CREATING A GLOBAL COMMUNITY
As we approach Tacoma Community House’s 100th anniversary, I became more aware of the consistency of our agency’s service to the greater Tacoma community. Since opening our doors in 1910, Tacoma Community House has focused on the mission of providing adults and children with the necessary skills to create stable lives for their families. Looking back, we have made a dramatic impact, serving thousands of people from all around the world, giving them a comfort that they may not have known for years as they begin building lives here in the United States. For those American-born participants, we have helped improve the quality of their lives by providing education, employment, and social service assistance. For all of our participants, we have made self-sufficiency a reality, which in turn has renewed an ability to realize their own potential.

As we look back on our year of service, here are some of our highlights and accomplishments that you should know about:

- Overall TCH provided specific program services to 2,185 people.
- Our Language Bank facilitated 12,475 interpretation appointments.
- Our Youth Program served 176 high school aged youth and helped 62 of them get a job.
- Our Education Department taught 975 students from more than 57 countries.
- Literacy NOW continued to develop and expand its statewide website (www.LiteracyNOW.info) for literacy services. A total of 23,373 people accessed this site during the year.
- We were fortunate to have 85 volunteers who provided supplemental tutoring services to our program participants.
- We partnered with 129 other community service providers.
- Through our Employment Department, 186 adults got a job, and we assisted another 452 with employment related needs.
- We successfully held our new signature fundraiser – The Antique Quest and Wine Fest.

Some of our activities for 2008-09 include conducting a new strategic planning process, holding our second annual Antique Quest and Wine Fest on October 4th at the Museum of Glass, preparing for our 100th Anniversary Celebration, and becoming more involved with the issues surrounding the Northwest Regional Detention Center, which is located right here in Tacoma, WA.

Since I will be retiring in April of 2009, our Board of Directors is also very involved as they begin the search for a new Executive Director for the agency. Having served in this position for 13 years, I am confident that the work of Tacoma Community House will continue to transform the lives of the participants we serve. In all of our present and future work, we will continue to focus on the goal that has been ours for all these years: “creating opportunities since 1910”.

Thanks to each of you for being part of Tacoma Community House and our story.

Peace,

Don Engquist Rennegarbe
Executive Director
A DESIRE TO GET AN EDUCATION is a value that John Nhial has been willing to risk his life for. John was born in 1985 in Bor, Sudan. Two years earlier, a war began to rage in the southern region of Sudan. By 1991, a six year old John along with his 9 year brother Jacob were forced to flee their home and become two of what the U.S. would later call them, The Lost Boys of Sudan.

John, in search of safety and access to education, traveled, mostly by foot, from Sudan to Uganda then to Kenya then back to Sudan and then eventually ended up in Kenya, in a journey that took him 10 years. “Schools were common targets for bombings but it was important that we got an education, so we went,” said John. While in Kenya for the second time John was one of 3,600 boys to be selected for Lost Boys of Sudan U.S. government program. So, on March 30th, 2001 John boarded a plane with 14 other boys and headed for Tacoma, Washington, a location only known to him by the destination marked on his plane ticket.

Catholic Community Services, a group that sponsored his plane ticket, was responsible for setting John up with services when he arrived in Tacoma. They took him to Tacoma Community House (TCH) were John was given an opportunity to take a few classes to help him improve on his English pronunciation. He already knew how to read and write in English from his schooling in Africa but now he had to speak it, something he said he rarely had to practice in school. TCH also set him up with youth summer employment program, which pays students to work at other non-profits. He was taught how to fill out a job application and how to prepare for an interview along with other hiring processes. During John’s first summer in the U.S. he already had his first job with the Puget Sound Boys and Girls Club. John said the experience was “great, it is really fun to work with kids.”

Andrea Reubel, the Employment Coordinator at TCH, took a special interest in helping these Sudanese boys. Andrea was already responsible for taking care of her own 6 year old son, but now she stretched herself even further when she obtained a license to become a foster parent. Andrea took in 4 boys from Sudan including John and his brother Jacob. John formed a deep and lasting relationship with Andrea as well as her son, whom he often watched over and played with. When John turned 18 and graduated from Foss High School, Andrea’s commitment was over on paper, but their relationship endured. She helped him as he traversed his path towards college.

John was accepted into Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA. John was not the only one to attend college. All four of the boys who went through TCH and lived with Andrea went to college. John’s brother is currently attending St. Martin’s University in Lacey, Washington. On May 11th, 2008 John graduated with a double major in political science and sociology with a concentration in comprehensive leadership. Currently, John is contemplating law school.

