COMMUNITY RENEWAL SOCIETY (CRS) is a faith-based organization that works with people and communities to address racism and poverty. CRS transforms society toward greater justice and compassion.
The past three years have been a time of change at Community Renewal Society (CRS). We bid farewell to the Rev. Calvin S. Morris, Ph.D., as he retired after 15 years as executive director. And after a long and thorough search, we welcomed the Rev. Curtiss Paul DeYoung, Ed.D., to help us usher in a new chapter in our work for economic and racial justice.

In the time between executive directors, CRS was guided by two capable interim leaders: Pat O’Connell, who led an organizational restructuring, and the Rev. Alexander E. Sharp, who implemented a strategic merger of CRS and Protestants for the Common Good (PCG). The CRS and PCG boards believed that the organizations’ respective strengths – grassroots community organizing, investigative journalism and public – policy advocacy – once joined, would become a powerful transformative force for justice in Chicago and Illinois.

Together, our Organizing and Policy staffs have worked tirelessly to develop empowered, knowledgeable leaders in Chicago-area congregations. Leaders use direct action, testimony, visits to legislators and other tools to advance our agenda to remove barriers to employment for people with criminal records, end police brutality, and call for state and city budgets that invest in children, families, and schools. In 2012, we began an annual Martin Luther King Faith in Action Assembly, which last year drew nearly 1,000 congregational leaders to support our Platform for Renewal.

Our publications also remain strong. The Chicago Reporter produced an investigation that in July 2012 resulted in a $175-million U.S. Department of Justice settlement with mortgage lender Wells Fargo over discriminatory lending practices, and spurred a $335-million settlement in a discriminatory lending case against Countrywide over allegations that the former mortgage giant steered African-American and Latino borrowers into risky subprime loans more often than white borrowers, at the same time charging them more for their loans. The Chicago Reporter also welcomed Susan Smith Richardson, an award-winning journalist with 25 years of experience, as its new editor and publisher. Catalyst Chicago, whose mission is to analyze and support school improvement efforts in Chicago, grabbed top honors among Chicago specialty publications in a study of online news outlets. The study looked at the quality of content, audience reach and audience engagement.

As board president, I am grateful that the board patiently and diligently waited to find the right executive director. Curtiss promises to be a visionary leader, re-engaging the board and inspiring staff to carry out CRS’ core transformative mission to increase racial and economic justice. Curtiss began with a challenge to the board itself – to transform its membership to reflect our mission. In response to that challenge, as of the October 2014 board elections, 62% of directors are persons of color, well on the way to our minimum goal of two-thirds.

“Curtiss promises to be a visionary leader, re-engaging the board and inspiring staff to carry out CRS’ core transformative mission to increase racial and economic justice.”

We are looking forward to what we can accomplish now with a full staff, an engaged board and a visionary leader. Won’t you come along as we seek to “do a new thing”?

Barbara Bolsen
Board President
Letter from the Executive Director

I arrived in Chicago in June 2014 as the 10th executive director of the 133-year-old Community Renewal Society (CRS). I succeed the important tenure of Dr. Calvin Morris, who was my seminary professor at Howard University in the 1980s.

CRS is an historic civil rights organization working for systemic racial and economic justice through the unique programmatic combination of church-based community organizing, policy advocacy and investigative journalism. We are a faith-based organization representing over 70 member congregations with deep roots and relationships in the United Church of Christ and the broader Christian community, as well as a full embrace of interfaith and other community partners.

The previous four executive directors at CRS were from the civil rights era. I am deeply connected to this generation through mentoring by Civil Rights leaders and education at Howard University. Yet, in this new season, we must fully move into the 21st century as an inclusive, efficient and relevant organization. With this in mind, 10 new staff have joined CRS in 2014 and early 2015. They are mostly young persons of color, rooted in local Chicago communities and representing diversity of gender, race, culture and religion. In order to move forward into this new season, our staff and board has committed to cultural competency, addressing privilege, and representing the diversity of Chicago; our net presence is expanded with a new website and a larger social media presence; and our issue platform responds to the voices of our constituency who are most affected.

