

Community



Summer 1998

CONNECTIONS

A Quarterly Publication of Community Action Organization

OPENING DOORS GETS WELCOME MAT

"Ten fingers, ten toes; a healthy 7 pound 10 ounce baby boy!" Those were the only words Shelly heard the doctor say. It all seemed like a dream. Only a few short months ago the thought of having a healthy baby would have been improb-



able. Shelly had left an abusive relationship with two young children, some clothes and a couple of stuffed animals in an old, pathetically unreliable car.

She came to Washington County to stay at a friend's apartment. She had no job, no money, and no medical insurance and had not seen a doctor even though she was three months pregnant. Shelly was scared that her baby would be born tiny and sickly like its brother. She felt like a failure and was terrified when she would look to the next week and see nothing.

One day while she was sitting in the laundromat, she noticed a flyer on the bulletin board about a place that says it helps low-income pregnant women. Feeling desperate, she called. "Opening Doors," a friendly voice answered, beginning a relationship that would change her life.

Opening Doors was formerly a program of Healthy Start, Inc., which began as a joint venture of public and private health care organizations in 1989 to address the needs of low-income pregnant women and to assist health care providers with resources and education about issues that affect their low-income patients. On July 1, 1998, Community Action became the parent organization of Opening Doors, a program which since 1995 has reached out to over 550 low-income pregnant women in Washington County to help them have healthy babies. In 1997 alone, 362 new clients were served, with all services provided in Spanish and English.

**"Ten fingers, ten toes;
a healthy 7 lb. 10 oz.
baby boy!"**

Working from three full-service offices, two paid employees supervise a dedicated staff of seven AmeriCorps VISTA workers who scour neighborhoods leaving fliers in laundromats and stores, searching for women who have dropped through the cracks in the system. Having roots in the community and sharing similar life experiences, VISTA workers are able to understand and empathize with their clients. Their training as lay health workers provides clients with excellent resources as well.

The VISTA worker who answers Shelly's call begins the process of determining her eligibility for the Oregon Health Plan and

walks her through the application process. At least twice a month, usually much more often, the VISTA worker sees her, offering much needed friendship and support as well as education and referrals to other helpful resources such as schooling and childcare. She brings some baby clothes and helps Shelly find a support group for abused women.

**...over 90% of the women
served deliver healthy
babies.**

The numbers tell a story of pregnancies at risk: 65% of the women are single mothers; 72% haven't finished high school; 33% are teens; 32% smoke upon intake; and 30% are former or current alcohol or drug users. Yet once they receive services from Opening Doors and needed medical services, over 90% of the women deliver healthy babies:

As Shelly holds her new baby, Justin, they both have a future to look forward to. It has become a dream come true.





Margaret Eickmann
Board Chair



Jerralynn Ness
Executive Director

A Letter To Our Friends—

Dear Friends:

On June 11, 1998, the Boards of Directors and staffs of Community Action Organization and Healthy Start, Inc., came together at our 33rd annual meeting to celebrate a significant occasion. Healthy Start has selected Community Action to take over the operation of their well-respected maternity outreach program, Opening Doors. We celebrated the joyful legacy of Healthy Start, while saying good-bye to the organization as it moved to close its final chapter.

“Every woman deserves the chance to have a healthy baby” is the slogan of Healthy Start, Inc., an organization that formed in 1989 to serve low-income, pregnant women in Washington County. Guided by its very capable leader and Executive Director, Lynne Weidel, the agency has helped to assure that thousands of women were linked to the services needed to assure that their babies would be born healthy. In Lynne’s own words:

“Using trained women from the community, Opening Doors seeks out low-income pregnant women at risk of not receiving adequate prenatal care and provides the needed education, advocacy and referrals to enable them to help themselves. Opening Doors staff also work directly with the providers and insurers of medical care to ensure that they are knowledgeable about the special needs and characteristics of this population, as well as the community resources available for them. The ultimate goals of the program are to encourage healthy birth

outcomes and to have a positive effect on the *system of care* for low-income populations in Washington County.”

Community Action is proud to be the new parent organization for Opening Doors and is committed to the continued provision of quality services. The services of Opening Doors, coupled with the vast array of services provided by Community Action, will create a powerful set of tools to help low-income families achieve a better life.

We welcome Catherine Fleischman and her talented staff as they become a part of our team. We thank Don Elsom, CEO of St. Vincent Hospital and Healthy Start Board Chair, for his wonderful leadership; and we thank the board for their confidence in Community Action. And we thank Lynne Weidel, an extraordinary woman whose vision and leadership has affected the lives of thousands of women and children and made this community a better place for all of us to live.



Lynne and some of her staff.

Community Connections is the quarterly newsletter of Community Action Organization, 1001 SW Baseline St., Hillsboro, OR 97123, and is published by the Development Office.

Community Action Organization is a private, non-profit corporation. In partnership with the community, Community Action assists low income people to achieve self-determination.

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Client Services: 648-0829**

WINE RAFFLE GOES OVER THE TOP!



CAO’s third annual wine raffle was a huge success this year, netting the agency’s anti-poverty programs \$8,008, which was \$1,008 more than our goal. Raffle ticket purchasers paid \$2 per ticket for the chance to win one of 8 prizes of 3 cases each or the grand prize of 6 cases. Montinore, Laurel Ridge, Helvetia, Cooper Mountain, Ponzi, Tualatin and Oak Knoll wineries, members of the Washington County Winery Association, donated a variety of their premium wines for the prizes. The grand prize went to Keith Tabor of Eugene. Other happy winners were Margaret Mills, Tim and Linda Wheeler, Alan and Diane Williams, Allison Taylor, Ted Nolan, Lois Ebel, Bernie Thurber and John Peters. Congratulations to all!



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RALPH BROWN JOINS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Ralph Brown, Mayor of Cornelius, was elected to the Community Action Board of Directors Executive Committee during its annual meeting. Brown was elected Vice-Chair of the board and joins Margaret Eickmann, Chair; Maria Loreda, Secretary; Russ Wilkinson, Treasurer; Craig Kinnie, At-Large; and Cindy Hirst, At-Large. Kim Carlson was also elected to the Board of Directors as the new Head Start Policy Council representative.

The 33rd Annual Meeting was a joint celebration with the Healthy Start, Inc., Board of Directors and staff to celebrate the addition of the Opening Doors program to Community Action.

When asked about the coming year, Margaret Eickmann said, "Looking ahead to the back-to-school season I see a very productive year ahead for Community Action. The board is highly committed to the mission of the agency and, with the help of CAO's talented staff, is ready to work with our community partners to tackle the issues of poverty in our county."

TEE TIME

Polish those clubs and grab your cleats! The Sunrise Rotary Foundation presents the 8th Annual Celebrity Invitational Golf Tournament on October 2, 1998, to benefit Community Action's homeless family shelter and the Rotary Foundation scholarship fund. This year, the event will be held at The Reserve Vineyards and Golf Club. Foursomes in the shotgun start tourney will be matched with sport celebrity players for a fun afternoon of golf, prizes, raffle and an auction. Players' guests are invited to join them for a delicious buffet dinner following the tournament. Reserve your spot and get more information by calling CAO at 693-3254. The cost, which includes green fees, cart and dinner, is \$160 per player if paid by September 4, and \$175 after that date. Please make checks to the Sunrise Rotary. See you at The Reserve!

