

CELEBRATING  
TEN YEARS  
OF SERVICE TO  
THE COMMUNITY

ANNUAL REPORT 2006 - 2007



## Dear Friends,

In April 2007, SE Works celebrated 10 years of service to the southeast Portland community. Much has changed since we opened our doors.

- ◆ In the resource room and lab we've gone from four donated computers to 24 state of the art computers.
- ◆ Early on we doubled our current space, and the storefront got a facelift; five years ago we leased and rehabbed the space next door for the "youth wing"; and, recently we added a sister site at 64th and Foster.
- ◆ Staff size increased from 6 to 30, and our budget doubled (three times).

What remains unchanged is our unwavering commitment to improving the economic health and well being of residents and employers. The unifying thread in our work continues to be helping youth and adults who traditionally haven't had access to education and resources to find meaningful, well-paid employment.

This year's annual report is filled with customer successes and program highlights. We've explored many interesting projects through the years. A few didn't fit; others became the foundation for our most innovative and beneficial programs. Some of last year's results include:

- ◆ 60 youth studied to earn their GEDs at our alternative high school; 36 graduated before the end of the year and 30 continued on to community college
- ◆ A total of 54 recent immigrants increased language skills, received certified degrees and licenses, and found work in their chosen professions such as law, health care, and accounting
- ◆ 125 ex-offenders found employment; 75 moved into housing; and 49 enrolled in training and education programs

We also won two very important awards. The first, presented by the *White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives*, recognized SE Works as a *Champion of Compassion*. The *Multnomah County Commission on Children and Families' Hilltop Award* is a celebration of our work with "low income individuals and families."

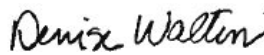
It's awe-inspiring to consider how many lives have been touched by SE Works. It's impossible to guess the number of hands that contributed to these ten years of achievements. If we had an award to give, it would be the Our Deepest Gratitude award. With it, we would recognize our honored customers, brilliant and committed board, staff and volunteers, excellent employer and service partners, and the generous funders that make our work possible.

This rich and powerful history gives us great inspiration and hope as we look towards the future. Thanks for your continued support and partnership.

Best wishes,



Heidi Soderberg  
Executive Director



Denise Walton  
Board Chair



# Economic Opportunities Initiatives



We first met Nathan Powell in October 2004. Nathan had been laid-off from his job many months before, had no luck finding work, and was discouraged and depressed. He and his wife Melonie had five children, lived in public housing, and were struggling financially. In a few months, Nathan had an updated resume, several job leads, and renewed confidence in his value to a prospective employer. He quickly became employed by a local welding supply company.

Over the next several months staff continued to meet with Nathan providing the critical financial assistance and support required to help stabilize the family. Nathan brought Melonie to one of these meetings. Melonie was in the early stages of pursuing a career in healthcare but was on the verge of giving up. The time and financial burden was too much for the family. We enrolled Melonie in May of 2006 and helped with housing, childcare, and books. We also continued to encourage and support both of them.

This past summer, Melonie finished school, passed her licensing exams and began working as a Registered Nurse. Nathan is still working for the same employer, has had several pay raises, and was recently promoted to shift supervisor.

Melonie shared, "At some point I realized that life was not over for me and I needed to set some goals for myself so that I could show myself and my children the importance of not giving up, no matter what obstacles we may face. By the grace of God, I found out about SE Works. This program has not only helped me financially, but they believed in me and that's what I needed at the time. Today I am a winner."

**The Powell's** story is a grand celebration of the three year anniversary of the Bureau of Housing and Community Development's Economic Opportunities Initiative. It is also a testament to the City's commitment to "reaching residents who had been left behind" by providing them with the resources and support they need to make genuine and sustainable improvements in their own lives.

Thank you BHCD and City of Portland!

**The Economic Opportunities Initiative**, funded by the City of Portland Bureau of Housing and Community Development (BHCD), is designed to increase the income and assets of low-income residents by 25% within three years. SE Works' EOI programs provide long-term career planning, training, case management, and support services.

