

Over the past two years we've been ramping up resident services programs like crazy for kids and adults, and we're having to increase our capacity and raise new funds to support them, because of the way our projects are funded.

We have 10 properties with 458 units, 9 in Washington County, and one in Columbia County. While five are funded through partnerships, five properties are funded by government Rural Development programs, which don't let you take any money out for resident services programs at all. And with tax credit funded properties, the cash flow is so poor, and resident services funding is way down in the waterfall provisions of the partnership agreements. This is something Oregon ON has been talking about with funders and legislators, putting resident services 'above the line' [building resident services into funding structures], and badly needed by our industry.

In 2007 we had one adult program funded by the United Way, the Promotores program, and one project called Listos for youth funded through Work Systems through a Department of Labor grant.

Promotores are peer leaders, community connectors. They are paid a small stipend because we demand a lot of them; they make 40 home visits annually within their apartment communities, identify needs and provide info and referrals on resources families need. They meet once a week, and have two coordinators that coach and mentor them; they are trained like many outreach social workers are on community resources. For example, if a family is having legal troubles, the Promotores know how to refer them to Legal Aid, or they can get them connected with Essential Health Clinic at the Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center. They are our legs and arms and eyes and ears into the community. We have built, through them, trust and credibility with residents, and guaranteed high participation in the on-site resident services we offer.

But both the Promotores and Listos programs were funded through three-year grants, and they ended in 2008. We conducted a door-to-door resident survey in 2007 with help from our Promotores (we had about 8 of them at the time), and they got 322 in-depth surveys from families that identified program priorities, which turned out mostly to be around educational needs. In response, we gradually established a whole suite of programs for adults: ESL classes, GED classes, computer classes both basic and intermediate, financial literacy training that goes for 3 years basic to intermediate, then in the third year moves to a homeownership track or a small business track linked to an Individual Development Account program. We began a community gardens program, a free tax prep program, and this year added a job club and an emergency cash assistance program. We have special events and presentations, and an organic farming microenterprise program with Adelante Mujeres.

Most of the families identified as their top priority their kids' success in school. The parents are 98% Latino, most are immigrants, most have a 7th grade education, and most are monolingual in Spanish, and therefore it's difficult for them to help their kids succeed in school. So we run three afterschool homework clubs, science clubs, a summer reading program and summer lunch, Explorador Camp with the Audubon Society, Financial Fitness for Life program, and special events and projects like Zoo to You and Kids on the Block. We have a basketball club, and in spring we'll start a soccer club.

Starting next week is a program for pre-teen girls, called Adelante Chicas, through a partnership with Adelante Mujeres.

We are also introducing a new mental health services program, because families who have increasing desperation from being laid off and other economic problems, are suffering from depression, anxiety, and family problems. We'll be hiring a bicultural, bilingual Masters in Counseling professional trained in cognitive behavioral therapy. In Washington County, there are very scarce resources for people without insurance, and even with insurance, finding a bilingual and bicultural counselor is challenging.

All those programs cost a lot of money! We are fortunate this year to have a big portion of our adult programs funded by a new three-year United Way grant, but all the other programs, we have to find funding for.

Over the past year and half we have written 83 grant applications; about 1/3 get funded, 1/3 get declined, and a 1/3 are pending. They range in size from \$350 for our summer lunch program, to yesterday, we got word we are being awarded a Meyer Memorial Trust grant for \$100,000 in unrestricted operating funds – and we had asked for \$50,000! It's unbelievable! It's early Christmas in Hillsboro! We are so relieved.

I think we have been successful in fundraising because we haven't gone to grantors for 27 years. We were self-supporting through developer fees, and we didn't have as many programs. The MMT grant is a bridge grant to keep our doors open until we can get back into developing housing and collect those fees again.

I think we've also been successful because we have cobbled grants together from many places: foundations, corporations and individuals. For example, we got a Collins Foundation grant to support our youth programs, The Standard supported our summer reading program, and we went to the Hardy Plant Society for our garden program.

We accomplish these programs with a resident services staff of 3.5 FTE, volunteers and partners. We've been very fortunate to have received grant funds, but they require enormous time resources to obtain and they are time-limited. Having grant-funded staff is not the best long-term solution for effective management practices, and sustainable above-the-line funding would mitigate this. A sustainable solution would be to build them into property operating budgets.

In these challenging economic times, the need for resident services programs are more critical than ever. Our programs are helping to keep the families in their housing with adequate food and clothing

as well as educational programs to help them move to self-sufficiency. Where resident services programs are built into operating expenses we can build capacity and make them sustainable over time. This is how we will achieve our mission to build housing, hope and futures for the well-being of working families.

Awards

REACH wins MetLife Award for Excellence in Affordable Housing [_top](#)

REACH is thrilled to announce they have been awarded the *2009 MetLife Foundation Awards for Excellence in Affordable Housing*. This award recognized Station Place Tower as an outstanding building, providing innovative independent senior living and environmentally responsive housing. This exciting award includes a \$50,000 grant to support their mission and continue to grow their affordable housing efforts in Portland.

Member News

Central City Concern Unveils New Exhibit Honoring African-Americans – Oct 22 [_top](#)

On Thursday, October 22, 2009, [Central City Concern](#) will host an unveiling celebration for a newly installed permanent exterior exhibit on two sides of the [Golden West Building](#), former center of Portland's African-American social and business life in the first decades of the twentieth century, located at the corner of NW Everett and Broadway. The celebration is free and open to the public, from 5:00 – 6:30 p.m., at Carleton Hart Architects, 322 NW 8th Avenue. The event will feature timeless music from "Sweet Baby James" and remarks at 5:30 p.m. by City of Portland Commissioner Randy Leonard and members of the project advisory committee.

The exhibit tells a social and ethnic story of the vibrant African-American community in Portland in the early 1900s and the successes and challenges of its residents. "In that early generation of the Black community here, you could find the very powerful strains of what you might call pursuit of the American dream," said Dr. Darrell Millner, Professor in the Black Studies Department at Portland State University and a consultant on the exhibit.

Central City Concern (CCC) owns the Golden West Building which is one of the earliest architectural landmarks of African-American history in Portland. "It's our great pleasure to celebrate this building's historic value," said Executive Director Ed Blackburn.

The exhibit consists of six visual panels on the exterior of the building and a visitor activated sound component. Curator Dr. Jacqueline Peterson-Loomis of Washington State University-Vancouver and the Old Town History Project worked with an advisory committee composed of community members and historians to create the display.

"So much of the neighborhood's rich history is unknown to Portland residents," said Dr. Peterson-Loomis. "This street level installation is a first step – and a long-term goal of the Old Town History