



"In here there are no strangers..."

Sisters Of The Road

...just friends we've never met."

2007-2008 Fiscal Year Notable Happenings and Items To Celebrate

Strategic Planning - Sisters Of The Road created our 2008-2013 Five Year Plan with input from customers, neighbors, donors, volunteers, community leaders, staff and board. Each of our programs base their yearly Plans of Work around these goals. They were decided through consensus by Sisters' staff, board, interns, and several Civic Action Group (CAG) members: **Vision 1:** Sisters will lead locally, regionally, & nationally to change society and institutions to improve the lives of the people in our community. **Vision 2:** Sisters will continue to honor our roots through consistently living and modeling our values, mission and philosophies of non-violence, gentle personalism and systemic change. **Vision 3:** Sisters provides sufficient resources to achieve holistic organizational sustainability and operate in an environment of abundance.

Livable Wage - Our lowest wage for employees - including on-call staff - was raised to \$13.00 per hour (plus full health/dental/sick and vacation benefits for permanent staff at 20 hours a week or more), which is considered a current livable wage for a single person in Multnomah County. This represented a 9% increase at the lowest wage level, and a 4% increase at the highest paid levels of the agency, further closing the wage gap in the organization.

Environment - Each operating team has adopted goals regarding operating our organization in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner. This includes building partnerships and our budget to bring in organic, local and cruelty free foods and meats in the Cafe, using recycled materials and traveling in an ecologically responsible manner.



CAFE/BARTER PROGRAM

The Cafe continues to serve a record number of meals. Meals to children and families - the fastest growing group experiencing homelessness in Portland and across the country - are also on the rise. We served 25 more meals per day (371 average) than the year before.

THE NEW PERSONALIST CENTER

Opened in July 2007 after two years of planning by our Cafe customers and staff, the Personalist Center provides an indoor waiting area for the Cafe, increased barter work opportunities especially for people with disabilities, a place to receive

U.S. mail and/or low-cost hygiene supplies, make a phone call and have a hot cup of coffee early in the morning.

The Personalist Center (PC) has become a "hub" for our community as many participate regularly in knitting circles, non-violence trainings, arts and craft days, monthly movie afternoons, a police rights training, a holiday toy-drive, and more.

SYSTEMIC CHANGE PROGRAM

Through their voter registration campaign, by the end of the fiscal year the Civic Action Group (CAG) had registered 380 people to vote and provided educational opportunities through mayor and council candidate's forums, one of which was attended by 13 candidates and hundreds of people experiencing homelessness.

Research and PhotoVoice - Over 5,000 people viewed PhotoVoice at these locales: the Trimet Street Fair, Dignity Village's 'Thinking Outside the Cardboard Box' event, Lewis and Clark College, OHSU Nursing School, Lovefest at Pioneer Courthouse Square, OCCV Mosaic Community Church, Linfield College, Concordia University, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Holy Trinity Middle School, St. Mary's Academy, the Newport Visual Arts Center, Providence St. Vincent Medical Center, Oregon Coalition on Housing and Homelessness, Portland Youth Builders/The Pangaea Project, Northwest Health Foundation, and OHSU School of Nursing.

In June, University of Washington Tacoma Professors Lisa Hoffman and Brian Coffey used Sisters' Research data to publish *Dignity and indignation: How people experiencing homelessness view services and providers*, in The Social Science Journal, Volume 45, Issue 2, June 2008, Pages 207-222. Others continue to write white papers using the unique database of the voices of people with experience with homelessness. These are posted on Sisters' website.

Community Organizer, Patrick Nolen, Executive Director Monica Beemer, and Research Project Coordinator Heather Fercho presented "Without Housing: A Community-Based Research Project for Policy Change and Human Rights" at the Canadian National Social Work Education Conference: Human Rights in a Diverse Community, in Toronto Canada, May 2008.

