

Building for Successful Futures

Success stories don't come easily at the Washington County Community Action Organization (WCCAO). They result from hard work, dedication, and persistence by the County's largest private social service agency and its clients.

Success didn't come easily for the Morales family. After their arrival from Guatemala, the large, extended family had one piece of bad luck after another, including disabling injuries and accidents, illness, a new language and culture, and finally, homelessness. It was at that point they came to WCCAO.

WCCAO's staff addressed the family's problems systematically, starting with finding them safe housing at their transitional shelter. Then they began intensive work with the family to provide access to services, language training, pre-school for the children, training for jobs for the adults, and life-skills training.

Now, after almost two years, the family is living together, in permanent, affordable housing. Its adults have jobs that use their training and enable them to live modestly, but securely. The children are in school, improving their English and preparing for a normal life. The family is on its feet, working toward self-sufficiency, contributing to society rather than remaining dependent on charity. They offer a common but inspiring example of WCCAO's philosophy of "a hand up, not a hand-out."

But for WCCAO itself, success stories such as these do not come as easily as they might. The agency is spread out in several different locations, making it hard to apply their holistic approach to problem solving. They rent space, using funds that should be going into programs to pay for space that doesn't meet their needs fully. Clients must often visit more than one site to have their needs met, wasting time and resources.

Now, there is an opportunity to help more success stories occur. Thanks to a community development block grant from Washington County, and some excellent planning by WCCAO's staff, the agency has purchased land in downtown Hillsboro. They have the chance to build a new multi-service center at the site, conveniently located on bus lines, near the projected MAX terminal, and with enough room to offer space for a playground and other recreational facilities.

In the first year of its existence, the new multi-service center will save WCCAO almost \$100,000 in lease payments--funds that can be put directly into client services. The savings will increase each year, as the agency is able to enjoy the benefits of owning its facility rather than being at the mercy of escalating rental costs.

The winners in all this will be WCCAO's clients, some of the more than 38,000 Washington County residents who live below the poverty line. WCCAO will be able to provide them more efficiently with its well-regarded Head Start program, utility subsidies, family and individual counseling services, child care, life and job training, and other means of offering "a hand up."

The other winners in WCCAO's plans will be the people of Washington County, who will gain the benefits of a private non-profit working at maximum efficiency to solve the County's problems. While WCCAO knows that poverty will never disappear, they are committed to solving its worst cases one by one, helping make families productive and whole.

WCCAO is calling on the citizens of Washington County, both as individuals and through their businesses, to support its efforts to create its new multi-service center. Your tax-deductible contributions will be rewarded with better, more efficient service, and the creation of a facility that will help the County become a better place to live for all its residents.

**WASHINGTON COUNTY
COMMUNITY ACTION ORGANIZATION**

Building For Successful Futures

SUMMARY

Washington County Community Action Organization is Washington County's primary safety net - providing services for the county's economically disadvantaged residents in need who otherwise would have nowhere to turn. WCCAO provides options for building a new life, beginning with basic needs and leading the client through a process, which ultimately offers the individual or the family a means for achieving greater self reliance. WCCAO recognizes that such changes are only possible through a comprehensive approach. At WCCAO, fulfilling the urgent needs of the tangible outside world, such as homelessness or hunger, is only the beginning. WCCAO's skilled and professional staff bring a sense of integrity to the client's inner world - working with families to preserve their wholeness and to build a sense of self respect for each family member. Providing services to families and individuals regardless of their beliefs or background, WCCAO's support is not "a hand out" but, rather, "a hand up." WCCAO builds partnerships with all sectors of the community and invests resources in the strengthening of families and the stabilization of the community.

WCCAO's Board of Directors is comprised of not only community leaders and the public at large but the client as well. It is this board composition that fosters cooperation between individuals, local officials and institutions and is a key to WCCAO's success.

Today, WCCAO's main facility is located in a 6000 square foot leased space which is over crowded and not cost effective. Three other WCCAO sites - two Head Start Centers and the Head Start central kitchen - are also currently located in spaces that are expensive and inadequate. The services offered today at these WCCAO sites are encumbered by the limited space, and so clearly it will not be feasible to meet projected future needs at the current locations. With this in mind, the Board of Directors has authorized a Capital Fund Campaign in support of a 21,000 square foot building which will consolidate these four sites into one. It will be equipped modestly, but adequately to render direct client services. A fifth site, located in Aloha, has already been consolidated with the Hillsboro offices in preparation for the new facility.

During 1992, WCCAO secured property to build a facility that will meet the projected needs of the community, will be handicapped accessible, and is convenient for public transportation. The projected cost of the new facility is \$2,400,000. This larger new facility will not only be maintained by present budget levels, but will effect considerable savings. The consolidations and leased cost savings of all five sites, combined with a more energy efficient facility, will together save \$100,000 per year - money that can be spent providing direct client services.

