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PORTLAND HOUSING BUREAU

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Final Report on FY 2010-11 \$1M Special Appropriation to Address Homelessness in Portland's Central City

The following report highlights results from a FY2010-11 \$1 Million Special Appropriation for Addressing Homelessness in Portland's Central City. The appropriation was highly effective. It generated new partnerships for focused outreach, employment and housing placement efforts that helped to move more than 300 households from the streets into housing in just one year – nearly a household a day.

Background:

At the time of the 2009 Homeless Street and Shelter count, Multnomah County had approximately 2,500 homeless people, 1,600 of which were unsheltered. The central city had the highest concentration of unsheltered people and the economic recession exacerbated the need. In developing his FY 2010-11 Proposed Budget, the Mayor expressed interest in increasing funding to provide targeted services in the central city.

As part of the FY 2010-11 Budget Process, City Council approved a one-time allocation of \$1 million to help unsheltered Portlanders in the central city. Housing Commissioner Nick Fish convened a diverse group of nonprofit leaders, law enforcement professionals, business leaders, and community partners to set priorities for the funds. The group emphasized the following priorities:

- Provide funding to programs that decrease the number of people experiencing homelessness in the central city;
- Free up “bottlenecks” in the service system, so that people can quickly exit emergency shelters and transitional housing for their own home, as well as exit from subsidized permanent housing to private market units when their incomes increase;
- Seek opportunities for maximum leverage and high value solutions;
- Utilize existing capacity in the current system to assure that services provided by these one time funds are efficiently administered and costs are minimized; and
- Emphasize collaboration between homeless service providers, law enforcement officials, business owners and housed residents of the Portland city center.

Two nonprofit organizations – JOIN and New Avenues for Youth – were selected as lead recipients of the award funds.

JOIN received \$820,000 to leverage its existing street outreach team with rent assistance dollars to move people into housing through the ***Permanent Housing Placement Initiative***. The initiative drew upon partnerships with service agencies, police, the business community and private landlords to ensure that people had support to maintain stability. Short term rent assistance is a cost-effective way to get people into housing and help them stay there.

Key partnerships included the Black Parent Initiative, Catholic Charities' El Programa Hispano, Central City Concern and the Salvation Army Female Emergency Shelter (SAFES).

New Avenues for Youth (NAFY) received \$180,000 for the *Roadmap Home* collaborative to reach young people living on the street in Portland's city center. The funding helped young people move into stable housing, as well as prevent others from falling into homelessness. An important part of the program was to train youth for jobs, help them find work, and stay employed and housed.

The collaboration was led by NAFY and included partners Janus Youth Programs, Outside In and the Native American Youth and Family Center.

Accomplishments:

The funds had a powerful and positive impact on reducing homelessness in the downtown city center in by the fall of 2011.

- 311 households moved from the streets into homes, including 58 young adults
- 73% were still in housing after 12 months
- 2,418 youth contacted in the downtown core, to connect them to housing and services
- 44 women moved from emergency shelter into housing, freeing up bottlenecks
- 269 individuals connected to employment and/or benefit support services
- 45 young adults obtained employment
- New partnerships formed with the Black Parent Initiative and El Programa Hispano, resulting in increased housing placements and culturally-specific staffing and access for African American and Latino households
- Partnerships strengthened among service providers, law enforcement and downtown businesses, to help identify and assist individuals in need of services

Both initiatives were effective in achieving the desired outcomes of freeing up bottlenecks in existing shelter, housing and service programs. As a result, more adults and youth transitioned to stable and permanent homes, increased their income and benefits, and achieved long-term housing success.

The Portland Housing Bureau was grateful for the support of City Council in providing a unique opportunity to direct funds in a strategic way to reduce homelessness in our city's downtown center.

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