

**NEW COLUMBIA  
COMMUNITY AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**  
*"THE FIRST EIGHTEEN MONTHS"*



JULY 2004  
Housing Authority of Portland

**COMMUNITY AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**  
***“The First Eighteen Months”***  
**July 2004**  
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**On the cover** is Miladys Perez, a former resident of Columbia Villa, a GOALS participant and now HAP employee working at the GOALPOST Family Self Sufficiency Center. “Millie” who originally immigrated from Cuba, became a U.S. citizen in July 2004. Millie plans on returning with her children to New Columbia once built.

## History of CSS in the World of HOPE VI

The story of HOPE VI and the Housing Authority of Portland's New Columbia project is about strength, building community and taking ownership - of oneself and one's future. In short, it's about developing a better quality of life. HAP's Community and Supportive Services (CSS) are as critical to the social and economic infrastructure of New Columbia as bricks and mortar are to its physical being. At the same time new homes are taking shape, the residents of the former Columbia Villa are forging new lives. For the more than 400 families affected by the Villa's closure - 382 relocated families and 67 families who moved prior to relocation - the birth of New Columbia, regardless of whether or not residents return, is a new beginning.

Formed specifically to service relocated residents of the former Columbia Villa, Community and Supportive Services (CSS) offers residents a chance to help themselves. The goal of the CSS program is to provide residents the support they need so that their lives improve and their new housing remains stable. CSS is funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) HOPE VI Program, which grants funds to improve severely distressed public housing. Members of the CSS team are charged with keeping track of the former Columbia Villa residents and work with them to set - and accomplish - their personal and professional goals.

Residents of the now-demolished Columbia Villa housing development learned in early winter of 2003 they would have to leave their homes. Some had lived there a short time, some for decades. Many found the prospect of moving unthinkable; it meant breaking ties of family and friends, of culture and comfort. For all, it meant packing personal belongings, family members and memories in order to take that proverbial leap of faith. The Housing Authority offered support to residents during this time. Relocation Specialists along with the CSS team assisted residents in finding and securing housing. Still, many wondered what would become of their lives once they had settled into a new home. Would the Housing Authority simply vanish from their lives?

Such worries were natural, yes, but taken seriously by the Housing Authority. Put in place before the first resident moved the first box from their home was a network of compassionate, savvy individuals whose mission for the next four years is to assist families and develop a road map suitable to their goals and dreams.

**New Columbia** is an innovative, mixed-income housing development anchored by a 35 million dollar federal HOPE VI revitalization grant. The 150 million project will replace the isolated, aging Columbia Villa public housing in North Portland's Portsmouth neighborhood, offering a mix of housing types and amenities including 230 units of for sale homes. The architecture, street patterns, services, and recreational and educational opportunities are all planned to integrate New Columbia with the surrounding neighborhood and enrich the lives of residents and neighbors. The first of the 850 units of housing will be available in late summer 2005, with the entire rental units replaced by December 2006.

The reputation of HOPE VI has been somewhat desecrated by unfavorable outcomes from past HOPE VI projects. According to a report published by the Urban Institute in May 2004, HOPE VI projects have not always benefited from redevelopment. *“This can be partly attributed to a lack of meaningful resident participation in planning and insufficient attention to relocation strategies and services,”* the report stated. In some cases, the report added, *“developments were simply rehabilitated or rebuilt in the same distressed communities, with little thought to innovative design, effective services, or neighborhood revitalization.”*

The National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing emphasizes in its report to the U.S. Congress and HUD that *“no successful strategy for addressing the conditions of severely distressed public housing can ignore the support service needs of residents.”*

CSS Manager Veronica King said building a solid individual foundation is as important as the site’s structural foundation. “From the beginning, we have put as much emphasis on the people as the buildings.” Members of the CSS team seek to empower rather than overprotect residents. The objective is to promote self sufficiency as a means to a better life. As one family specialist said, *“If we can help them see life differently, they’re better for it.”*

HAP has been generous with both its vision and budget for CSS services for Columbia Villa families. Of the \$35 million HOPE VI award, \$4.25 million - or 12 percent - is allotted for CSS activities. What follows is the CSS budget:

#### THE NEW COLUMBIA CSS GOALS

- Create 62 jobs for Columbia Villa public housing and low-income adults
- Facilitate the development or support of between six and 12 resident-owned businesses
- Assist 170 working-aged adults to increase their income through employment, training or career advancement
- Double the number of adults and youth with high school diplomas, as well as GED, ABE and ESL completion
- Assist 350 youth to engage in leadership, mentorship and academic enhancement opportunities; employment; and recreational or child development activities
- Enroll and assist more than 300 families in case management, service coordination, asset accumulation and/or homeownership
- Assist 60 families with the purchase of homes or complete home-buying workshops; and
- Assist 100 families in establishing Escrow or individual development accounts

## COMMUNITY AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES BUDGET

PERSONNEL (FTE - Full Time Equivalents)	\$1,906,839
1 FTE Program Manager, 4 FTE Family Specialists, 1.5 FTE GOALS Family Self Sufficiency Specialists, 1 FTE School Stability Specialist, 1 FTE Administrative Assistant, .5 FTE ETAP Program Coordinator (and remaining .5 FTE paid by other HAP resources)	
SPECIALIZED CONTRACTS & SERVICES	
Translation/Interpretation	\$60,000
Personal Counseling Contingency	\$50,000
Emergency Assistance Fund	\$30,000
EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, CAREER DEVELOPMENT	\$537,500
EDUCATION AND COMPUTER LITERACY	\$207,000
YOUTH EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP	\$298,000
QUALITY CARE AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT	\$300,000
OTHER INITIATIVES	
Resident Leadership Initiatives	\$80,000
Homeownership Preparation and Reoccupancy Orientations	\$45,000
Evaluation (PSU)	\$100,000
EQUIPMENT/BUILDINGS/STAFF DEVELOPMENT	
Bridging the Digital Divide	\$197,000
Supplies, Staff Training, Newsletters, Data Tracking System	\$148,000
REOCCUPANCY AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT	\$289,750
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$4,249,089</b>