SERVING WASHINGTON COUNTY FOR 28 YEARS

Since 1965, Washington Community Action Organization (WCCAO) has been fulfilling its mission, providing for basic needs for the economically disadvantaged while working to remove barriers to self-sufficiency. WCCAO fosters individual responsibility, helping people break out of poverty and become contributing members of the community. From its inception, WCCAO's policy, philosophy and approach has been to offer "a hand up, not a handout."

Like the other 14 CAPs in Oregon, WCCAO is governed by a board composed of one-third public elected officials, one-third representatives of the poor, and one-third representatives of the private sector or general community. This board composition serves as a vital link between the poor and local officials and the community at large.

Through partnerships with local businesses, churches, other nonprofits and governmental agencies, WCCAO works to meet the needs of the vulnerable in Washington County by carefully managing community resources for maximum effectiveness.

THE PROGRAMS OF WASHINGTON COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION ORGANIZATION

Since 1965, WCCAO has been meeting emergency and basic needs for the vulnerable in our community while promoting long term economic and social self-sufficiency.

Today, there are 38,000 residents in Washington county living on low incomes. This is more people than the entire population of Tigard. Many are young families, with one or both parents employed at entry level or minimum wage jobs.

Besides the working poor, there are some people in Washington County who experience barriers that prevent them from becoming self-sufficient, such as mental illness or developmental disabilities. Still others are temporarily dependent on public assistance but are potentially self-sufficient and struggling to move out of poverty.

Together with corporations, churches, governmental agencies and other social service organizations, WCCAO's staff of 100, along with over 500 volunteers, address the problems of poverty in Washington County and provide solutions that make a difference.

The programs at WCCAO meet the needs of today with a focus on tomorrow. WCCAO believes that the best way to serve the community is to teach those in need to serve themselves. In this light, WCCAO's programs continually focus on giving people the tools they need to help themselves - not just a handout.

Who are the people that turn to WCCAO for help? It might be a homeless family of five arriving at the emergency shelter after having spent several nights sleeping in their car. Or it could be an elderly woman who has just learned that her heat is being turned off for non payment. Or it might be a family of three who are living on a minimum wage job and find their money won't stretch enough to purchase adequate food.

Once a family or individual has reached out for help at WCCAO, the first goal is to stabilize their situation. This could mean providing emergency shelter, or intervening to avoid getting heat turned off, or providing an emergency food basket. Whatever the starting point may be, once the situation is stabilized, the client and staff work together to develop a comprehensive plan designed to lead to long term self-sufficiency.

WCCAO provides a wide variety of direct and indirect services. Services provided during the past year included:

- * Information and Referral for 13,100 callers needing assistance with emergency and basic needs
- * Emergency Shelter for homeless families and migrant farm workers totaling 16,900 bed nights
- * Transitional Housing for families moving from emergency shelters to independent residences
- * Rental Assistance to 190 low income families to help maintain their residences and prevent homelessness
- * Weatherization Services to 250 families to prevent heat loss and reduce heating costs
- * Head Start for 240 low income and handicapped four year old children, providing them with educational, nutritional and social services to help prepare them to succeed in school
- * Educational Programs for 1200 low income families, covering subjects such as effective parenting, energy conservation, budgeting and drugs and alcohol

Indirect services to clients include:

- * Housing Advocacy to increase the number of low income housing units available in Washington County and to decrease barriers to equal opportunity in housing
- * Specialized Housing Services to ensure handicapped access, shared housing and housing for the physically and mentally disabled
- * Food Distribution to member agencies, together providing 165,000 hot meals and 23,300 food baskets
- * Child Care Advocacy to increase the number of low cost child care slots in the county
- * Housing Development assistance to produce 24 additional affordable housing units for low-income residents

The services provided by WCCAO are indeed varied and far reaching. The current central facility is stretched beyond capacity and the multiple sites have become too costly. Without construction of a new facility, WCCAO will no longer be able to effectively serve the county's residents. Escalating occupancy costs will increasingly force the diversion of resources from services to meet rental demands. This realization prompted the decision to proceed with a major capital campaign.

WHY A NEW FACILITY IS ESSENTIAL

Currently WCCAO is operating out of a 6,000 square foot central facility that is at present severely over utilized. This facility is spatially inefficient and uncomfortable for clients and these limitations interfere with the work of volunteers and staff. Further, it is inaccessible to handicapped clients.

Operating this facility is costly because it is being leased through the very expensive private real estate market. Utility costs are also high because the building is not energy efficient.

