When Ginny Donohue started On Point for College in 1999, her goal was to get help 1,000 students go to college.

“Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine we’d grow to have thousands of students enroll in college, or that On Point would be be in two additional cities,” she said. Then in August, Ginny and On Point’s Deputy Executive Director Sam Rowser learned that they would each have the chance of a lifetime: to meet the President of the United States.

Here’s how the meeting happened. When On Point friend and supporter Kim Cook, executive director of the National College Access Network (NCAN), heard that President Barack Obama would be visiting Syracuse on a tour to address the cost of higher education, she contacted the White House and suggested that the President should meet Sam and Ginny since they had been honored with a national award for staff and executive leadership from NCAN. Sam was invited to meet the President on August 22 at Henninger High School, and Ginny was invited to attend a speech the following day at Binghamton University.

“I shook his hand and he thanked us for the work that we do,” Sam said. “He asked me how many young people we had worked with, and I told him more than 5,000 here in Syracuse.”
Message from Ginny Donohue, founder

As I was sitting in my car waiting to pick a student up, a woman knocked on my window and introduced herself as the mother of one of our graduates. She wanted me to know that when her son went to college, it changed the entire family. Her other children began to study hard. Her family felt hope. She and her husband were kinder to each other. Everything changed.

In many ways, On Point for College is changing. We are growing at a pace we could never have imagined. We are supporting more than 6,000 students in Syracuse, Utica and New York City. And we continue to grow right here in Syracuse, where we began serving more than 900 new students last year.

We are advocating more than ever before. Two years ago, we learned that students who lived in homeless shelters received less New York State TAP aid than students who lived with their parents. That law has been changed. We suggested a change in graduation strategies to one of our partner colleges, and that college’s graduation rate increased by 9 percent. We are reaching out to new populations of students, and trying new ideas to help our students be more successful.

But even as we change and grow, we will always remember that we are about helping one student at a time, and removing that student’s obstacles and watching him or her soar. And helping that one student can have a ripple effect beyond imagination: a friend who is inspired to do better, a brother who studies harder, and a family with renewed hope and love.

When you support On Point for College, this is the kind of change that you make in our community. Thank you.

Community leaders inspire On Point students

Melanie Littlejohn, National Grid’s Central New York Regional Executive, visited a class of nearly 50 new On Point for College enrolling freshmen this fall, to give them advice, inspiration, and words of wisdom for the future.

Like many On Point students, Littlejohn said, she grew up in the inner city, in a household with more than 20 foster children. She was told by her guidance counselor that she wasn’t college material. After graduating from SUNY Stony Brook, she went back to her high school to help create positive change.

After her speech, Littlejohn handed out backpacks branded with “National Grid” and “On Point for College.” National Grid Foundation provided On Point with enough backpacks to outfit all freshmen as well as a $15,000 grant to support the cost of the orientation sessions in Syracuse and Utica.

From everyone at On Point, thank you to National Grid for supporting our 13 orientation sessions and thanks to all of our speakers!
When Allorra Allen was 17, she was finally old enough to get her own apartment. On her own since age 14, she lived on couches at friends’ houses.

For most, moving out at 14 might seem daunting. But for her, it felt like a burden being lifted.

“From when I was 9 until about 12, I ran the house by myself and raised my two sisters,” she said. “At least when I was on my own, I only had to worry about feeding myself.”

Even when faced with such personal challenges, Allorra always knew that a college education was for her.

“I always thought that college was absolutely necessary for my life,” she said. “I was on the honor roll and had perfect attendance. It wasn’t until high school that I started to lose hope and lose that vision. It was like, I have to eat and pay my bills, and I don’t have time to do college too.”

Allorra’s complicated family and financial situation derailed her first attempt at attending Onondaga Community College.

But On Point Advisor Stephanie Allen and other College Success advisors, in partnership with OCC, removed all the obstacles. OCC waived her tuition bill and On Point helped her get her independent status so she could re-enroll.

Now, Allorra is in her final semester at OCC. After she earns her business administration degree, she plans to transfer to Syracuse University and major in marketing or merchandising to become a fashion buyer.

“I think I’m good at seeing trends and understanding what customers want,” she said.

Allorra still works two jobs while going to school full time to support herself. She volunteers for On Point frequently, giving early awareness speeches to young people from the inner city, telling her personal story at events, and filling in at the annual Golf for Grads tournament and wherever she is needed.

And her academic success speaks for itself. Even with a 0.00 grade-point average from her first semester factored in, she has a cumulative GPA of 3.26.

She has referred many other students to On Point for College, including her mother Brenda Solivan, who got her GED in 2010 and is attending OCC pursuing a medical assistant degree.

Allorra says On Point was instrumental in her success. In addition to help with transportation, clothing, bus passes and supplies, a Ray Curtin Scholarship donated by Empower Federal Credit Union (named for a mentor who passed away) helped her buy food when she was forced to choose between eating and paying her rent.