As we enter this new season, CRS member congregations have selected an issue platform that focuses on addressing violence; reform of the criminal justice system; elimination of bars on employment opportunities for people with records; equitable and adequate education funding; access to well-paying jobs and affordable housing; and greater police accountability. Our Organizing and Policy staff coordinate this work in partnership with others through leading or participating in coalitions for social change. CRS’ publications, The Chicago Reporter and Catalyst Chicago, remain at the cutting edge of independent investigative journalism, providing the data and narratives that compel the work of social justice in Chicago and Illinois. Our programmatic efforts are making a significant difference.

2015 marks a new season as we begin work on police accountability in Chicago. The real, lived experiences of our churches and leaders have moved this to the forefront of our attention. We also join with the national consensus emerging from the Ferguson, MO., and the #blacklivesmatter movements in addressing this concern. The issue of accountability in policing is not new to us. My predecessor and CRS were involved in demanding justice in the Chicago Police Department’s Burge police misconduct and torture case only a few years ago.

Fifty years ago the Civil Rights Movement was engaged in working for voting rights in Selma, AL. When the Selma campaign ended, many of the movement activists moved to Chicago to set the stage for the 1966 Chicago Freedom Movement. Some of those activists joined the staff of Community Renewal Society. We are already planning for a year of action and remembrance in 2016. While we take inspiration from all that those leaders accomplished, we recognize there is still much to be done. In this new season, we stand in solidarity with today’s leaders, who are shining a light on injustice and forging the path to a better tomorrow.

Curtiss DeYoung
Executive Director
Our Programs

Organizing
The Organizing program strengthens congregations by developing leaders who identify key issues affecting our communities. CRS organizers bring churches together in powerful campaigns to affect systemic change, and provide congregations with organizing training, mentoring and materials. A leadership council representing member congregations makes recommendations about the legislation and campaigns to be implemented over the course of the year.

Policy
The Policy program works with CRS congregational leaders, community coalitions, and county and state elected officials to develop and pass legislation primarily in areas of economic and criminal justice and tax reform. CRS Policy staff also equips people in local churches to examine their responsibilities as citizens through a theological lens via trainings, blogs, monthly e-news and social media.

The Chicago Reporter
*The Chicago Reporter* was founded in 1972 to serve as a barometer for Chicago’s progress toward racial equality coming out of the civil rights era. As one of America’s most segregated cities, Chicago continues to experience racial and economic inequality. *The Chicago Reporter* serves a critical role in the city and nation by focusing the power of investigative reporting on issues of inequality that rarely receive thorough and regular examination. Our core areas of coverage are criminal justice, affordable housing, labor and employment, government accountability and immigration.

Catalyst Chicago
For many civil rights advocates, education is the No. 1 issue and struggle of the day. On virtually every measure of academic achievement and opportunity, African-American students, especially males, are at the bottom, and Latinos are not far ahead. *Catalyst Chicago* tackles this inequity by serving as an independent journalistic watchdog and resource for school improvement, authoritatively speaking to the multiple audiences needed to adopt, implement and sustain sound education policy.
The Policy and Organizing programs collaborate to overcome the barriers of poverty and racism through congregational organizing, policy analysis and direct lobbying. In the past three years, CRS has gained the ability to create coordinated campaigns that are both grassroots and policy-driven. Our approach to faith-based community organizing and public policy advocacy is focused on systemic change and is based on relationship-building.

CRS’ Policy program was created through a merger with Protestants for the Common Good (PCG) in January of 2013. The merger was the fruit of many months of planning and discussion between the two boards of directors and years of work on common issues. When PCG joined CRS, the names of both PCG and the Civic Action Network were changed to the Policy and Organizing programs of CRS.

Since 2012, CRS has added more than 25 congregations to our network. CRS has strengthened the capacity of these congregations to become powerful forces for social justice and service in their communities. We help them lead campaigns for systemic change by providing training, congregational leaders with well-researched policy positions and legislative blueprints.

MLK Faith in Action Assembly

In 2011, CRS held the first annual Martin Luther King Faith in Action Assembly. While that initial assembly was attended by a few hundred leaders, in 2014 it grew to nearly 1000 congregational leaders! The annual assemblies have become a kick-off to yearly work and a place where congregations can hold elected officials accountable for taking action on the needs of our communities.

Organizing & Policy Highlights

In 2011, CRS held the first annual Martin Luther King Faith in Action Assembly. While that initial assembly was attended by a few hundred leaders, in 2014 it grew to nearly 1000 congregational leaders! The annual assemblies have become a kick-off to yearly work and a place where congregations can hold elected officials accountable for taking action on the needs of our communities.