Sisters' staff and interns promoted the research and book at the National Alliance to End Homelessness Conference on Ending Family Homelessness in Seattle in February. They connected with dozens of social workers, directors, and workers from homeless organizations across the U.S.

Sisters' Research Project was chosen by PSU Capstone Program for hundreds of hours of expert service to support putting the database on-line in a user friendly, easy to access way. The students donated over \$30,000 in in-kind expert input and work and the database went on-line in September of 2008! (much of the work leading to this success was done in the 2007-2008 fiscal year).



Cafe and Personalist Center policies were based, in part, on customer surveys and focus groups; over a hundred customer surveys and a focus group helped inform our Five Year (2008 - 2013) Plan.

Customer feedback on Sisters' policies was gathered in the following venues: Meat/Veggie Food Forum, Service Animal Forum, a focus group on Sisters' participation in the SAFE committee, and community meetings concerning the sit-lie and anti-camping campaign.

DEVELOPMENT

We secured our largest grant ever (\$225,000) through a partnership with the Northwest Health Foundation/Kaiser Permanente Fund to support dissemination of Sisters' Research Project data and findings in support of informed policies and communities across the country.

WinterFolk, a musical fundraising event put on by talented musicians and volunteers every February, celebrated its 20th Birthday! Sisters' good friend and WinterFolk favorite Utah Phillips passed away in May of this year and we held a memorial in the Cafe.

At the close of the fiscal year in June, we had over 17,000 supporters on our mailing list; sent email updates to over 5,000 people each month; and had an average of 2,550 hits per month on our exciting website!



FINANCE

Dave Coffman, CPA was hired as our Finance Manager as we continue to build our rainy day, operating reserve to three months of operations and receive positive audit reports.

Our administration and fundraising costs lowered to 19% of overall expenses. We receive no large federal, state or city grants and we are not a United Way agency. The majority of our support (65%) comes from individual contributions, the vast majority of which are \$100 or smaller contributions.



COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT

We provided eight non-violence trainings in the community for a wide variety of groups, including the Portland Patrol, KBOO Community Radio, Human Solutions, Inc., and Portland State University.

We participated in neighborhood meetings and small groups, including the Old Town Chinatown Visions Committee (OTCT), OTCT Business Association, SAFE oversight committee, OTCT Neighborhood Association, Mayor's Visioning Oversight Committee, and the Resource Access Center Visioning Group.

On a national scale, Sisters' E.D. Monica Beemer is now on the Coordinating Council for the Poor People's Economic Human Rights

Campaign – the country's first and only domestic human rights organization founded and led by poor people.

PUBLIC SPEAKING AND TESTIMONY

Sisters' Executive Director (ED), Monica Beemer, MSW, was asked and gave the commencement speech at the Portland State University Graduate School of Social Work to over 1500 people. Her speech was entitled *Non-violence, Systemic Change and Love in the Social Work Profession*.

Sisters held two Candidate Forums on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness with Portland Mayoral candidates, and a Town Hall meeting on homelessness with Senator Avel Gordley in April.

Sisters' Civic Action Group has given testimony on housing issues multiple times to City Council, and Sisters' Community Organizer Patrick Nolen used Sisters' research to give public testimony at policy hearings including:

- Trimet concerning their proposal to eradicate Fareless Square; the proposal was discarded
- The Downtown Public Safety Access Committee in regards to the Sit-Lie to Anti-Camping laws and the proposed Resource Access Center
- The Old Town Chinatown Neighborhood Association about the Resource Access Center and the importance of low-income housing in old town
- City Hall concerning many issues including the Anti-Camping and Sit-Lie laws, and the Mayor's Street Access for Everyone (SAFE) Oversight Committee

Sisters isn't a restaurant, it's a friend. I always feel better after I leave here - the whole rest of my day improves. It's part of the reason I'm not doing drugs and alcohol, and why I've started back to school. - A Sisters' Customer

Thank you for being part of Sisters Of The Road!