“I would do anything for On Point,” she said. She recalled last August, when her sister Zajna was visiting On Point’s office with her and went into labor. On Point Founder Ginny Donohue drove them to the hospital.

Now, she says, “I’m nervous because I’m close to graduating. I just want to be sure I’m making the right next step.”

We are confident that she will!
Longtime On Point for College Mentor and returning Board Member Dr. Fred Gilbeaux (above left) and student Sequoia Kemp were featured on a NewsChannel 9 segment about the difference mentors make in the lives of students they drive to college. As you can see, Sequoia’s things just barely fit!

Specialized help for student success

A new, three-year Freshman Success Program Grant from the nonprofit USA Funds will allow On Point to serve more students and collaborate with Educational Opportunity Centers in Syracuse and Utica to provide five weeks of summer classes to students in need of at least one remedial course.

“If you come from a struggling family where there are worries about basic needs like food and shelter, it can be very easy to fall behind no matter how motivated you are,” said On Point for College Founder Ginny Donohue. “But once you catch up, your potential for success is huge.”

The combination of the Summer Institute at the Educational Opportunity Centers and intensive on-campus support through freshman year will help our students to soar!

This three-year, multi-city grant is for $450,000. On Point for College is one of only three grant recipients in the country selected to receive “Key Transitions in Postsecondary Education” funding from USA Funds. Nearly 250 organizations applied for funding.

The following day, Ginny traveled to Binghamton with prepared comments for the president.

“I wanted to make sure to tell President Obama how grateful we were for the College Access Challenge Grant, which allowed us to expand to New York City and Utica,” she said. “But I was not prepared for his gratitude for what On Point has accomplished. He thanked me and then said, ‘No, I mean this. I am very grateful for the lives that you have changed.’

President Barack Obama is pictured with On Point for College’s Sam Rowser.

Save the Date!
[we’re turning 15!]

Please make sure to save the date to help us Celebrate On Point for College’s 15th year helping young people! Join us on May 2 at the Oncenter! You won’t want to miss the 2014 Celebration Dinner! Watch for your invitation or call (315) 362-5003!

‘President’... from page 1

On Point for College alum, Caly Givens, left, shares her experience during an August site visit by USA Funds. USA Funds’ Patricia Roe looks on.

President Barack Obama is pictured with On Point for College’s Sam Rowser.

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Thank you so much to everyone who helped make our Celebration Dinner and Golf for Grads tournament such successes. Together these events raise nearly $150,000 annually for On Point!

Without our committees, volunteers, sponsors, and so many golfers and dinner attendees, this would not be possible. We are so grateful.

Thank you to our golf sponsors:
- Naming Sponsor: Syracuse Orthopedic Specialists
- Presenting Sponsor: NBT Bank
- Seniors Sponsors: Crouse Radiology Associates and NY Spine & Wellness
- Dinner Sponsor: Giovanni Foods
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Thank you to our dinner sponsors!

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- Mohawk Valley Community College
- MONEY Federal Credit Union
- Onondaga Community College
- Pinckney-Hugo Group
- Syracuse Sunrise Rotary Club
- Sutton Real Estate

Quashawn Blunt and students from Team A.N.G.E.L. perform an original rap about On Point for College at the 2013 Celebration Dinner.

Longtime On Point for College Director of Grants Carolyn Beyers receives the Make-A-Difference Award.
Kemoy says that although he appreciates the financial assistance On Point provided and that it made the road to a degree much easier, it was the human element of the program that he most appreciated.

“The greatest part was at the beginning of the semester, Sam would come down, meet with me and make sure everything was okay,” he said. “I think those personal relationships are what really makes the difference and motivates On Point students to succeed.”

While Kemoy teaches students to fly, Maranda Morris will be taking a trip of her own. Maranda, On Point’s first graduate to earn a degree in architecture, was hired Oct. 1 as a junior designer with Austin Patterson Disston Architects in Southport, CT. “I am ecstatic right now,” she said. “I can’t even function.”

Maranda said she fell in love with architecture in high school, and earned her degree from Syracuse University after attending Onondaga Community College and SUNY Delhi.

A first-generation college student, Maranda said her biggest obstacle to going away to college was transportation.

“‘Pilot’...from page 1

wanted to do it from a young age. It’s not even like going to work.”

For me, my main thing was a ride,” she said. “I just had no way to get there. It’s like that for so many students.”

Maranda and Kemoy are not the only students reaching new milestones this year! Congratulations to Danny Essadiq, who earned his law degree from the Syracuse University College of Law!

James Kiki’s graduation from SUNY Oswego was a joyous occasion, with South Sudanese cousins from across the world helping him celebrate. Pictured from left are (back row): John Donohue, Kennedy Nakwa, Simon Luchano, Esther Nakwa, James Kiki, Emilio Virgilio, Mario Nakwa, Nimiri Konas, Alba Sande (holding daughter Zara Nakwa), Ginny Donohue, and Lino Nakwa. In the front row are Margaret Naoya and Angelina Ben.

Ginny Donohue congratulates Danny Essadiq, the first On Point for College student to earn a law degree.