Accomplishments

2014: Reclaim Campaign Increased Restorative Justice Funding

Cook County Commissioners created a new fund of a half million dollars for community-based restorative justice in 2014. As a result of joint policy and organizing efforts, the Reclaim Campaign - a collaborative effort led by Community Renewal Society, Kenwood Oakland Community Organization and Southside Together Organizing for Power - achieved this victory. The goal of the Reclaim Campaign is to reduce violence by moving limited financial resources away from the criminal justice system and into community-based restorative justice, mental health and substance abuse alternatives.
2013: Expanded Sealing Records in Illinois

FORCE leaders, along with CRS Policy and Organizing, played a central role in passing HB 3061, the Illinois Sealing Bill, through the Illinois General Assembly in 2013. This bill vastly expands record sealing for low-level, non-violent felony records, giving people a chance to turn their lives around, care for their families and become productive members of their communities.

It costs taxpayers nearly $500 million every year to sustain the overcrowded Cook County Jail. Meanwhile, Cook County allocates a mere $1.9 million into violence-prevention grants for community organizations. Increasing community-based restorative justice funding will help to rehabilitate individuals who need support and treatment and make our communities safer.

The Reclaim Campaign held a public meeting of more than 400 people with Cook County Commissioners and organized a powerful turnout from our base at all of the county budget hearings. Reclaim Campaign leaders testified and asked commissioners to prioritize resources our communities need to prevent violence and protect our families. In passing the budget amendment, numerous County Commissioners thanked CRS and the Reclaim Campaign for bringing this issue forward.

Each day, 3.9 million men and women in Illinois are being denied opportunities for decent employment, housing and education. Current law and practices deny hardworking, law-abiding individuals the chance to move forward from past mistakes. The sealing of old convictions promotes self-sufficiency, makes Illinois safer, and saves the state millions of dollars.

CRS worked closely with our coalition partners to build legislative strategy, testify at committee hearings, and lobby members of the General Assembly to pass the Illinois Sealing Bill with significant bipartisan support. With HB 3061 becoming law, individuals with non-violent, Class 3 felonies, after a wait-period of four years without any involvement with law enforcement, can now apply to have their criminal records sealed.
2012: High Hopes Campaign Victory for Chicago Public Schools

The High HOPES (Healing Over the Punishment of Expulsions and Suspensions) Coalition, convened by CRS, passed extensive changes in the Chicago Public School (CPS) Student Code of Conduct to move CPS away from punitive discipline and toward restorative justice practices. In 2010, CPS led the nation in the rate of suspending and expelling students, even for minor infractions, suspending more than 40,000 students (about one in ten). Students were pushed out of schools and onto the streets.

The High HOPES Campaign published a report that demonstrating restorative justice, when effectively implemented, drastically reduces misconduct, suspensions and violence in schools while improving school climate and student learning. The Chicago City Council also held a hearing on restorative justice in Chicago Public Schools and passed a resolution supporting the High HOPES Campaign. The High HOPES Campaign led several public actions, including a die-in and community march.

This culminated in a victory in 2012 when CPS committed to prioritize restorative justice strategies, eliminate 10-day suspensions and remove out-of-school suspensions for low-level infractions. As a result of High HOPES, suspensions and expulsions were reduced, student learning was promoted and youth violence decreased.

Floyd Stafford, FORCE leader

FORCE, an initiative of CRS, brings together people with records, their families and faith allies to create change for people with records.

Floyd Stafford, a FORCE leader, is one example of the many men and women who have turned their lives around and now work to change systems that keep people with records from reintegrating into their communities.

“As of today, I have a lot to be grateful for, as I have been reunited with my four children as a responsible parent. I also have continued my education and will receive my master’s degree in social work from the University of Chicago, School of Social Service Administration in 2015.

Being a man of faith I strongly believe in redemption and reconciliation. I am not my record. I am so much more.”
In July 2012, The Chicago Reporter produced an investigation which resulted in a $175 million U.S. Department of Justice settlement with mortgage lender Wells Fargo over discriminatory lending practices. The settlement resolves allegations that the lender and its brokers steered African-American and Latino borrowers into risky subprime loans more often than similarly situated white borrowers, while at the same time charging minority borrowers more for their loans during the nation's housing boom.