## Rising to the Occasion in a State of Economic Depression

The Portland story of HOPE VI and its Community and Supportive Service efforts is not a complete story without also laying out the economic times that HAP was facing. The Housing Authority of Portland received its HOPE VI grant in November 2001. Although his visit was delayed by the tragedy of Sept. 11, U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith came personally to Columbia Villa to announce that the Housing Authority would receive a \$35 million HOPE VI grant award. This great news came roughly the same time Oregon's economy began a steady downward spiral that continued to plague the state into 2004. For the next three years, Oregon would face some of the worst social services budget cuts in history, all happening just as the HAP was about to launch its CSS HOPE VI program. Despite the bleakest of odds, the Housing Authority's HOPE VI project continued to take shape - and with Columbia Villa residents due for relocation in March 2003, CSS was picking up steam. Services that had been wiped from the slate were not only possible but also probable with HOPE VI funds, funds that had come just in the nick of time.

## Housing Services Capacity to Plan and Implement a CSS Program

With its Housing Services Department already in place (Rent Assistance and Housing Services), HAP was in a unique position to create and implement a successful CSS program. Since its inception in 1994, Housing Services has written, been awarded and managed over twenty million dollars in grant funds that have contributed to community and supportive service programs that promote self sufficiency, self reliance and quality of life for HAP's residents.

Under the direction of Judi Pitre, Deputy Executive Director and guided by the philosophy that self-sufficiency means different things to different people, Housing Services offers extensive services to residents of Public Housing, Section 8, Affordable Housing and the broader community. These services include housing stability for seniors and people with disabilities, homeownership, job training and asset building as well as youth education and recreational programs. Four of Housing Service's programs - the Congregate Housing Service Program, Resident Service Coordination, GOALS (Greater Opportunities to Learn, Advance and Succeed) and Public Housing Drug Elimination programs - have been nationally recognized as best-practice programs.

Housing authorities nationwide have struggled to establish themselves as service providers, often relying heavily on outside agencies in order to meet residents' needs. But with the developed resources and solid infrastructure of Housing Services, HAP was well equipped to build and execute a comprehensive - and successful - CSS program.

The goal of the CSS program is to provide residents the support they need so that their lives improve and their housing remains stable. The program is voluntary and, to date, 87 percent of residents have chosen to work with a CSS Specialist. The CSS specialists contact residents on a regular basis to check in and see if there is anything they can be of assistance with. In addition, residents may contact their CSS specialist any time and receive support regardless of whether or not they are currently enrolled in the CSS program.

The CSS plan developed by HAP is both aggressive and comprehensive, and keeps the needs of both returning and non-returning families in its immediate sights. The planning for such services started in 2000, a year before HAP submitted its HOPE VI grants. "Throughout the entire grant application process," said Assistant Director John Keating, "we had major involvement with residents and community service providers to get input on how we should focus our services if we received the funding." That focus has not changed and it is what

makes up the CSS program today. "I remember distinctly," said John Keating "the message from the resident association was that the kinds of services needed are the ones that the residents *know* they need, not what other people *think* they need." Taking that message seriously, HAP designed core services from which adults and children would benefit. All share a common theme: developing self sufficiency and a quality of life. They are:

1. **Strengthening and improving employment and asset-building opportunities for adults and families through:**
  - Family-wage, full-time employment; career development and training; Escrow and IDA accounts; support services for childcare and transportation; and homeownership preparation.
2. **Increasing the educational attainment and life-long learning opportunities for children and adults through:**
  - Early childhood education; academic tutoring; after-school activities; basic education, ESL and GED preparation; computer and Internet training; access to computer tools; and linkages to higher education opportunities.
3. **Improving the quality of life through the promotion of social, recreational and individualized activities that support healthy families and communities, including:**
  - Counseling and family development; services that promote independent living; youth recreational and leadership activities; multicultural programming and language services; and adult leadership activities.

With these guiding principles in mind, CSS Manager Veronica King set out to write the required Community and Supportive Service Workplan. Working alongside the HUD appointed consultant *Abt. & Associates*, Veronica took all the planning work that had gone on before her, circled back to HAP's significant service partners and designed a plan to last though the lifetime of the grant. Much had changed since the original application and it was time to take the vision and make it real with the present-day landscape in mind. The Community and Supportive Services plan includes "a lot of aggressive goals, both in terms of employment and homeownership, and business development opportunities for HOPE VI families," Veronica said. Creating ambitious goals was intentional. "It really forces you to be accountable to families and mindful of the short time in which you have to work." In September 2002, HAP submitted the CSS Workplan to HUD for approval and by October 31, the plan was approved. The CSS wheels were in motion.

## **Bringing Together a CSS Team with Multiple Backgrounds and Disciplines**

Veronica King came to HAP with previous HOPE VI experience and a strong sense of what HAP's CSS should look like. Likewise, John Keating had been with Housing Services for many years and had been with the HOPE VI project since HAP first thought to apply. Together they created a vision for the team. "I knew we would need a staff from many cultures and backgrounds," John said. "We needed a team that reflected our residents and together could tackle anything."