- The Workforce-Housing Alliance (WHA) has provided comprehensive workforce services to 44 residents of REACH and Portland Impact.
- The Manufacturing Training Program engaged 45 people in industry training programs and assisted them to find employment.
- The Community Partners Re-Entry program, a collaboration with Volunteers of America, Irvington Covenant Community Development Corporation, Metropolitan Family Services, Cascadia Behavioral Health, and Multnomah County Department of Community Justice (DCJ), connects young males who were formerly incarcerated with a continuum of re-entry support. SE Works has provided workforce services to 47 people. *Funded through BCHD. WHA also supported by the United Way Tools For Living Program.*

# Portland Partners Re-Entry Initiative



“My name is **Thomas** and when I first came to SE Works I had just graduated from the Summit Boot Camp. I was living in Bridges to Change housing and a resident told me PPRI could help me with employment. I lacked the money and resources to provide for myself, and was tempted to resort to old behavior. But I decided to give PPRI a chance.

I was assisted with a clothing voucher, bus pass, rent, and was referred to a local agency to obtain food. I attended pre-employment workshops and eventually secured employment with a pipe fitting company digging ditches. This was a far cry from the work I had done before and paid considerably less than the illegal money I was used to making. I had to look to my recovery and draw on my humility to do what I had to do to be successful. Eventually the strenuous work aggravated a prior injury, but I refused to give up.

The employment specialist referred me to a clinic. After being diagnosed with a hernia and no way to pay for surgery, I was referred to the PACE clinic at Providence. I applied for a scholarship and received surgery and follow up care free of charge.

Eight months ago I had no knowledge of PPRI, and didn't believe that there were people willing to help me walk through this difficult time. The respect I was given by the agency was unprecedented in my life. It's what I needed to help me to thrive.

I have spent 13 years of my life incarcerated, relied on drugs, lived life on the edge. I have beaten the odds and proved to myself and others that people like me can change their lives.

I now can help the next person walking through the same dark tunnel that I have. I tell them about this crazy, supportive, got your back, down for you 100% percent group of people known as The PPRI team.

I share my story to testify to the serious need for programs like PPRI. The community support and generosity is not in vain, as it sends out a wave of hope to us clients and our families that we are not forgotten or dismissed by our communities.”

After six months of digging ditches, Thomas found a full-time position with benefits at Pacific Fruit. He's continuing to work towards his long-term goal of earning a Commercial Driver's License.

**The Portland Partners Re-Entry Initiative (PPRI)** is a collaboration among Volunteers of America, Better People, Central City Concern, and YWCA. Working in partnership with county, state, and federal community justice agencies, the program enrolls 200 new participants each year and provides them with the supports they need to find employment and build new lives after incarceration. *Funded through the U.S. Department of Labor, the Bureau of Housing and Community Development, the State of Oregon Department of Corrections, and Multnomah County. Also supported by the Oregon State Service Corps and AmeriCorps VISTA.*

# WIA Adult Program

▶ **Rakia** found out about SE Works in spring 2007, thanks to a partnership between SE Works and Cascade Medical School. The goal of this collaboration is to assist individuals with increasing skills in the medical field, a high-demand industry that offers living wages and opportunities for advancement.

Rakia was working as a Certified Nurses Assistant (CNA) but was interested in continuing her education so she could earn more money and increase her employment opportunities. Though her ultimate goal is to become a Nurse Practitioner, she wanted to become a Certified Medication Aide (CMA) first.

Rakia finished her medication aide training only three months after the initial meeting with a SE Works employment specialist. As she was completing the class she began applying to other companies. "I was working as a CNA with a staffing service. When they heard I was becoming a medication aide, they immediately increased my pay and level of responsibility."

Rakia currently works for a nursing rehabilitation center full-time. Her pay went from \$12.00 an hour to \$14.50 per hour with full benefits. In addition, she still works for the staffing service that pays her \$25 an hour for on-call jobs.

Rakia is currently enrolled in Mt. Hood Community College's nursing program and hopes to graduate in 2012. In the interim, this job is providing her with the stability and professional experience she needs to move forward. "I am able to work fewer hours as a medication aide. I get proper rest, I'm less stressed, and physically not as tired. This helps my ability to study for my future as well."

Last year 2,407 individuals came to SE Works for employment services through the **Workforce Investment Act (WIA)**. They searched for jobs in our internet-connected computer center and attended job readiness workshops. In addition, 241 individuals enrolled in our intensive program, which includes career coaching, training, basic skills classes, and financial support for essentials such as housing, childcare or transportation. These resources are targeted for individuals who want to pursue education or vocational training so they can increase career opportunities.

