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### **As Boomers Step Down, New Leaders Step Up**

Call it the graying of the do-good generation: Oregon Baby Boomers working for non-profit organizations are getting older by the minute, and leaving a dearth of experienced leaders as they retire. That worried the Neighborhood Partnership Fund (NPF) in Portland Oregon, a statewide nonprofit providing leadership and resources to help build affordable homes, healthy communities and economic opportunities for low-income Oregonians.

"Executive directors head up the community development corporations we partner with," says Cynthia Winter, NPF's Program Director, "and we expect about sixty per cent to be retiring in the next few years. So we got busy on the problem." The solution was Future Leaders Initiative (FLI), a training program to make sure that executive directors departing from CDCs don't leave a vacuum of experience, wisdom and leadership skills when they go.

"Future Leaders was designed with three goals," says Winter. "to grow incoming leaders, to deepen institutional knowledge, and increase stability in times of transition. Next, we also wanted a more diverse leader body -- leaders from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds, leaders of color, leaders with roots in our communities statewide." Future Leaders final goal was to create a group of CDC professionals who would rely on each other for support throughout their careers.

And bottom line: the course had to produce immediate, measurable, real-world results for participants and the CDCs employing them.

Eighteen employees from affordable housing programs as varied as farm worker housing to shelter for the urban poor joined FLI. The course is headed up by leaders with a track record of success in their fields, and offers one-on-one coaching provided by skilled professionals. Six months ago, each participant identified a personal performance challenge, and through the course is seeking to meet it.

Now at its halfway point, employers and future leaders alike are singing the program's praises. Kate Allen, Portland Director of Enterprise Community Partners says of her participant's progress, "I see the benefits of her involvement in Future Leaders every single day." Adds executive director of Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives Maxine Fitzpatrick of her employee, "He represents our organization's next round of leadership."

Rachel Post directs Supportive Housing and Employment for Central City Concern. She says FLI has played a key role in helping her meet her challenge to increase employment and placement into permanent housing by 20%. "I think I have become a more deliberate leader," she says, while another participant says, "I have seen changes I couldn't have imagined for myself."

Sandye Brown, an FLI coach, sums up her observations: "What I see are young people who have come to this program who are much more reflective about who they are and their capacity to cause change in their organizations." This is "managerial courage," she says, the ability to expect others to rally around a vision, and to manage upwards, from a mid-point in an organization. Participants are taking risks "that they wouldn't have done previously," she says, and are already making a difference.

"I can tell you this," says Brown, "they will not be the same people coming out of this program as they were going into it."

Cynthia Winter is already planning for the next class of Future Leaders. "We're proud of this group and confident they'll fill the shoes of those retiring," she says. "Now," she says with a smile, "we're going to help grow more."

**The complete story and photographs of the program can be found at: <http://futureleaders.tnpf.org>**

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NPF's innovative leadership and resources support the creation of affordable homes, healthy communities, and economic opportunities for low-income Oregonians. Underlying all of our strategic goals is a commitment to work to maximize resources for affordable housing development and community development, in order to best support the work of our partner organizations.