In all, there were 14 different languages and/or dialects spoken at Columbia Villa. Bilingual staff was brought into the fold to accommodate the majority of these languages, and Housing Services already had staff that spoke Spanish, Vietnamese, Eritrean, Russian, Somali, Oromo, Tigre, Cambodian, Thai, Lao, Bosnian, Croatian and Chinese. CSS hired additional Spanish-speaking staff, "borrowed" Housing Services staff and contracted with the International Refugee Center of Oregon (IRCO) to fill in with additional languages. HAP understood in

assembling its CSS team that bringing qualified, seasoned professionals on board meant the ability to provide services that would have a positive impact on the relocated Columbia Villa families.

CSS employs one full-time program manager, four full-time family specialists, 1.5 FTE GOALS specialists, one full-time school stability specialist and one full-time administrative assistant. CSS also provides funding toward the full-time Evening Trades Apprenticeship Program (ETAP) coordinator.

The family specialists of CSS are not first-time case managers; they are individuals with depth of experience in their fields. Family Specialist Chris Corrigan brings years of experience in mental health issues and working with seniors, while Arlene Gregory, who had worked many years at Columbia Villa, has solid background with drug and alcohol issues. Juan Pratt-Sanchez, himself an immigrant, has a solid background in working with refugees and providing refugee services while Lucia Noriega Pena, also a family specialist with CSS, has long-term experience assisting migrant farm workers and advocating for her clients on broader housing issues. This core group of four in addition to Housing Services staff already in place made up the CSS team.

### It's Time to Move

CSS was in place as residents began moving out of Columbia Villa and into their new homes in March 2003. During relocation, CSS supported the relocation staff, headed by Jacob Fox, in any way it could. CSS staff helped overcome barriers to moving, and helped residents identify, visit and apply for housing. Relocation and CSS staff members met regularly, helped establish rapport and trust among participants and worked jointly on solving issues.

Residents ushered out by relocation specialists now turned to CSS as their new point of entry for assistance. While establishing contact with residents was key to a smooth transition, so, too, was conveying the relocation process to the community at large and one of the biggest challenges was communication. Toward that end, Leslie Esinga, resident community liaison, frequently met with residents of Columbia Villa, community and city leaders, schools and social services agencies to provide the latest information pertaining to New Columbia. Leslie Esinga also was charged with damage control: during relocation, the rumor mill at Columbia Villa was relentless in providing misinformation. "You had to respond when people talked - you couldn't just dismiss it," she said.

In its application for HOPE VI funds, HAP stated its intention unequivocally: *"to replace fear of failure with hope and success."* With its first task completed - ensuring that Columbia Villa families relocate successfully into stable housing - the larger and longer-term task of building and maintaining self sufficiency was set in motion.

While CSS was concerned with moving residents, the staff also faced its own relocation, both literal and figurative. In the September of 2003, CSS staff moved into its new location on North Lombard Street, by October 13, 2003, the entire Columbia Villa site had been vacated.

### Post-Relocation Housing and School Stability

Historically many housing authorities have struggled to keep in touch with residents in the post-relocation phase of a project such as New Columbia and residents were naturally suspect of such major upheaval. Despite intensive efforts to assure them they would be taken care of



at every turn, fear lodged deep in some who worried that after moving, they simply would be forgotten.

It has happened before - in other HOPE VI projects. Some housing authorities have failed to explain the difference between Public Housing and the autonomy of Section 8. Children's assimilation into new schools has been disregarded. One housing authority actually lost track of 175 families. HAP took great pains to ensure that didn't happen. "We went way above what was required of the HOPE VI relocation process" Judi Pitre said "We made a solid commitment that we would not lose track of the Columbia Villa residents". HAP made sure that residents' experience moving out of Columbia Villa and into alternative housing was a comfortable - if not uplifting - one.

For Columbia Villa residents, the shift from Public Housing to privately owned Section 8 subsidized housing was dramatic. Many had no idea what to expect outside of what they had known. For some, it was as if the safety net had been yanked out from under them. Renting an apartment or house carries additional responsibilities residents hadn't envisioned, such as keeping up a yard, paying for all the utilities and sometimes having to do your own maintenance. "It's a whole different way of living," said one of the CSS staff.

Each of four CSS family specialists is responsible for tracking between 80 and 90 HOPE VI families. Ensuring housing for those families remains stable during the next four years is a top priority for the family specialists, and a critical part of ensuring stability is helping residents find their financial footing.

Housing stability was the main focus as residents settled into their new homes. Managing that stability was particularly tough the first winter when ice, snow and brutally cold temperatures hit Portland hard. Many HOPE VI residents were largely unprepared for the sizeable utility bills that resulted from the cold. CSS responded to this crisis with \$20,000 in emergency assistance funds, managed by HAP's Housing Stability specialist and set aside for such a situation. In the spirit of CSS, however, residents didn't simply get their bills paid. They received money, but they also received a lesson in how to prepare a budget in order to cover their expenses for the next "storm" that life brings. "We don't just give them the money, we set up budgets and help them determine what priorities should be," said CSS Family Specialist Arlene Gregory.

For some residents, relocation was like winning the lottery. People got lost in the "fairytale" of having their own home and forgot what makes that a reality. For others, moving marked a clean start. For some families, housekeeping was a common issue at Columbia Villa often resulting from low self-esteem and lack of pride. When residents found a home of their own, however, the desire to clean house - both literally and figuratively - took a strong hold in some. For many, the change in environment translated to a change in outlook.

## What About the Children?

What housing stability is to adults, school stability is to their children. Nearly half of the Columbia Villa families had children who, due to relocation, were forced to change schools. "From the first moment we started to talk about relocation," relocation manager Jacob Fox said, "everyone was asking what effect this was going to have on all the Columbia Villa children." HAP recognized the potential negative effects moving youth from one school to another could have and employed a school stability specialist to work with families specifically on this issue.