Grant focuses on expanded outreach

A new three-year grant will allow On Point for College to target new populations of students and to provide advice so that our students can graduate more quickly.

The “Pathways to College Graduation Project,” funded by a grant from the Kresge Foundation, based in Detroit, Michigan, will support a total of 4,500 new and returning college students in Syracuse, Utica and New York City. This three-year grant is for $450,000.

In Syracuse, On Point will expand outreach to new populations including the Latino community and adults at the Educational Opportunity Center. In Utica, a similar focus will be placed on outreach to Burmese/Karen refugees by a college access advisor fluent in both languages.

The grant also will allow increased advisement of students to make better course selections for more timely degree completion, and target On Point’s most at-risk students with specialized support.

“We are so grateful to the Kresge Foundation for providing us funds to reach out to new populations of students,” said Ginny Donohue.
This academic year, we’re sending more than 500 students from Syracuse and Utica to college — 95 percent are the first in their families to attend college.

We’ll support 2,254 students in college this semester. We couldn't do this without your donations.

It costs $1,200 from the day we meet them to help a young person enroll in college and provide them with supplies, campus visits, and transportation through the end of their freshman year.

All donations are tax deductible.

**Gifts of stock**

On Point for College accepts gifts of stocks, bonds or any other securities. If the stock has appreciated in value, the donor can avoid paying the capital gains tax by giving it as a gift.

For more information about donating stock, please call Associate Director of Development Fritz Diddle at (315) 484-3150.

**Saying thank you to some very special donors**

We would like to recognize a few very special donors who have incredibly generous contributions to On Point for College!

- **John and Marcia Watt.** For the past five years, John has chaired On Point for College’s Board of Directors and has been one of our most steadfast supporters. In 2013, John and Marcia started the On Point for College Endowment Fund at the Central New York Community Foundation with a donation of $25,000, and inspired friends and colleagues to make donations! John and Marcia, thank you so much for all that you have done to support On Point for College. For more information, please contact Thomas Griffith, Gift Planning Officer for the CNY Community Foundation, at (315) 422-9538 or tgriffith@cnycf.org.

- **Eric Alderman.** In July, Eric made a donation of $18,000 to On Point for College! The number 18 is a significant number in Judaism that represents good luck and life. So a gift, in the amount of 18 or in multiples of 18 signifies the pledge to doing good in the appreciation of life. “And the good of which I speak, is the good being done by On Point, which is what I was honoring.” Eric, thank you so much for your incredible generosity and friendship.

- **Tim and Renee Duffy.** We had an amazing time at Philanthropic Foodies, which featured local chefs donating their time, and Gentile's Restuarant donating space, to support On Point for College and Friends of Dorothy House. This fantastic event raised $15,000 for On Point! Renee and Tim, thank you so much.

**Thank you to our major donors, funders and sponsors**

- Eric Alderman
- Allyn Foundation
- Angell Foundation
- AT&T Foundation
- David and Ellen Bacon
- Barney II Foundation
- Becker Foundation
- Bank of America
- CNY Community Foundation
- Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties
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- Dr. Fred Gilbeaux, DDS
- John Ben Snow Foundation
- Kresge Foundation
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- Janet and Sam Lanzafame
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- Paul and Kathy Solomon
- Thorn Family Foundation
- United Way of Central New York
- USA Funds
- John and Marcia Watt
- Jack and Linda Webb
- Wegmans
Double the impact of your gift

The John Ben Snow Foundation, one of On Point for College’s most steadfast family foundation supporters, recently stepped up its efforts!

Thanks to a generous new matching grant, the John Ben Snow Foundation will provide On Point a $20,000 grant and will match all new and increased donations up to an additional $20,000! All new and increased donations received on or before Dec. 15, 2013 will be eligible for this dollar-for-dollar match!

Please, consider supporting our students with a new or increased gift that will provide the most possible impact!

We are so appreciative to the John Ben Snow Foundation, and we also like to recognize several other corporate and foundation partners that have supported On Point for College’s mission for many years:

• First Niagara Bank’s support of mentoring in Syracuse and Utica has been instrumental to our students’ success.
• The Community Foundation of Central New York has made On Point a consistent funding priority and made a huge impact.
• M&T Charitable Foundation is our earliest corporate partner, supporting our College Access and Success Program since 2000.
• AT&T Foundation recently stepped up its support of On Point for College through sponsorship of our Celebration Dinner and grants to support our programs in Syracuse and Utica.

Your support means so much. Thank you!

Wish list

We’re always looking out for donated items that could help us serve our students better!

Here is our latest “wish list”:

• New desktop computers
• Laptops
• Two copiers
• Gift cards to Staples
• Two new vans to transport students
• Flash drives
• Office chairs
• New dorm room supplies (comforters, pillows, sheet sets, backpacks, five-subject notebooks, toiletries, and electric alarm clocks).

To donate, call (315) 362-5003, e-mail edlin.onpoint@gmail.com or stop by our office at 1654 West Onondaga Street, Syracuse.