The two Head Start Centers in Hillsboro are housed in leased facilities that are prohibitive in cost and do not adequately meet the needs of the children. Meals for nine of the Head Start Centers located throughout the County are currently prepared in a borrowed, cramped, antiquated kitchen.

Clients already stressed by circumstances do not have a healthy environment in which to wait or in which to address their problems. The waiting room is overcrowded, with clients spilling into the hallways. The overcrowding contributes to an unsafe environment for those children who must wait with their parents.

Due to lack of space, initial assessments must be done in the reception area. People reaching out for help are forced to share the most intimate details of their personal life crisis where they can easily be overheard.

In partnership with GTE, WCCAO provides a telephone for clients so that they can handle their personal business by themselves. For many this is the only free phone they have access to. However, this phone is in a noisy and crowded area so once again there is no privacy at a time when a moment's peace could be not only comforting but the key to productivity.

While WCCAO strives to foster self sufficiency, the necessary workshops and other educational opportunities needed are now severely restricted due to lack of space.

Volunteers and graduate students extend services far beyond what would paid staff alone could provide. Yet current space limits the number of volunteers and graduate students that can be utilized.

The present facilities are clearly inadequate to meet the agency's current and future needs and are not cost effective. With this in mind, the Board of Directors has authorized a Capital Fund Campaign in support of a 21,000 square foot building to be equipped modestly, but adequately to provide for client services now and in the

foreseeable future. It will be conveniently located for public transportation and will be handicapped accessible. The new facility will consolidate the five sites described above, address all of the aforementioned limitations, and will be designed to provide maximum benefit to our community by creating an institution with an environment that will more readily manifest WCCAO's mission towards independence. The projected cost of the new facility is \$2,400,000.

BENEFITS OF THE NEW FACILITY

This larger new facility will not only be maintained by present budget levels but will effect considerable savings. In preparation for the new facility, the Aloha and Hillsboro offices have already been consolidated. The consolidation of five sites, leased cost savings and a more energy-efficient facility will combine to save \$100,000 per year -money that can be spent providing direct client services. It will not only be cost-effective, but will also allow staff and volunteers to work more productively, enhancing their ability to better provide services to the residents of Washington County.

Volunteers and interns make it possible to extend services without additional costs. With new space, it is estimated that the number of volunteers will triple within the first two years. The number of student interns is projected to double in the same time period. Additionally, there are highly trained experts in fields such as computer programming and human resources, who are willing to deliver services at no cost as soon as there is adequate space to house them.

Clients will be received in a safer, calmer, more comfortable waiting area. A Family Resource Center will dramatically enhance direct services to clients. There will be space for interviewing and counseling clients, where confidential information can be shared without fear of being overheard. There will be a room for childcare, phones in quiet confidential space for conducting personal business, classroom space for teaching basic life and other skills, and a place for families and individuals to work on personal goals leading to self-sufficiency. There will be computerized information available allowing clients to access resources rather than having to rely on someone else.

The new facility will also have meeting rooms for workshops and classes that foster self-sufficiency and for other educational programs. These classes and workshops act as building blocks on which people learn the skills and gain the confidence to break out of poverty permanently. Additionally, a kitchen will provide adequate space for preparation of nutritious meals for distribution to all Head Start Centers. These meals often provide the only balanced meal the children receive on any given day.

The new facility will also house five classrooms, designed to meet the special needs of young children. In order to meet the needs of the whole family, the new center will have space for childcare before and after school. A parent room will provide opportunities for parents to gain the skills needed to be effective parents and will provide additional opportunities to be involved in their children's education. Additionally, more space could positively affect fundraising for some programs, as WCCAO will have the capacity to serve more families and children in need.

The new facilities, because of location and design, will be a contribution to the entire

community. Because this center will be permanent, those in need will come to know of its presence and will be able to turn to WCCAO earlier in the cycle of their crisis as well as later, when a telephone, resource information center and continued counseling can further the independence and productivity of individuals and families.

WCCAO NEEDS YOUR HELP

Washington County Community Action Organization is recognized as a major stabilizing force in Washington County. A new facility is imperative if WCCAO is going to continue to effectively serve the needs of our community. An investment in WCCAO is an investment in our community.

Broad-based financial support is needed to make this campaign succeed. \$290,000 has been realized through the sale of the Aloha site, and Community Development Block Grants for a total of \$426,000 have been awarded through the County. The all-out support of Corporations, Businesses, Foundations and Individuals is needed to raise the remaining funds needed to complete the project.

To help make your gift as large as possible, payments can be spread over a period of time - preferably, three years. All major gifts will be recognized permanently through naming opportunities or on a plaque to be located in a prominent location in the new facility. Your gift may also be a memorial to a loved one.

WCCAO needs your generous support for this major campaign. With your help, we can make it happen.