The school stability specialist was slated to oversee the transition and troubleshoot for the first six months after relocation, but the need for this position was stronger than anticipated. Steps are being taken by CSS to secure the position as permanent. "What we discovered was that our families needed additional support regarding youth," Veronica King said. "School Stability Specialist Deb Butzen brings an unprecedented level of expertise focused on youth and child development and resolving behavioral issues to the staff."

"It's a vulnerable time, particularly for middle and high school students," Judi Pitre said. "We wanted to make sure the children were stabilized."

Most of the roughly 400 school-aged children previously living in Columbia Villa remained within Portland Public Schools. School principals shared their insights with CSS on how to encourage a smooth transition and offered to help in anyway possible. The results were, according to one CSS family specialist, "remarkable." Results from the Portland State University relocation survey showed that nearly 90 percent of the relocated families expressed satisfaction with the transition to new schools. Staff report that many of the children are doing better now than prior to the move. By virtue of being in a new school - around new teachers and peers - many time students have become more accountable. "When they go to a different school, they don't have to be the class clown any more, (there's) no expectation of them not doing anything," Arlene said.

*As of June 2004, the CSS school specialist has assisted 87 children with enrollment, securing special needs transportation, interfacing with new school districts, providing parent advocacy and supporting ongoing after-school needs.*

HAP Family Programs Manager Jim Trapp sees adult and child issues as inextricably linked. "If a child is not successful at school, an adult is not going to be successful," he said, adding that a child living in poverty has an increased likelihood of not finishing high school. Much of HAP's youth service are focused to prevent generational poverty by providing youth with direction and services tailored to their achievement.

Typically a strong presence in Columbia Villa for a number of years, youth programs have declined recently as the result of severe cuts to federal aid. Through an AmeriCorps sponsorship, HAP currently offers on-site early childhood literacy programs - open to HOPE VI residents - for families with children ages 0 to 5 years old. A new program "GOALS for Kids" - geared toward middle-school students and also available to HOPE VI families - teaches youth the basics of life, such as how to manage a bank account and save for the future. As well, new computer labs are springing up in other public housing sites such as Hillside Terrace, Dekum Court and Fir Acres, where students can take advantage of homework clubs and access library resources. Likewise, CSS, in partnership with the Boys & Girls Club and University Park Recreation Center, are sponsoring a variety of youth-focused summer activities.

Toward the end of assisting youth in their transition into a new home and new school, CSS is encouraging youth participation in community activities that aid in their education and development. This summer, two youth leaders have been chosen to attend a HOPE VI youth leadership event where they will meet with their HOPE VI peers from across the country. Of the approximately 480 youth between the ages of 6 and 18 who moved from Columbia Villa, CSS hopes to serve 350 youth. Included in their plan are recreation activities and educational services, such as tutoring, mentorship, leadership and skill-enhancement programs.

## Balancing Immediate Needs of Residents with the Self-Sufficiency Goals of HOPE VI

While HAP anticipates residents will take between six months and a year to feel “at home” in their new environment, CSS is, where possible, working on its next big push: assisting residents to get a better job. HAP discovered during the HOPE VI Community Needs Assessment that the majority of Columbia Villa residents were living at or below the poverty level, and a significant number of adults were experiencing barriers - such as childcare and transportation - to gaining entry-level employment.

From that same Community Needs Assessment, HAP determined that 45 percent of Columbia Villa’s employed households were dissatisfied with their current job situation. To address those concerns, CSS is focusing on entry-level employment as well as career advancement.

CSS staff says their goal is to get - and keep - their caseload working. The process to get there, however, can be a long one. Hurdles, such as finding childcare and transportation, stand in the way for many residents.

Others struggle with the basics of employment: how to write a resume, what clothing to wear to and how to respond at an interview, and once hired, what a proper work ethic looks like. To that end, CSS offers employment preparation, with the aim to help individuals build their self-esteem. CSS is helping individuals get their GEDs and then take the next step of higher education or career training. CSS also provides English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and other job skills and training programs.

Of the more than 400 adults who are able to work, roughly 36 percent work and roughly 27 percent report zero income. CSS hopes to increase the working population dramatically. And succeed in making 170 new job placements by the end of its term.

The CSS strategy is to get to know the family - get a sense of who they are - and go from there. Offering motivation - and positive feedback - can be key to helping individuals see their lives differently. “You have to recognize their accomplishments,” Arlene said. “Every single time my client does something good, I say, ‘That is wonderful.’ They want to hear those words again.”

## Providing Crisis Management with a Self-Sufficiency Focus

Almost everything CSS does comes down to one question: “You’ve got your new housing, now what do you want to do?” The biggest challenge to the CSS staff is responding to crisis while also helping family’s progress toward meeting their goals. In order to achieve any degree of self-sufficiency CSS staff must first quell the chaos within the family. Many residents have been entrenched over the long-term in survival and have never had the opportunity to ask themselves the question at which change begins: What are my goals?

For some, the lifestyle of doing nothing and going nowhere - living in isolation at Columbia Villa - has been abandoned in favor of learning to be productive. For almost everyone who left Columbia Villa, fear played a major role in facing - and creating - change. CSS staff members have been able to soften that blow. “If you have somebody you can talk to and work through that process,” said Arlene Gregory, “you begin to think about things differently.” Helping residents help themselves is about meeting them where they are, and handing them the reins.

