

A Gathering of Good 2010



Most of us enjoy throwing an occasional dinner party for friends and relatives, but how often are they attended by top medical researchers, noted university professors, or the director of the Multnomah County Health Department? Imagine the lively discussions on social topics that these guests inspire.



A GATHERING OF GOOD

agog



Fun and informative, **agog dinners & discussions** are part of a yearly series sponsored by Metropolitan Family Service. Community members arrange these gatherings, with support from the agency. This year's dinner discussion series is focused on building healthy communities. Meals have been catered, home-cooked, potluck, or summer barbeque, setting the scene for a lively exchange of ideas. At each dinner, local conversation leaders – noted topic-experts – moderate and engage guests in conversation.

"My experience in hosting and attending the dinners and discussions has been wonderful. Portland is a community where people want to be informed and involved. Providing an opportunity for that along with friends, food and really interesting discussion leaders has proven to be a great model."

-Eva Kripalani, agog co-chair

At one dinner, three innovative leaders from OHSU led the conversation. Guests considered whether popular culture in the United States can support the level of personal responsibility and social changes that are needed to improve our overall health. Obesity, for example, is a national epidemic for many reasons – kids are not eating at home as often; single parents or both parents are working long hours; kids are in daycare or after school care for extended periods daily and there is easy access to cheap, unhealthy food choices. Acknowledging that personal behavior plays a major role in healthcare outcomes, guest came up with many possible recommendations, including taking an active role in their healthcare and making healthier lifestyle choices. Some suggested taking a more aggressive approach to educating the community on health issues and promoting healthy habits and health education in our schools. Other guests committed to creating change at local, state and federal levels. Thinking personally, systemically and outside the box is encouraged.

"There were so many fascinating and knowledgeable people there with real world, in the trenches, health care and social service experience. Everyone was interesting and contributed."

To date, nearly 200 people have participated in the 2010 discussion series. Topics have included identifying and reducing root causes of health care disparities, keeping our brains active

A dinner hosted by Portland resident Dave Johnson included conversation leaders from OHSU. From left, Tana Grady-Weliky, M.D., Dave Johnson, Brian Druker, M.D., John "Jay" Nutt, M.D., and Metropolitan Family Service Executive Director, Krista Larson.

and healthy, designing our neighborhoods for health, and helping parents and families create strong foundations. At a discussion on promoting healthy habits in school, one participant said, "It was inspiring to hear from people who are working at the grassroots level on these issues. It was helpful to hear their perspectives and ideas as we brainstorm ways that we can be involved ourselves and encourage others." Summaries from the 12 dinner and discussions are shared widely and available online.

A Gathering of Good, the culmination of the **agog dinner & discussion** series and benefit for Metropolitan Family Service is scheduled for Saturday evening, October 16, 2010 at the Portland Hilton Grand Ballroom. At this fun, eye-opening and inspirational event, Metropolitan Family Service will be recognizing local community leaders who are "doing good" – people who are passionate and focused on building a healthy community and inspiring others to learn, share, and get more involved.

The second annual *Provocateur* award will be presented to Eileen Brady, the cofounder of New Seasons Market. Ms. Brady serves on the Oregon Health Policy Board and Oregon Business Association Board and speaks regularly on sustainability, building regional food systems, and transforming health care. The *Provocateur* award was created in memory of Eileen Johnson, who was an inspiring example of community activism and dedicated to the mission of Metropolitan Family Service.

Dr. Larry Wallack, Dean of the College of Urban & Public Affairs at Portland State University, is the featured keynote speaker. He is known for his work in 'media advocacy,' an innovative approach to working with mass media and communities to advance social and public health issues.

For 60 years, Metropolitan Family Service has been building healthy communities to support children, families and older adults. Programs include parenting education, after

"I had never attended anything like this and I found it to be a most insightful way of looking at our society today and the family in particular for ways to best serve our children."

community school programs in high poverty neighborhoods, intergenerational mentoring for elementary students, transportation services for older adults, and a vibrant volunteer corps. Annually, Metropolitan Family Service helps more than 37,000 people facing economic and cultural barriers including health-related issues, poverty, inadequate education and isolation.



*Conversation leader, Dr. Michael Mega (left), Medical Director of the Cognitive Assessment Clinic at the Providence Brain Institute, talks with a guest at a recent **agog dinner & discussion**.*

Proceeds from **A Gathering of Good** support Metropolitan Family Service programs. Last year's event sold out and raised over \$260,000. To learn more and register, visit www.agatheringofgood.org.