the various aspects of OCC. We look forward to meeting you!

Alexandra Lusak, Chair

Priscilla Hilton-McCauley, Vice-Chair

Shanna Goldman, Secretary

Ian White, Treasurer

Amanda Beale Wild

Carolyn Braunius

Kizziane Casale

David Hains

Katie Hammon

Justin Relf

SUPPORT OCC

Oakwood relies on the generosity of our community-in addition to the rent from its long-term residencies- to keep the building open and running.

Donations are welcome, needed and GREATLY APPRECIATED, and can be made on our website:

www.oakwoodcommunitycenter.org

STAY IN TOUCH

Don't be strangers, be neighbors! Contact us to let us know about how OCC might help with your event, project, or idea. Want to volunteer at any number of our community events? Let us know. We're on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), and can also be contacted directly on our [website](#).

REOCCURING PROGRAMS

Food Pantry, every Saturday, 9 AM- 11 AM

Oakwood Soul Café, fourth Monday of every month, 6 PM-8 PM

'OCC SCRAPBOOK' Recent Events



The Black Diamond Dancers during a performance at their Soul Cafe fundraiser. Thank you to all who came to show support and generously donated!



*Mirah on tour with Secret Drum Band, live at Oakwood!
Photo credit: Shannon Straney*