## An Example

One of the residents CSS worked with was a single parent with a very large family. The resident had settled into their new home, but from the start the property owner wasn't holding up their end of the bargain. Even though it is the owner's responsibility to pay the garbage bills, the bills were not being paid, and the garbage was piling up. As Thanksgiving came, the heat in the house went off and stayed off for over a week while the resident waited for it to be repaired. Then a small fire broke out due to a temporary heater and the former Columbia Villa resident was starting to worry that her housing was at risk. The property owner was upset about the fire, about the furnace, about the garbage and started to blame the resident. That's when the resident called the Community and Supportive Services Office. Right away, one of the CSS staff got involved to take care of the immediate needs of the garbage and lack of heat in the house. The CSS specialist attempted to work with the property owner but with little success. When it became obvious that the property owner was not going to change their ways, the CSS specialist and the resident both agreed that it was time to look for another place. "Looking for a new home for a very large family, in the middle of winter wasn't the easiest thing to do," said the CSS staff, "but we did it." We got the property owner to let our resident out of the lease but the problems weren't over. Every time a new place was found the rental application was turned down because the disgruntled property owner would only provide bad references for the resident. It was up to CSS to intervene and convince the potential new owner that the whole story wasn't being told and that this HOPE VI family would make an excellent tenant. Finally, a house was found and the family was moved, settling in to a part of town they had wanted to live in the first place.

## Connecting with Community Partners and Utilizing Existing HAP Services

One of its strongest resources for CSS households is with HAP's own GOALS<sup>1</sup> Family Self Sufficiency Program - a program paramount to residents wanting to achieve self sufficiency. The GOALS program, which began in 1994, offers residents a chance to get off public assistance and, ideally, into their own home within five years. The only requirement is to seek and maintain suitable employment for the duration of the contract, and the benefit to residents is huge. Many residents come to the GOALS program with zero earned income or an income of less than \$10,000. Once they obtain employment, their earning power increases - and with it, their rent. For every dollar the rent increases above what an individual or family was paying when they came into the GOALS program, HUD<sup>2</sup> provides matching funds, which go into an interest-bearing Escrow account. When the contract is up, residents come away with not only a better job but also a considerable sum of money, which is typically used as a down payment on a home or for higher education. Many exit the GOALS program earning upwards of \$25,000 per year and with an average Escrow payout of \$6,500.

Since 1999, GOALS has graduated 349 families and generated more than \$2 million in Escrow savings. A third (137) of these families have gone on to own their own home. Currently, there are 543 active GOALS participants including former Columbia Villa residents. Another 334 Housing Authority residents are waiting to come on the program.

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<sup>1</sup> Greater Opportunity to Advance Learn and Succeed

With GOALS, it's not about the money for residents, but about the possibility of homeownership and the incredible sense of accomplishment it brings to someone whose hard times led them to public assistance. Of the roughly 600 people currently taking part in GOALS, 125 are previous Columbia Villa residents. "The GOALS program offers another huge opportunity for residents of HOPE VI," GOALS Supervisor Peggy Martini said. "The ultimate is becoming self sufficient and getting off housing altogether, and that's why we're here. When you're told there's an opportunity to work with a staff person to keep moving up, that's really powerful."

HAP partners with more than 80 community agencies, including Portland Community College (PCC), One Economy Corp., the Portland Housing Center, the YWCA of Greater Portland, Cascadia Healthcare, Multnomah County, Boys and Girls Club and University Park Community Center, Albina Head Start and IRCO, to name a few. During relocation these partners helped staff make certain that as residents moved to new neighborhoods they were linked to services they had been receiving.

"The advantage of GOALS", Jim Trapp said, "is that it provides residents with a major asset-building tool." While some would argue that it doesn't pay to get out of poverty, GOALS and HUD jointly give residents the opportunity to get on their feet and come away from the program with homeownership potential.

Portland Community College (PCC) has been a major partner with the HAP for nearly a decade. Before Columbia Villa was torn down, PCC had a significant presence at the Columbia Villa Family Investment Center called "The GOALPOST." "This partnership is alive and well today," said John Keating. "When it was time to move all the services at the GOALPOST, the college came along with us to our temporary offices down the street on Lombard." Through PCC's Workforce Network, HOPE VI residents can take advantage of "The One Stop," a group of workforce development agencies that provides employment and training services, such as job postings, interviews and placements.

"Sending people with just a resume won't build self-esteem," Jim Trapp said. "If you really prep people for interviews, applications, (how to) highlight their skills ... for some of the adults, it's the first time an adult has actually cared about them."

### **Providing Workforce Training in the Midst of Major Construction**

A major piece of the HOPE VI initiative was that residents benefited from this major development. When HAP was awarded the HOPE VI grant, they already had in place a successful construction-training program call ETAP (Evening Trades Apprenticeship Preparation).

HAP's Evening Trades Apprenticeship Preparation (ETAP) program has provided HUD grant-funded apprenticeship preparation training since 1998, leading to the successful employment of 70 low-income residents in family-wage construction trades employment largely through the state-certified apprenticeship system.

As part of its workplan, CSS vowed to create 62 jobs for public housing and low-income adults, and ETAP was one of the ways to get there. The most sought-out jobs were those at the construction, but other placements were made as well including working with the moving companies and providing administrative assistance in the project offices.


Fifty of these projected jobs have been created to date. Due to overwhelming success, CSS has increased the number to include an additional 40 job placements. With regard to the construction jobs, HAP partners with Walsh Construction Co., which places ETAP workers either directly or indirectly through a subcontractor. Working in construction is a great way for many to break the

cycle of poverty. "ETAP provides a huge jumpstart to get into and succeed in the construction industry," said ETAP coordinator Michael Burch "It's possible to make good money out of apprenticeships."

