



## Metropolitan Family Service

1808 SE Belmont Street  
Portland, OR 97214  
503.232.0007  
Fax: 503.232.9178

July 23, 2010

Contact: Pat Kaczmarek,  
Marketing & Communications Manager  
Metropolitan Family Service  
503.232.0007, ext. 170  
patk@metfamily.org  
www.metfamily.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### **North Clackamas Community School Program is effective model for building neighborhood connection**

Portland, Oregon – July 23, 2010– On June 27, **Jim and Cheryl Myers**, North Clackamas School Board member, hosted 11 guests at their home to explore *Education as a Social Determinant of Health*. Social, educational, economic and environmental factors affect health and can have life-long effects. Where we live, work, learn and play can have a great impact on how long and how well we live, more than most of us realize.

The dinner discussion is part of **A Gathering of Good (agog)**, a series of events organized by Metropolitan Family Service to promote face-to-face conversation, civic engagement and social change. This year, **agog** discussions focus on the topic of Building Healthy Communities.

Conversation leaders **Ellen Baltus**, school counselor at Lot Whitcomb Elementary in Milwaukie and **Patty Metropulos**, Director of Public Funding and Government Relations at Metropolitan Family Service, guided the discussion. They presented Lot Whitcomb's community school model as a case study for the effectiveness of community school programs and community cohesiveness in low-income neighborhoods.

The conversation leaders shared how the very successful community school model at Lot Whitcomb had transformed the school into a community hub and improved the social, physical, emotional, and academic lives of children and their families.

STRENGTHENING  
FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS  
WHILE ENHANCING  
THEIR PARTICIPATION  
IN COMMUNITY LIFE



## Metropolitan Family Service

1808 SE Belmont Street  
Portland, OR 97214  
503.232.0007  
Fax: 503.232.9178

Ellen Baltus described what the atmosphere was like at Lot Whitcomb prior to partnering with Metropolitan Family Service in becoming a community school. “In 1999, girls were in gangs. Some were sexually active. Seven year olds would hear a gun and run toward it to see what happened, sometimes seeing the unimaginable. Attendance was sketchy. The school had over 600 students, and the turnover rate was 250 kids per year...for many years. Kids went home hungry on the weekends. Several had nothing to do after school - the time of day when most juvenile crime takes place. Many parents worked two jobs, leaving siblings to raise each other. Many parents were uninvolved and even avoided the school.”

Responding to the needs of the kids and community, Baltus and the staff at Lot Whitcomb searched for other community school models in the area and contacted Metropolitan Family Service. Over the last 6 years, MFS has partnered with providers to create a vibrant community school and after school program, building that systemic change Ms. Baltus has been working so diligently for.

Now, Lot Whitcomb is a community hub. Numerous family events attract and connect school families with each other and needed community services. Health fairs at the school provide haircuts, medical and dental care. Adult classes include English literacy, GED completion, computer literacy, financial management, fitness, and how to prepare healthy meals on a shoestring budget.

Guests discussed the factors that have led to academic achievement, increased parental involvement, and development of positive life skills among participating students. They noted that curriculums were closely tied with school day learning. The program has been particularly successful in assisting students that are performing below benchmarks and face barriers to achievement.

“I learned about the specific ways some of the programs at Whitcomb are changing kids’ lives for the better... I assumed all was well, but had no idea how important the impact has been on the kids and the community,” shared Debi Stromberg, an agog participant. “Ellen's personal stories and Patty's commitment to the program were inspiring,” said Mitzi Bauer, another agog guest. “I walked away knowing way more about a terrific program and some amazing people that work very hard for many others.”

To learn more about this dinner discussion and others in the series, visit [www.agatheringofgood.org](http://www.agatheringofgood.org).

STRENGTHENING  
FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS  
WHILE ENHANCING  
THEIR PARTICIPATION  
IN COMMUNITY LIFE



## Metropolitan Family Service

1808 SE Belmont Street  
Portland, OR 97214  
503.232.0007  
Fax: 503.232.9178

On Saturday, October 16, 2010, the signature fundraiser for Metropolitan Family Service, *A Gathering of Good*, will take place at the Portland Hilton Grand Ballroom. The theme is Building Healthy Communities. **Dr. Larry Wallack**, the 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,’ working with mass media and communities to advance social and public health issues.

The second annual *Provocateur* award will be presented to **Eileen Brady**, the co-founder 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.

Proceeds support Metropolitan Family Service programs that help people facing cultural and economic barriers such as inadequate education, health issues, isolation and poverty. Metropolitan Family Service helps more than 37,000 children, families and older adults each year. Please visit [www.metfamily.org](http://www.metfamily.org) to learn more.

### **Background Information**

About **Metropolitan Family Service** (MFS): For sixty years, Metropolitan Family Service has been building healthy communities to support children, families, and older adults. We provide services at more than 145 sites, including more than 70 schools. Metropolitan Family Service makes connections that strengthen the lives of 37,000 individuals and families each year.

For more information, contact Pat Kaczmarek, Marketing and Communications Manager, at 503.232.0007 ext.170. You can visit our website at [www.metfamily.org](http://www.metfamily.org).

Through **agog**, Metropolitan Family Service promotes face-to-face conversation, civic engagement and social change. 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. For more information about agog please contact Monica Wirtz, Special Events Coordinator, at 503.232.0007 ext. 201.

STRENGTHENING  
FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS  
WHILE ENHANCING  
THEIR PARTICIPATION  
IN COMMUNITY LIFE

###