

News from Youth and Family Outreach of Portland

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Grand Opening of YFO-West

Youth and Family Outreach swung open the doors of YFO West in early November with a community open house. More than 50 people attended the event at the new site—251 Danforth Street.

The event celebrated the October re-opening of an early care and education center formerly run by nonprofit Portland West. When Portland West announced plans last summer to close the center if it could not be taken over by a responsible provider, YFO stepped forward to meet the need.

Late this summer, YFO negotiated a lease with Portland West and opened YFO west on October 1st. Included in the lease was the expansion into available space to give the center capacity for 36 children. When the center opened, there were fewer than 10 chil-

dren but by the end of November that number had grown to 18. The new center offers care for children from 6 weeks to 5 years old. The addition of infant care is a key component to the new center. "High quality infant care is a critical need across the community" Said YFO Executive Director Rob Ellis.

In re-opening the center, YFO received \$6,000 in start-up funding from the United Way of Greater Portland. According to Ellis, the start-up has cost the organization about \$30,000. Open House attendees received a copy of a wish list with a request for assistance.

"We hope the community will respond to our request for support," Ellis said "We've responded to a community need and have done so without increasing our administrative costs. We've taken a responsible approach and look forward to inviting the community to be a part of this center."



YFO Executive Director Rob Ellis receives the key to the new YFO West from Portland West's Ethan Strimling.

The Story of Sam and Shelby: Delivering On Our Mission

Five years ago a baby girl was born to 17 year old Samantha. A junior at Portland High School, this was a detour that Sam had not planned on. Sam made the decision to keep the baby and raise her. Samantha contacted the social worker at Portland High School and when she was 7 months pregnant they visited Youth and Family Outreach together. The social worker knew that YFO had a

history of working with teen parents and it was only a block from the high school.

I clearly remember the day that Sam came in with her belly pushing out the bib of her denim overalls. She presented herself as a very confident and happy mom-to-be. Samantha filled out an application and was put on the waiting list. As with all applications from teen parents it was immediately bumped to the top of the waiting list. Shelby's first day in the infant room was September 6, 2004. Sam snuggled Shelby, checked in with the teacher and was off for her first day of her junior year of high school. Sam

was a diligent student and a responsible mom always communicating with teachers. She graduated with her class in 2006 and today Shelby is a thriving preschooler looking forward to kindergarten in the fall and Sam has a professional job here in Portland. Sam says she makes her decisions based on what is best for her daughter and that she knew having her here at YFO has been just that.

We're on the web!

www.yfoutreach.org



Our Mission

Youth and Family Outreach creates opportunities that enhance independence and learning to support the quality of life for children, youth, and families in Greater Portland.

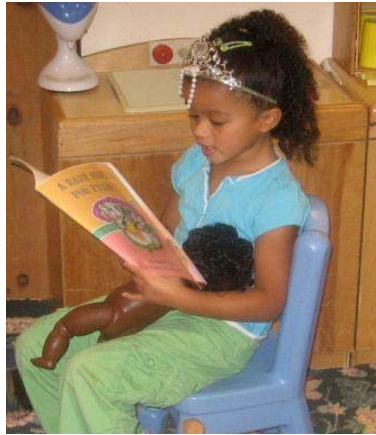
Early Reading Opens Worlds of Learning

Youth and Family Outreach has a unique pre-school program. In the spring of 2005 discussions began about this national initiative called EARLY READING FIRST (ERF). The Muskie Institute and Maine Roads to Quality were interested in bringing this project to Maine. Several child care directors met to discuss the possibilities and the grant was written. Upon reward in the fall of 2005 five classrooms immersed themselves in the intensive training to become skilled at the selected curriculum—Opening Worlds to Learning (OWL). Our preschool classroom was fortunate to be a part of this focused effort to deeply engage preschoolers in developing their literacy skills.

Scientifically based reading research had uncovered the not so surprising information that the reason children were behind in literacy when they reached second and third grade was directly related to the child's education at 4 and 5 years old.

In the fall of 2006 we began full implementation of the OWL curriculum. The grant offered support to classrooms with monthly

trainings, weekly coaching meetings and release time for teachers to plan this intentional curriculum. Oldham Innovative Research (OIR) also came to assess children and evaluate programs



"Reading a story to my baby"

twice yearly. This data was used to monitor the success and growth of implementation.

Each August a portfolio has been mailed off to kindergarteners regarding their new child from YFO. Feedback from Portland Public Schools regarding the readiness of the students from the

ERF classrooms was overwhelming. The children are consistently prepared for the expectations of the kindergarten classroom, which is an important start in their school careers.

This fall marked the end of the three year grant and the beginning of YFO's independent venture to continue on track with delivering this valuable curriculum. The city of Portland, compelled by the data that was being generated by OIR, rewarded our request for \$10,000 to maintain the program.

Fly Me to the Moon—New Year's Eve Gala



Join us New Year's Eve to welcome in 2009 with style!

Dance to the groovy stylings of the Big Chief Band!

Appetizers, raffles, door prizes, live entertainment, \$45 per person

Purchase tickets on line at www.yfoutreach.org or

Call 874-2370



Youth & Family Outreach presents:

FLY ME TO THE MOON

Swing in the New Year!

December 31, 2008

8:00 pm to midnight

featuring the live dance music of **BIG CHIEF BAND**

Champagne & Dessert ★ Cash Bar ★ Raffles ★ Door Prizes

Clarion Hotel

1230 Congress Street, Portland

discounted hotel accommodations (\$79/night) available through the Clarion

\$45. per person (tickets limited) Call 874-2370

or go to: www.yfoutreach.org

Proceeds benefit Youth and Family Outreach, a nonprofit organization providing quality early education and care for low-income families at two sites in Portland.