Under the direction of ETAP coordinator Michael Burch, residents train with members of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, AFL-CIO, at the Willamette Carpenters Training Center in Northeast Portland. "When they go out to their first job site, they know the equipment and how to safely pick things up," Michael said. "ETAP provides the necessary training to link residents and community neighbors to New Columbia jobs. It creates greater opportunity for low-income families, minorities and women to participate in the construction industry."

As part of providing training and opportunities for residents with small businesses, HAP has contracted with these residents to cater events such as the Columbia Villa resident reunion, public meetings and the New Columbia wall-raising event. In early July, a resident and GOALS participant opened "Coffee Mama" at the New Columbia worksite, selling coffee and pastries to the construction workers. As well, CSS has selected a North Portland business "Dixon's Ribs" to conduct business on the construction site for New Columbia. With the help of HOPE VI funds, Veronica said, residents "become the economic drivers and reap the benefits."

## Who better to rebuild a community than the people who are part of the community.



When Walsh Construction Co./OR began work on the New Columbia housing project, we wanted to hire skilled people who took pride in a job well done. So, naturally, we looked to the neighborhood.

As a result, more than 60% of the workforce was women and people of color. Disadvantaged, Minority, Women and Emerging Small Businesses were awarded 30% of subcontracts. How did we do it? Walsh Construction Co./OR and the Housing Authority of Portland helped subcontractors hire trades people from the community.

Join our team! Subcontractors and suppliers, call Carolyn Wilson at 503-222-4375 for information on the next phase or visit our website at [www.walshconstructionco.com](http://www.walshconstructionco.com). For on-site employment opportunities, call Valencia Edwards at 503-542-8160.


**Pre-bid Meeting Dates for 75 Units of Phase One Housing**

**Bidding:** February 10, 9-11 a.m. and February 13, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

**Plans:** February 11, 9-11 a.m.

**Allys/Comm. Green:** February 12, 9-11 a.m.

All pre-bid meetings to be held at the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs (OAME) 4134 N. Vancouver Avenue Portland



To date, 25 percent of project contracting has been awarded to minority, women-owned or small emerging businesses.

Of all qualified labor hours, minorities or women have performed 44 percent.

ETAP apprentices have performed 13 percent of all qualified labor hours.

## Evaluating the Results

A rating factor in the HOPE VI grant application was based on grantees evaluating the effect HOPE VI has on residents. HUD's preference was that local universities provide an independent evaluation. In partnership with Portland State University's School of Urban Studies and Planning, an evaluation is being implemented to determine resident satisfaction in relocation and the impact of providing Community and Supportive Services (CSS) to the previous residents of Columbia Villa. The purpose of the evaluation is to monitor and assess the following components of the HOPE VI revitalization of Columbia Villa: relocation, housing stability, community supportive services and re-occupancy. With the assistance of Jo Ann Bowman of Bowman Consulting Services, HAP identified and set the goal of answering 12 "hard questions" that may be of concern to the local community. The evaluation addresses these questions by gathering data primarily through a mail survey to residents, but also through interviews with HAP staff, residents and project affiliates. Of the three surveys designed, one was administered in fall of 2003, and two more are planned for the summer and winter of 2004.

The first survey asked questions concerning residents' relocation experience; their new homes, neighborhoods, and schools; housing stability; and their feelings about the relocation. It was mailed to 382 households in November 2003 with a cover letter from PSU explaining the evaluation study and confidentiality procedures. The survey asked 36 questions and was translated into five languages. PSU received a 46 percent response rate. The second survey, focused on post-relocation housing stability, will be sent out during the summer of 2004.

- About 90 percent of survey respondents considered the staff to be somewhat or very helpful and were satisfied overall with the services received
- About three-quarters of residents now use Section 8 and one-quarter are in public housing
- About two-thirds (64 percent) of residents who wished to relocate to North Portland were able to do so
- A large majority of respondents indicate that they are very or somewhat satisfied with their new homes (89 percent) and neighborhoods (84 percent)
- More than half (58 percent) said their children liked their new home better than their Columbia Villa apartment
- Nearly half (46 percent) were working with a HOPE VI Family Programs Specialist
- Two-thirds (67 percent) knew that assistance was available if they became concerned about their housing
- Nearly half of the residents want to return to New Columbia (46 percent)
- Nearly two-fifths remain unsure (38 percent)
- Nearly one-fifth do not want to return (15 percent)

## The Reviews Are In

In June 2004, the Housing Authority received a site visit from HUD HOPE VI Headquarters in Washington. HUD staff person Tony Hebert spent a day going over how the Housing Authority planned and implemented their Relocation and Community and Supportive Services efforts. A few days after the visit, the Housing Authority received the following message from Washington:

**From:** "tony\_x.\_hebert@hud.gov" <tony\_x.\_hebert@hud.gov>  
**To:** "Veronica@hapdx.org" <Veronica@hapdx.org>  
**Date:** 06/09/2004 12:37:45 PM  
**Subject:** HUD HOPE VI CSS Site Visit Comments - Portland, OR

During the HOPE VI Community and Supportive Services (CSS) site visit to Portland on June 2, 2004, HUD met with housing authority staff to discuss the progress of CSS activities at Columbia Villa. Overall, the housing authority has made excellent progress on its CSS program and has developed a number of innovative approaches for delivering services to public housing families.

The relocation and case management strategies developed by the housing authority are particularly noteworthy. The housing authority overcame the challenges of relocation while providing impacted residents with quality counseling and solid relocation options in good neighborhoods. Throughout the process the housing authority assessed the stability of relocated households, worked with CSS case managers to stabilize families with the greatest need and evaluated both the status of these families and the efficacy of the service process to most effectively address existing and emergent issues. The case management systems are outstanding and the caseload triage approach is a best practice for maximizing the impact of HOPE VI CSS on public housing families, especially those with the greatest need.