The 109 individuals who completed training and found employment before the end of the program year (June 30, 2007) earned an average of \$11.15 per hour. Out of the 241 customers, 110 were receiving public assistance, 50 had limited English skills, and 24 experienced disabilities. *Funded through Worksystems Inc., Multnomah County, and the Housing Authority of Portland.*



# Cuban and Russian Immigrant Program



▶ **Raquel**, a former lawyer, came to SE Works in August 2004. Her family had recently arrived from Cuba and was relocated to Portland under the federal immigration services. She began taking English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at SE Works and received job search assistance. Within a few months she found her first job at Goodwill. The work was very physical and difficult, but she knew she had to keep working and studying in order to find a different job.

After both Raquel and her husband gained stable employment, they wanted to move out of their apartment to a larger one. They had three children who were sharing a bedroom and one had on-going medical needs. Her employment specialist suggested they try the Habitat for Humanity program. After many phone calls, budgeting, planning, and a lot of sweat equity, their family completed a house through Habitat for Humanity. They took only nine months from the first conversation to the day it was finished, and they both maintained full-time employment in the process. They were extremely busy!

By February 2006, Raquel still wanted to progress professionally. She began researching legal careers and created a strategy to reach her long-term career goals. Raquel continued one-on-one ESL tutoring at SE Works to refine her English skills, especially the technical language she needed to enter the law field once again. SE Works also purchased tools such as bilingual legal dictionaries to assist her in the process.

Raquel and her employment specialist discussed many things about American culture, workplace norms, and how to be successful in the United States. She learned about credit, buying cars, finding free computers, the school system, health programs, and other community resources that helped her and her family to be successful here. We also assisted her to access low-cost vision care after she sustained an injury.

That summer, Raquel applied for a job as a legal secretary at a local law firm, was immediately called for an interview and offered a job. Now she's earning 79% more than she was at her previous job. She's been employed with this company for over a year, and is taking on new challenges and responsibilities every day.

## The Cuban and Russian Immigrant Program

is designed primarily for immigrants and refugees with professional and technical backgrounds. The program includes investigating career tracks and developing career advancement plans, translation and certification of foreign diplomas, English language classes, tuition for occupational skills training, support services, and coaching about American culture and workplace skills. A total of 54 individuals participated in the program this year. Funded through the City of Portland Bureau of Housing and Community Development and Worksystems, Inc.



# Community Learning Center

This year 184 students improved basic skills, prepared for GED tests, and learned English through the Community Learning Center (CLC). Adults participated in on-site classes in English, math and reading. Youth participated in our GED preparation program, which in 2006 was designated an alternative education option.

Student, volunteer, and staff efforts culminated in the CLC graduation on June 7th. A total of 55 GED graduates and 12 English language learners were celebrated for their accomplishments, as tales of perseverance, resiliency, and hope echoed throughout the auditorium.



Students in the CLC also receive individual tutoring, thanks to a team of dedicated volunteers. SE Works held its first annual volunteer recognition ceremony on May 7 to honor the 128 volunteers who spent 1,717 hours tutoring students. In addition, we presented the Distinguished Service Award to three AmeriCorps members for their exemplary dedication and outstanding contributions to SE Works. Together they provided 4,000 hours tutoring, coordinating volunteers, and developing programs.



With a background in teaching and a desire to help students, Scott came to SE Works seeking a meaningful volunteer experience. Every week now for almost a year, Scott has helped students unleash their inner-writers, find meaning in reading, and improve English language skills. One student, Ekaterina, said, "In just one hour with Scott, I learn so much about English and how to use it correctly!"

*Funded through Worksystems, Inc., City of Portland Bureau of Housing and Community Development, Spirit Mountain Community Fund, The Collins Foundation, Staples Foundation for Learning, and the Oregon State Service Corps.*



This year, **CLC** staff began using PowerPath, a tool that screens for learning difficulties and identifies resources and techniques students can use to improve learning. Over 50 students were screened for attention, hearing, and visual difficulties. This frequently revealed years of "hidden" or undiagnosed learning challenges. Some students were referred to hearing and eye specialists, and others began managing learning barriers with newfound strategies.

For instance, the screening indicated that Larisa, a youth in the GED class, had visual stress, a condition where eyes are very sensitive to black print on white pages and/or bright lights, making it very difficult to focus and read. Larisa was given a colored overlay, which helps reduce glare and make reading more enjoyable. She stated....

