

## Portland Children's Investment Fund For Portland's Children, For Portland's Future

By Dan Saltzman

Portland is nationally recognized as one of the nation's most family-friendly cities. We have an abundance of parks, a strong public education system, healthy neighborhoods, a vital downtown and an engaged electorate that cares about issues across the street and around the world.

Portland voters demonstrated their support of families by passing the children's levy in 2002 that created the Children's Investment Fund (CHIF), financed through a five-year property tax on city homeowners of about \$60 a year for a home with an assessed value of \$150,000.

Through 2008, nearly \$40 million will be invested in proven programs at organizations throughout the city in early childhood development, after school and mentoring and child abuse prevention and intervention. The beneficiaries are a diversified population that includes white, Hispanic, African-American, Asian and Native American children living in all parts of Portland.

Some speak little or no English. Some are refugees from countries such as Bosnia and Somalia. Some have grown up with little or no resources to give them a healthy start. But ALL are finding hope and opportunity through the programs CHIF supports.

The need in Portland is great.

- 23 percent of the city's children live in extreme poverty, which the federal government defines as about \$19,000 a year for a family of four.
- More than 3,000 children in Multnomah County are in foster care.
- One in every five babies in Multnomah County is born to a high school dropout.
- Portland Police review about 1,000 child abuse and neglect cases each month.

We can change those depressing statistics because we know that investing in quality, evidence-based programs for children produces long-term, positive outcomes. CHIF investments are supporting:



Dan Saltzman, Portland city commissioner and chair of the Children's Investment Fund Allocation Committee, is pictured here at Albina Early Head Start in northeast Portland.

- Early education childcare, early intervention programs and improved access to health screenings so Portland's at-risk children reach kindergarten healthy and prepared to learn.
  - Average annual investment: \$3.4 million serving 2,400 children.
  - A study of our early childhood programs shows 80 percent of the children served are meeting key milestones in language and cognitive development and in the acquisition of social-emotional and motor skills.
  - Safe and constructive after-school and mentoring activities to promote academic achievement, reduce the number of juveniles victimized by crime and improve graduation rates for students in middle and high schools.
  - Average annual investment: \$3 million serving 5,700 children.
  - Portland Public School students attending these programs have made marked improvement in their attendance and behavior and on reading and math test scores.
  - Programs that support stressed families most at risk for abuse and neglect and intervention programs to mitigate the damage of abuse and neglect on children.
  - Average annual investment: \$1.5 million serving 1,500 children.
  - Our programs are helping families avoid violence, assisting homeless teens complete drug and alcohol treatment programs and decreasing high-risk behaviors in many others.
- Accountability is important. Children's Investment Fund staff monitors grantee progress on an ongoing basis and audits are required of every organization we support. The fund itself is subject to annual audits and administrative costs cannot exceed 5 percent, ensuring that 95 cents of every dollar is invested back into community programs serving children.
- Results show our investments are making a difference as each year:
- 1,300 children receive developmental screenings.
  - 400 children from immigrant and refugee families receive services.