The housing authority is setting a new standard for excellence in relocation and case management approaches among HOPE VI grantees that other housing authorities can learn from and use to improve their service delivery systems. We look forward to learning more from the strategies you have developed to overcome HOPE VI CSS challenges in Portland. We plan to share your approaches with our 2003 grantees as examples of leading edge HOPE VI CSS practices.

Tony Hebert  
Office of Public Housing Investments HOPE VI  
HUD / Washington, DC

## What Next?

One of the goals of CSS is to ensure that every household has the opportunity for successful reentry into New Columbia beginning in 2005. As rental units are ready for occupancy, residents who were relocated from Columbia Villa will have the first opportunity to move back. With a focus on building skills and securing employment, CSS acknowledges that stable housing and self sufficiency work hand in hand. While CSS is slated as a four-year program, HAP is pursuing stretching the funding to accommodate a fifth year of services in order to assist residents as they return to New Columbia. "It will be critical that there are services



available from the day that new residents move in," said John Keating. "We want to make sure everybody gets off to a great start and that all these efforts have been worth the wait."

For all residents - whether their goal is to stay where they are living or return to New Columbia - New Columbia won't be what it once was, and many think that's a good thing. "I think it was good for people to get out and find out what it's like to not live (in Columbia Villa)," said Peggy Martini. As a result, she said, people's perspective has shifted. "I think a lot of people want to move back to become part of a community that is an ideal place to raise kids - not because they want to come back to be on subsidized housing."

Saying goodbye to the socially and physically distressed Columbia Villa has opened a new door - begun a new chapter - for many of its residents. Many see public housing now, as they hadn't seen it before - as a stepping-stone to a better life. And many hold CSS responsible.

"I've never been part of such a dynamic team before where the strengths of each and every person were capitalized on, where at the end of the day, people really felt like they were heard," Leslie Esinga said. Planning and executing relocation, and bringing CSS into the fold at the right time, were all challenges, but HAP was thorough in its process. "I think it was thought through with great detail" Leslie Esinga said.

Thorough and, so far, successful, many hope HAP's New Columbia project will be held up as a prototype HOPE VI project in the nation. In order to earn the respect and trust of HOPE VI residents, HAP had to "talk the talk and walk the walk." "To a great extent, the Housing Authority has done that," Leslie Esinga said. And for those who are working toward the ultimate goal of homeownership, CSS and GOALS staff are as excited as the residents to help make the dream a reality. Guided by the compassionate and knowledgeable folks of CSS, residents no longer see education, employment and homeownership as lofty goals, but rather, as goals that are achievable.

Over the next couple of years, CSS staff continues to work towards the positive outcomes for those who have left Columbia Villa, regardless of whether they chose to return to New Columbia. What follows are highlights of CSS articles featuring the steps taken along the way, leading towards the future success of HOPE VI and its Community Supportive Services.

As of early summer 2004, CSS case management staff has had 1500 individual contacts with relocated households. They have completed 319 employment assessments and conducted 600 home visits. Staff members have helped 40 households with rent and utility assistance, 37 households with transportation needs and have assisted 59 households overcome landlord/tenant issues. In addition, 60 households have enrolled in the GOALS Self Sufficiency program. The CSS staff continues its work with the former residents of Columbia Villa and is meeting, and sometimes exceeding, the goals set out for HOPE VI.

The newsletter of the New Columbia project published monthly by the Housing Authority of Portland

# NEW COLUMBIA

ISSUE NUMBER THREE • DECEMBER 2002

# News

## SERVICES PROGRAM RECEIVES FEDERAL APPROVAL

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approved the New Columbia Community and Supportive Services (CSS) Workplan on October 31, triggering the implementation of a comprehensive program to invest more than \$4 million (12 percent of the HOPE VI grant) in promoting resident self-sufficiency. In addition to these funds, several community partners have committed to contributing substantial amounts of funding and direct services to foster education, employment, and a healthy neighborhood environment for residents.

Education and training opportunities will include increasing the number of young children participating in childhood development activities and assisting 350 youth to engage in leadership, mentoring, and academic achievement programs. Through increased enrollment and higher success rates in adult education and job training programs, the CSS program aims to increase the number of youth and adults with high school diplomas and place 180 adults in employment, training, or career advancement programs.

The Housing Authority will endeavor to create 62 jobs with service providers and contractors during the construction of New Columbia, as well as promote the development and support of 6 to 12 resident-owned businesses to provide services to the project.

A series of home-buying workshops to help 20 to 40 families interested in buying homes in New Columbia and 100 escrow accounts will be offered to help households build financial assets. When construction is complete and the residents of New Columbia have returned to their neighborhood, new facilities to promote a healthy, fulfilling social environment will include a child and youth development center, a day care center, parks and recreational facilities, and community rooms.

For more information on the program, contact Veronica Sherman, Community and Supportive Services Manager, at 503-802-8439. ■

## Family Support Staff on Board

With the hiring of four family specialists, the Housing Authority will be able to provide additional support services to Columbia Villa families as they are relocated.

The new family support staff are working first with special needs groups and at-risk families requiring substantial assistance before and during relocation. The family specialists are identifying needs, arranging appointments, and providing childcare referrals so that residents can access the appropriate social service providers throughout the relocation period.

The family specialists are working closely with the relocation specialists during this critical period to make sure that the social service needs of all families are met during relocation. The family specialists will also establish working relationships with existing HAP social service partners in order to provide comprehensive support for Columbia Villa residents.

