

MEDIA ADVISORY
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Metropolitan Family Service

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Gates Foundation Awards Grant to Metropolitan Family Service ***Students at 11 schools will benefit from enhanced mentoring programs***

Portland, OR – May 30, 2007 – Students at 11 high-poverty schools in the Portland tri-county area will benefit from a three-year grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to Metropolitan Family Service (MFS). MFS received a \$150,000 grant to enhance its Experience Corps program, a lauded national mentoring program that matches skilled and caring older adult volunteers with disadvantaged children. As a result, more than 1,900 children will benefit from tutoring and mentoring services focused on improvement in reading and math performance.

MFS Experience Corps teams of older adult mentors, ages 55 and over, work one-on-one with youth for approximately fifteen hours each week. With that level of involvement, outcomes can be significant, including improved academic performance, improved attendance and attitude towards school, increase in self esteem and positive personal relationships with mentors, teachers and students - - all of which contribute to a positive school atmosphere.

Funding from the Gates Foundation will enable MFS to expand volunteer leadership positions for retired professionals, resulting in quality improvements and measurable outcomes for children, schools, and mentors. New volunteer leadership positions will help recruit and manage volunteers, develop training curriculum, coordinate student/mentor matches, monitor successes and evaluate impacts.

“We view the work of this project as a structural step to engage more experienced older adult community leaders in our programs,” says Metropolitan Family Service Executive Director, Krista Larson. “We hope to use the Gates grant as a prototype for other school sites throughout the region.”

STRENGTHENING
FAMILIES AND
INDIVIDUALS
WHILE ENHANCING
THEIR PARTICIPATION
IN COMMUNITY LIFE

About the Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people -- especially those with the fewest resources -- have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, the foundation is led by CEO Patty Stonesifer and co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

Metropolitan Family Service has played a vital role in the lives of children, families, and older adults in the Portland area. We provide services at more than 100 sites, including more than 80 schools. Metropolitan Family Service's skilled and caring volunteers contribute more than 132,000 hours annually in the tri-county area, a value of \$1.3 million.

Experience Corps is a program of Metropolitan Family Service. This certified mentoring program matches skilled, talented older adults with primarily elementary school students. Teams of older adult mentors, ages 55 and over, are placed in schools and work one-on-one with youth approximately fifteen hours each week.

For more information visit www.metfamily.org.

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=998528389335987063>

For volunteer opportunities, contact Pat Kaczmarek, Marketing & Communications Manager, at 503.232.0007, ext. 170 or patk@metfamily.org

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