"I really appreciate what PowerPath has done to help me in class and prepare for my GED. My eyes don't like to stare at white pages for hours, and since the staff gave me a gray overlay, reading and studying has become easier. I am so thankful for my overlay. I read more, and now I really like to do it."

## Leighana

came to SE Works in the spring of 2006. Her mother and stepfather had recently moved to a different state and left her behind. She says that life was rough because she was forced to move in with a relative who was severely addicted to methamphetamines and money was tight. She wanted to make changes in her life and improve her future. She dropped out of high school in the middle of her sophomore year and immediately enrolled herself in SE Works' GED program. She shared...

"My first day, a SE Works' staff member, Kenny, noticed I was high on pot and kicked me out. He told me to come back sober. I thought for sure I was out of the program, but Kenny didn't give up on me. From that day on, he pushed and pushed until I finally got my stuff together. Because I was only 15, I had to be in the class for about six months. However, in those six months, my living situation worsened...so I began living on my own, bouncing around from friend to friend while continuing at SE Works.

In November of 2007, I passed the last GED test. That day was one of the best days of my life. It felt good to know that I had achieved my goal. And that's just the beginning. From there, I went to the community college and began working. After months and months of hard work, my life finally began to come together. My friend Brandee (who is also in the program) and I were accepted in SE Works' housing program and got our very own apartment.

Since then, I have continued working, and I just started my fourth term at Portland Community College. Even though I put a lot of effort into changing my life, none of the changes would have been possible without SE Works. I plan to take the opportunity they have given to me and use it to better my future. If everything goes the way I've planned, I will be out of college in the next couple of years, pursuing a career as an editor."

## Youth Programs



This year, 60 youth participated in GED preparation through our alternative high school and worked individually with advocates who helped them address barriers standing in the way of their success. The students explored career opportunities, participated in internships and job shadows, and attended trainings to learn the skills they need to find and keep jobs. A few youth also received rental assistance and took classes to learn life skills such as budgeting or cooking. After earning GEDs, our staff supported graduates as they transitioned to post-secondary education or vocational training. Students are expected to continue their educations after completion of the GED; our classes are designed to prepare them to take this next step.

We also assisted 67 youth who were still in traditional high schools to develop job skills, find part-time jobs, and make plans for future careers.

*Funded through the Worksystems, Inc., the City of Portland Bureau of Housing and Community Development, Multnomah County, and Youth Employment Institute.*



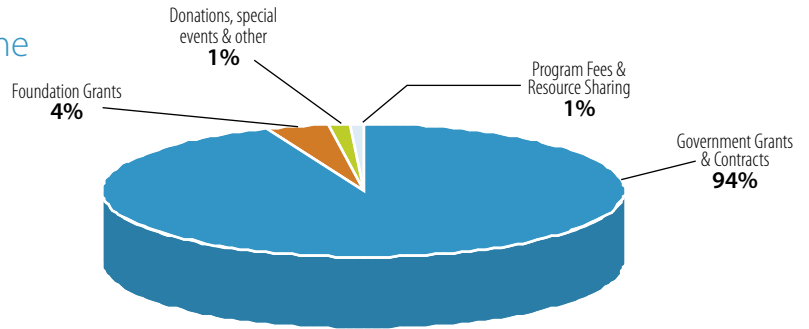
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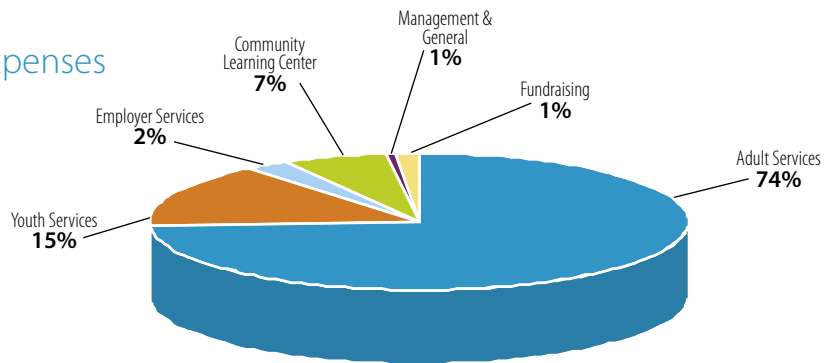
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