Once a family is relocated, a family specialist will work with the household to establish services in their new neighborhood and develop a long-term family action plan focused on employment training and educational achievement for adults and youth. To make sure that needs continue to be met, the family specialists will maintain regular contact with families during the relocation period.

All of the new family specialists have significant experience with low-income and special needs populations and are familiar with the social service providers and agencies in the Portland area. For more information on the family support program, contact Veronica Sherman, Community and Supportive Services Program Manager, at 503-802-8439 or [veronica@hapdx.org](mailto:veronica@hapdx.org).

### Juan Pratz-Sanchez

Juan has spent the past four years as a relocation specialist with the SOAR program of Ecumenical Ministries of Portland establishing homes and social services for low-income, Spanish speaking immigrants. Juan is also an experienced Spanish language translator and fluent in French.



### Lucia Peña

Lucia has over twenty years of experience as an advocate working to locate jobs and housing for low-income and disadvantaged people. She has been a case management worker for Multnomah County for families in transition. More recently, she served as Housing Programs Manager for Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) of Oregon. Lucia is also fluent in Spanish.



### Christopher Corrigan

Christopher comes to HAP from Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare, where he was a crisis case manager, linking clients with community and social services. Prior to his work with mentally ill clients, Chris was an occupancy specialist with Network Housing, Inc.

### Arlene Gregory

Arlene has more than ten years of experience working with families and individuals with substance abuse issues to help stabilize their lives. Most recently she has been a substance abuse counselor and family intervention specialist with The Right Choice and DePaul Treatment, Inc.



# New Columbia's Economic Pie Benefits Local Skilled Workers and Targeted Businesses

In 18 months, New Columbia will be a neighborhood. For now, it's a \$138 million economic engine. And when the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awards major grants such as its \$35 million HOPE VI grant to the Housing Authority of Portland, it wants to create work opportunities for those who are low-income or in other ways disadvantaged.

In its first months, New Columbia has achieved this aim admirably. From Sept. 1–Dec. 31, 2003, women and minorities put in 59.27 percent of the work hours and made up 20.5 percent of the construction workforce.

"Really, the level of participation on New Columbia is pretty outstanding," says Cathleen Massier, contract compliance specialist with the city of Portland, which is administering New Columbia's construction-related workforce training and hiring program. "The New Columbia project is double the norm."

Massier says the project's ability to tap graduates of the Evening Trades Apprenticeship Preparation (ETAP) program plays a big role in the strong numbers. (See related story, Page 3.)

Elaine Holt, purchasing manager for the HAP, says both HAP and Walsh Construction want the New Columbia project to provide economic opportunity on multiple fronts. Hiring the ETAP

graduates is one way. Some apprentices are recruited through networking with the city or with contractors looking for a good match between local talent and project needs. Other skilled workers are hired after they knock on the door. "We've had people from the community just walk up to the trailer on site and say, 'Do you have jobs?'" says Holt.

HAP also aspires to award 20 percent of New Columbia's contract dollars to targeted businesses, which include those that are state-certified as emerging small businesses, women-owned or minority-owned, SBA Small Disadvantaged Businesses, HAP resident-owned businesses and those federally designated as a disadvantaged business enterprise. As of Dec. 31, 2003, says Holt, 25 percent of New Columbia contracts were awarded to such businesses.

"We can't promise we can retain those numbers," says Holt, noting that the 59.27 percent is unusually high. "But it's a good start, and we think we will remain above the norm in the project."

HAP and Walsh have tried to smooth the way for targeted businesses to participate in the project by providing general pollution insurance coverage, breaking the scope of work into bids that are manageable for small enterprises, and contracting with the Housing Development Center to provide technical assistance to small firms.

Myriam Ceballos owns Elite Sign, a family business in Southeast Portland. Elite Sign is certified as a minority-owned, woman-owned and disadvantaged business, and Ceballos felt great when Walsh and HAP approached her for two different sign and banner projects for New Columbia.

"It's a foot in the door, which is very important," says Ceballos, 56, who founded her company in 1991 after earning her MBA. "Always what we ask for is the opportunity: If they give us the opportunity, we prove ourselves. We would love to do more work for New Columbia."

Finally, HAP and Walsh hope to reach out to the broader community with employment opportunities.

"There's an indirect economic boost as well," adds John Keating HAP's assistant director of community services, "just by having all this activity going on in North Portland." ■

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## New Columbia Milestones



June 2001	HOPE VI Grant Application submitted
October 2001	HAP notified that HOPE VI Grant Application approved
September 2002	HAP submits Community and Supportive Services (CSS) Work Plan to HUD
October 31, 2002	HUD approves CSS Work Plan
December 20, 2002	HAP submits Relocation Plan to HUD
January 1, 2003	Relocation staff on board
February 6, 2003	CSS Family Specialists on board
February 10, 2003	HUD approves Relocation Plan
March 31, 2003	First household relocated
July 23, 2003	Relocation hits the halfway mark
October 6, 2003	343 of Columbia Villa residents enrolled in CSS Program
October 13, 2003	All 382 Columbia Villa households relocated
November 03 -March 2004	Housing stability efforts keep families securely housed through the first winter
April 2004	Employment Assessments Complete
June 2004	CSS receives excellent reviews from HUD site visit
January 2005	Property Management under contract for New Columbia Relocated residents begin the return process
July 2005	First round of residents move into New Columbia CSS staff begin delivering on site services
September 2005 through December 2006	Remaining residents who wish to return to New Columbia do so through December 2006
December 2006	Project Complete
January - December 2007	New Columbia CSS Services continue post re-occupancy

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