John Nhial, FORMER TACOMA COMMUNITY HOUSE PARTICIPANT
In 1982, Literacy Network of Washington (NOW) began offering support services to organizations that assist adults in learning to read. The goal of these services was to create a system where all adults have access to and receive the high quality services they need. Twenty-six years after beginning this mission, Literacy NOW has made an impact statewide. Literacy NOW has trained over 30,000 volunteers who have in turn supported over 150,000 adults in Washington in their quest to become literate. Literacy NOW has also worked with or trained nearly every adult literacy organization across the state. They provide training, consulting, and program management assistance to programs that are beginning or well-established.

Despite this impressive record, the need for adult literacy services is still tremendous. And many people aren’t aware of the scope of the problem: An estimated 571,000 adults over 18 in Washington do not have a high school diploma, and an estimated 35% of the state’s workforce functions at the lowest literacy levels. Today, Literacy NOW offers a range of practical tools to adult literacy providers statewide aimed at tackling this massive problem. One of the key things that Literacy NOW does is provide hands-on training in a variety of subjects. Perhaps the most popular and beneficial training is for volunteers who are working at adult literacy organizations as tutors for adult literacy students. The volunteer training offers skills needed to engage with and successfully teach adult learners to read.

“Every child in Washington state deserves a parent who is capable of supporting the child’s educational needs and growth.”

Literacy NOW also offers a comprehensive set of tools for organizations which includes: a team of trainers with years of experience, hands-on training on topics ranging from adult literacy techniques to intercultural communication, printed materials and resources on adult literacy, a 24-hour information and referral hotline, and an online directory of every adult literacy provider in Washington state. Additionally, Literacy NOW produces a quarterly newsletter on both management and instructional information for providers, generates a monthly e-newsletter, Literacy Matters, which shows people ways of making literacy matter in their community, and publishes fact sheets on various topics related to adult literacy that build awareness about the need for adult literacy services.

Literacy NOW is also working to create a statewide advocacy network for adult literacy. This advocacy network would work to create awareness among public officials about the need for adult literacy services and funding across the state. One of the primary goals is increasing understanding about the impacts, both economic and personal, that adult illiteracy has on Washington. In the end, Literacy NOW endeavors to create a system that supports low-literate adults, who in turn are the primary teachers of children. As Lee Jewett, Literacy NOW program coordinator, mentioned, “every child in Washington state deserves a parent who is capable of supporting the child’s educational needs and growth.”
When you meet Bill Quaife it is hard to imagine that just two years ago he was homeless. Bill is an intelligent, passionate and dedicated man that fits none of the preconceived notions of a homeless person.

Bill is a long time Tacoman. In his early years, he lived in the Lincoln District, which was a low-income area of Tacoma that was very culturally diverse. When Bill's family was relocated to University Place, an area that had very few minorities and a lot more money, it was a major shift for him. He felt out of place, which was further exacerbated by the fact that he was diagnosed with a learning disability after he failed to pass second grade. In the 7th grade, Bill could no longer take the pressures of school and dropped out. After dropping out he quickly started using drugs.

Bill married in 1988, had a son, and was divorced shortly after. The divorce and substance abuse drove a wedge between Bill and his son. They became estranged for four years. In addition to his personal struggles, Bill also suffered on a professional level. Despite the fact that Bill held odd jobs as a house painter for 25 years, he was left vulnerable by his lack of education. When Bill injured his shoulder, he found himself jobless, unable to find work, and inevitably living on the streets in abandoned houses and the woods. Eventually, Bill ended up at The Tacoma Rescue Mission, a homeless shelter in Tacoma, and was in and out for four years of drug and alcohol treatment.

One day the Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) came to The Center for Drug and Alcohol Treatment Facility and Bill's luck began to change. The EOC referred Bill to Tacoma Community House and it wasn't long until he was in our building being tested by Bruce McDowell, one of our ABE teachers. He began taking classes at TCH, 30 years after he dropped out as a 7th grader. In an amazingly short period of time Bill was able to pass his ABE courses and obtained his GED. Bruce explained that, "thinking beyond that (GED) was not something he'd done. He had never thought he could go to college before. This was an utterly new idea to him." Bruce helped Bill expand his own ideas about what he was capable of and helped him realize his plans for going to college.