This investigation also spurred a $335 million settlement against Countrywide, a subsidiary of Bank of America, over similar allegations.

In the spring of 2014 our article “The House at Ground Zero,” written by Angela Caputo, prompted the Chicago City Council to pass an ordinance forcing lenders to register their vacant properties. The Chicago Reporter analysis found that many financial institutions weren't doing so, which resulted in the loss of millions from city coffers. We analyzed records of 11,500 single-family properties that have been reclaimed by lenders since 2008, and have likely been vacant since that time. At least 50 percent of these bank-owned homes were never registered, resulting in the loss of over $2.2 million in revenue to the city from these lenders.

After the Reporter's July/August story on public housing vacancies, U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Assistant Secretary Sandra Henriquez came to Chicago to review the Chicago Housing Authority’s (CHA) vacancy problem. For nearly a year, HUD and CHA had been denying open record requests by public interest attorneys seeking this data, but The Chicago Reporter was able to obtain it for our investigation. As a result, HUD put CHA officials on notice that they needed to start leasing more empty units.

In May 2014, staff from The Chicago Reporter embedded in a pocket of the Chicago Lawn neighborhood, referred to as ground zero in the local foreclosure crisis. Our investigation examined how residents had come together to convert an abandoned building into a home again, and also explored why Chicago, unlike other major cities, was not taking banks to court for failing to maintain vacant properties. The story generated significant discussion about strategies for helping communities overcome the long-term impact of the foreclosure crisis, and provided a tool to community leaders holding banks and others responsible for vacant properties.
Discriminatory Lending Practices Lead to Multi Million Dollar Settlement

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Chicago Missing Revenue From Unregistered Bank-Owned Homes

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Uncovering and Analyzing Chicago Housing Authority Data

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Overcoming Long-Term Impact of the Foreclosure Crisis

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Police Misconduct

The Reporter’s May/June 2012 cover story on police misconduct was used to inform legislation proposed to establish an elected civilian council which would provide oversight to Chicago’s police crime review process.

Effects of the War on Drugs

Our Crime and Punishment issue reported on the effects of enhanced drug laws. We found that in the ongoing “war on drugs,” lawmakers passed harsher laws with little examination of the extra costs. The investigation got the attention of Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. She ordered copies for her staff and advisers and has made reforming drug laws a top priority.

Tracking the Cook County Courts

In November 2013, an analysis by The Chicago Reporter found that Cook County had among the highest dismissal rates in the nation for misdemeanor cases - eight out of ten were dismissed between 2006 and 2012, according to an analysis of 1.4 million case records maintained by the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County and the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts.

During that time, taxpayers spent an estimated $796 million on arrests, prosecutions and detentions in these dead-end cases. Our investigation sparked a robust conversation about alternatives to arresting people on non-violent charges such as drug use and possession. Sheriff Tom Dart commended the Reporter’s work.
Catalyst Chicago Highlights

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Covering the Historic Chicago Teachers’ Strike

Catalyst Chicago was the go-to source during the Chicago strike. Web site page views soared to 174,000 that month, and more than a dozen national and local journalists contacted Catalyst Chicago for background, quotations and participation in radio and TV public affairs programs. The media outlets included the New York Times, NPR, Bloomberg News, NBC Nightly News and Minnesota Public Radio. And our active Twitter feed won rave reviews from observers and participants alike.

Public Forums

The 2012 Chicago School Policy Forum series, which Catalyst Chicago co-sponsors with Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, set another attendance record, attracting some 300 people to each of two forums on the “soft skills” needed for learning.

Beyond Print

We co-sponsored a TEDx conference (Teacher Voice Beyond the Classroom) that featured 16 current and former educators, including award-winning news broadcaster Carol Marin. Some 100 teachers attended the tapings, and the YouTube videos drew a total of 14,326 views.
Awards and Recognition

The Chicago Reporter

The Chicago Reporter received a National Association of Black Journalists’ Salute to Excellence award in 2013 for Abusing the Badge, an investigation by Angela Caputo, Rui Kaneya and Yisrael Shapiro. The story took the top prize in the investigative reporting category for magazines under 1 million circulation.

In 2012, Angela Caputo and Kimbriell Kelly received a Sigma Delta Chi Award for journalism, a long-standing and prestigious national award given by the Society of Professional Journalists. The Reporter investigation looked at the way public housing residents are being kicked out by the Chicago Housing Authority’s One Strike policy.

