



BGCP TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 500: ROCKWOOD CATALYST CAMPAIGN

Tuesday, March 10, 2015

TRACI ROSE, CHIEF ADVANCEMENT OFFICER: A Case for Rockwood

The mounting effects from the urban gentrification of North and Northeast Portland over the past 10 years have pushed poverty into outer-east Multnomah County. The community hardest hit by this rapid population growth is East County's Rockwood neighborhood.

With the largest concentration of youth under the age of 18 within the metro region, the Rockwood community today faces critical challenges that place young people at tremendous risk. These challenges include:

- A burgeoning school district that is considered one of the largest in the state, serving youth within the boundaries of three city limits – Portland, Gresham and Troutdale;
- Nine out of 10 students living in the Rockwood community receive free and reduced lunch;
- Rockwood students are posting some of Oregon's lowest academic scores and graduation rates rank 7% below the state average at a time that Oregon ranks worst in the country;
- Rockwood arguably has the highest incidences of crime in our region's history, with
 - the number of documented gang members living within this community tripling over the past 10 years;
 - 40% of Multnomah County residents listed on probation or parole and 50% of the county's child welfare cases reside in Rockwood, and;
 - Some of our regions highest incidences of child sex trafficking and drug related crimes

As a result of the unexpected closure in early 2013 of the Police Activities League (PAL) Center, the only youth facility of its kind located in East County, resulted in the loss of youth programming in Rockwood.

Staying true to our mission of serving youth who need us most, Boys & Girls Clubs of Portland Metro stepped in to ensure a continuum of programming for the more than 300 youth served through the PAL Center. Our organization immediately raised nearly \$400,000 to secure two years of funding to transition youth into three school-based sites in a partnership with the Reynolds School District.

We are now poised to build a new Boys & Girls Club on the site of the former Drake's Seven Dees Nursery at the corner of SE 165th and Stark Street. The site, chosen by the Mayor of Gresham for its visibility and accessibility in this community, provides the opportunity to repurpose an existing retail space into the new Club design, which will save the organization approximately \$500,000 in construction costs.

The new Club facility will be approximately 30,000 square feet, and with additional land on this site, active plans are underway to partner with non-redundant youth service organizations to create a campus of wrap-around services dedicated to kids and families in Rockwood. Where there once was only one youth organization serving this neighborhood, there are now plans for four or more over the next two years.

Thank you for your time.

Traci Rose