Bill enrolled at Tacoma Community College (TCC). At first, TCC was a challenge. The students there were commonly 18 years old to Bill's 40 years, but supportive teachers and students once again impassioned Bill. He honored his visual learning style, and altered materials so that he could understand them. And his hard work has paid off. Since enrolling, Bill has received all A's and B's and last quarter an A in every class. Bill found a direction and began giving back to his community. He began taking courses in Human Services with an emphasis in substance abuse counseling. He began volunteering in the community speaking to AA groups. Recently Bill received TCC’s highest student award, the Ellen Pinto Community Service Award given to the student that best exemplifies good scholarship and community service.

In addition to academic success, Bill has also had success in his personal life, rekindling his relationship with his son. They both graduated in 2007, Bill from TCH and his son from high school. Bill’s son is currently attending Central Washington University majoring in criminal justice. Bill has been sober since October 5th, 2006. Bill’s focus on giving back to the community that helped him is clear: “I hope to be either a counselor or probation officer that works for youth with substance abuse problems.”

Bill describes Tacoma Community House as a stepping stone along his way. “TCH is open, helpful, welcoming. The experience there (TCH) has left me feeling empowered and showed me that I’m not stupid.”
Thank you to all our Supporters

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Bethany First UMW
Bothell UMM
Clinton UMC
Calby UMC
Clallum CR
Custer UMC
Des Moines UMW
Epworth-Lessian UMW
Fairwood UMC
Fall City UMM
Fern Mountain UMC
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General Board of Global Ministries
Women’s Division
Gig Harbor UMC
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Kennewick First UMW
Kent UMC
Lakewood UMW
Lamb of God Baptist Church
Magnolia UMW
Maysville UMC
Mason UMC
Milton UMC
North Mason UMC
Olympia First UMW
Pacific Lutheran University
Pacific NW Conference UMC
Pacific NW Conference UMM
Parkland UMM
Puyallup & Ralston UMW
Pullman UMM
Puget Sound UMC
Seattle UMC
Seabold UMC
Seaworsh UMM
Lorette Ave UMC
Spanaway UMC
St Marks Lutheran Church by the Narrows
St Andrews UMW
Summit UMM
Tappernich UMM
Tualatin UMC
Woodland Park UMM
Yelm UMC

Businesses

Alaska Airlines
Bellevue Community College
Boeing Employees Community Fund
Davies Pearson Attorneys
Financial Planners Northwest, Inc.
Hilltop Action Coalition
Hopakline
Johnson Stone & Pagano, PS
Mario Gonzales
McClain-Winery
Microsoft Corporation
Milgard Manufacturing
Narrows Plaza Bowl
The News Tribune
Pacific Law, Inc. PS
Practical Solutions
Rebecca Y. Gallery
RMG McCluskey, Inc.
Ruby George Creative
Seattle Mariners
- Mariners Care Community Section
Sound Banking Company
Southwest Youth and Family Services
Teams Local Union #117
United Way of King County
United Way of Pierce County
Vail and Associates
Weekly Volcano

Grants

Employees Community Fund/Boeing
-Peugeot Sound
Greater Tacoma Community Foundation
-The Hendrix Foundation
Jean E. Thompson Foundation
Key Foundation
M. Ronair Bank
Rainier Pacific Foundation
Russo Investment Group
Sequoia Foundation
Sunrise Rotary Club

Public Support

Department of Social and Health Services
Franklin Pierce School District
Higher Education Coordinator Board
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
State Board Community & Technical Colleges
Tacoma Department Planning & Development
Washington Representative Council
Tacoma Pierce County
- Employment & Training Consortium
Tacoma Public Schools
Washington State Board
-For Community & Technical Colleges
Participants Served

Total 2,185

- Education 975
- Employment 638
  - Community Jobs 120
  - Supported Works 179
  - Youth 176
- Multilingual Services 966
  - Bilingual Assistance 168
  - Immigration/Citizenship 826
*These are unduplicated numbers.

Other Services

Literacy Now
- Hits on Directory 23,373
- Organizations Served 59 in 16 counties

Other Services

- Volunteers 87
- TANF Participants Served 380
- Organization Partners 129
- Language Bank 12,475
- $673,245 total billed

Outcomes

- Increased language or literacy skills 384
- Increased computer literacy level 195
- Became a citizen 59
- Adjusted immigration status 175
- Got a job 248
- Stayed in school (K-12) 100
- Retained summer employment 8
- Graduated from high school 41

Statistical Highlights

Yana Cosme, Language Bank Coordinator

Stephanie Nakajima, Language Bank Administrative Assistant, Azusa Hirasawa

Our Language Bank completed 12,475 individual interpretation/translation assignments with the total billing of $673,245.