In 2011, The Chicago Reporter won eight of the Chicago Headline Club’s Peter Lisagor Awards that honor exemplary reporting, design, graphics and photography.

Lisa Madigan on the Countrywide and Wells Fargo settlements:

“They are the largest fair lending settlements in our nation’s history, and I stand before you today to give credit for initiating that to The Chicago Reporter.”

Shannon Bennett, lead organizer, Kenwood Oakland Community Organization

“When we meet with city officials, we cite information from Catalyst Chicago. When I make presentations at universities and colleges or in front of parent groups, I cite Catalyst Chicago. ... We tell our parent and youth leaders all the time, “Go to Catalyst Chicago.” And they do. Now, they are sending us Catalyst stories before we get a chance to send them.”

Catalyst Chicago

In 2014, Melissa Sanchez was awarded second place by the Education Writers Association for “beat reporting.” It was awarded for her work covering teachers and early childhood education for Catalyst.

Deputy Editor Sarah Karp won second place in 2013 for investigative reporting from the National Education Writers Association for a series of articles that delved into the details of CPS’ questionable $20 million, no-bid contract with the for-profit SUPES Academy.

In 2013, Sarah Karp also won a National Casey award for her reporting on the effects of trauma on student learning and the lack of resources to address the problem. Catalyst Chicago came in third following New York Magazine and Rolling Stone.

For both 2012 and 2013, Editor Lorraine Forte won a Peter Lisagor award for her “From the Editor” columns in Catalyst In Depth.
### Statement of financial position

#### Assets

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<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporarily Restricted</th>
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<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>$ 1,327,806</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 4,469,894</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 2,638,349</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 47,755,453</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 45,301,637</strong></td>
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#### Liabilities and net assets

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<th></th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporarily Restricted</th>
<th>Permanently Restricted</th>
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<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 6,840,649</strong></td>
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<td><strong>$ 4,469,894</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 52,638,349</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 47,755,453</strong></td>
<td><strong>$ 45,301,637</strong></td>
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COMMUNITY RENEWAL SOCIETY 14
Statement of activities

End of Fiscal year
JUNE 30

Operating Revenues, Gains and Other Support

<table>
<thead>
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<td>14,672</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14,672</td>
<td>30,988</td>
<td>51,434</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributions from Trust</td>
<td>1,576,771</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,576,771</td>
<td>1,522,058</td>
<td>1,456,327</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment return designated for operations</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42,468</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42,468</td>
<td>42,478</td>
<td>21,590</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other income</td>
<td>13,178</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13,178</td>
<td>5,812</td>
<td>6,217</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction of program restrictions</td>
<td>615,489</td>
<td>(615,489)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL OPERATING REVENUES, GAINS AND OTHER SUPPORT</td>
<td>$2,866,167</td>
<td>$127,284</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$2,993,451</td>
<td>$2,977,175</td>
<td>$2,503,498</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Operating Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2014 Total</th>
<th>2013 Total</th>
<th>2012 Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Services</td>
<td>$2,270,869</td>
<td>$2,278,168</td>
<td>$2,047,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General management and program development</td>
<td>$384,886</td>
<td>$322,581</td>
<td>$691,092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business management</td>
<td>$258,530</td>
<td>$249,388</td>
<td>$390,758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>$290,193</td>
<td>$266,149</td>
<td>$348,726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES</td>
<td>$3,204,478</td>
<td>$3,116,286</td>
<td>$3,478,566</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS - OPERATING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-operating gains/losses</td>
<td>$ (338,311)</td>
<td>$ (211,027)</td>
<td>$ (139,111)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating expenses</td>
<td>$ 875,208</td>
<td>$ 4,884,546</td>
<td>$ 2,634,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL CHANGE IN NET ASSETS - OPERATING</td>
<td>$ 536,897</td>
<td>$ 4,673,519</td>
<td>$ 2,495,316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF YEAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net assets - beginning of year</td>
<td>$ 5,956,852</td>
<td>$ 47,596,750</td>
<td>$ 45,101,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANGE IN NET ASSETS</td>
<td>$ 5,36,897</td>
<td>$ 4,673,519</td>
<td>$ 2,495,316</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net assets - end of year</td>
<td>$ 6,493,749</td>
<td>$ 47,596,750</td>
<td>$ 45,101,434</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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