



## Social Venture Partners Portland Investee Final Report

**Investee:** Forest Grove Latino Community Network

**Investee Contact(s):** Anabelle Vargas-Fierro

**SVPP Lead Partner:** Laurie Weiss

**Investment Period:** Sept 2006 – June 2008

**Annual Operating Budget:** \$30,000 [SVPP grant final year]

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### **Investee Mission and Vision:**

A coalition of the Forest Grove School District, state, and county government organizations, and several local community-based organizations aimed at engaging Latino students and parents to improve academic connectedness and success. The coalition currently includes the FGSD, OSU 4H Tech Wizards, Northwest Oregon Housing Development Corporation, Centro Cultural, Washington County Sheriff's Office, Adelante Mujeres, SMART program and Hillsboro School District.

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### **SVPP Investment and Objective:**

**Objective:** Foster self-empowerment and vision building structures in Latino families so they become motivated to seek higher levels of learning and to support their children to succeed in school and life through four key targeted areas:

- Expanding interagency engagement to create stronger links between organizations that support the Forest Grove school district's Latino population;
  - Empowering parents by connecting them to students and schools;
  - Empowering students by developing deep and broad-based educational connections beyond school-based learning;
  - Developing student skills by focusing on the home study environment with technology and learning tools
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### **Results & Accomplishments:**

Numerous programs targeting local Latino families were launched during the two years of this grant. These include:

- Community strategic planning and local focus groups to determine the school district and community directions;
  - 4 4-H Tech Wizard workshops on communication, family values, and integration into the school system;
  - The introduction of Lego Robotics at the elementary school level;
  - Parent training in English, computers, citizenship, driving, gang awareness, home safety, child discipline, child dental care, and taxes
  - NW Oregon Housing Development Corporation workshops in leadership training, Hand-on-Banking, and home buying and predatory lending;
  - Creation and training of a district-wide Latino Parent Advisory Committee (now Parent Advisory Committee) and parent groups in the HS and Middle School;
  - Several English Language Learners and Migrant Parents general meetings were held in the second year to focus on what parents need to support their children's education;
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- An Education Fair was held in the second year of the grant, drawing over 145 Latino families who received information on and assistance with colleges and the application and financial aid processes;
- The Bienestar Familiar (Family Wellness) program was launched in conjunction with Centro Cultural, providing workshops to improve family communication between migrant parents and their high school students;
- Adelante Chicas was kicked off with Adelante Mujeres, providing mentoring for migrant girls;
- A new District-wide preschool program launched, providing pre-school instruction for children, parental classes, and childcare services, was declared “state-of-the-art” by the State of Oregon, with suggestions to use it as a model for other programs;
- Several hundred home visits were conducted by the HDC Promotoras and Centro Cultural, making referrals in health care and providing school supplies;
- Girl Scouts of America launched a Latino outreach program where local high school girls provide mentoring for local elementary school girls.

Results include increased participation in 4-H Tech Wizards by 25% in the first year and one level of ELL proficiency improvement by 75% of the students. Data for the 2007-2008 school year specific to the Latino student population have been difficult to come by. However, the percent of students meeting or exceeding Oregon standards in reading, writing and math increased at nearly every grade level.

### Volunteer Partners/Friends of SVPP and their Key Contributions:

Laurie Weiss, Team Lead, SMART volunteer  
 Martha Soltesz, Migrant Pre-school Parent Education  
 David Kahl, Parent Tax Education

### Total Impact:

Category	Since Inception
Value of volunteer hours from partners and friends	\$12,570
SVPP direct financial contributions (grants)	\$40,000
Indirection contributions – donations from partners, friends, businesses, co-investments, in-kind because of introduction by SVPP	\$30,000
Projected operational impact from SVPP-supported projects/initiatives	\$0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$82,570</b>

### Summary:

**Grant Objective:** Foster self-empowerment and vision building structures in Latino families so they become motivated to seek higher levels of learning and to support their children to succeed in school and life through four key targeted areas:

1. Expanding interagency engagement to create stronger links between organizations that support the Forest Grove school district’s Latino population
  - Closer ties were developed and numerous joint programs launched between the Forest Grove School District and Adelante Mujeres, Centro Cultural, and NW HDC.
2. Empowering parents by connecting them to students and schools



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- As mentioned previously, many workshops were held to educate parents on the school system, get them engaged in district activities through parent committees, and train them in the tools they need to help their children succeed.
- 3. Empowering students by developing deep and broad-based educational connections beyond school-based learning
  - The introduction of mentoring programs, communication training, afterschool intervention programs all help the Latino students in life beyond school.
- 4. Developing student skills by focusing on the home study environment with technology and learning tools
  - Most of the progress in this area was achieved during the first year of the grant, including the expansion of participation in the 4-H Tech Wizards program, the launching of elementary school-based Lego Robotics, and the distribution of over 25 computers to Latino families.

### Investee Comments:

During the investment period Forest Grove School District received from SVPP, many goals (previously listed) were accomplished. A crucial one is the increment of parent involvement at the schools and more interaction of the parents in their children education.

As an investee contact, I always received the support of the SVPP Lead Partner, Laurie Weiss. She contacted me periodically by email or phone calls to see how she can support the projects. She made important contacts that helped to develop the partnership of the FGSD with other community agencies.

Laurie Weiss also was the link to contact David Kahl who presented a parent workshop about taxes. Ms. Weiss also was the contact with Martha Soltesz who was the coordinator for parent classes in our "Little Sunshine" Pre-School Program. Laurie Weiss participated also in the SMART Program.

The Lead Partner was always a great support to prepare the reports to SVPP.

We would like to have more participation of the SVPP in our programs and projects. The investee contact presented various opportunities but it seemed they didn't fit the interest of the partners. The location of our community could be another reason for the low participation of the partners.

FGSD and the Forest Grove – Cornelius community were positively impacted for the SVPP investee and the district decided to continue with the position created by the SVPP grant for the continuity of the work and assets accomplished during the SVPP investment period.



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## Internal Assessment and Lessons Learned

### **Did the investment have clear and measurable objectives from the beginning? Did the objectives change during our investment? How did we perform against those objectives?**

Initially, the objectives were clear and measurable. Unfortunately, the change in personnel that began as we started our investment, led to the investee changing the work plan and, thereby, the objectives. It was unrealized by us due to the lack of engagement by the first Lead Partner. As a result, we performed relatively poorly against the original objectives; I would gauge it at ~65%.

### **Were there significant and meaningful volunteer opportunities at the Investee? Did you have sufficient qualified volunteers to meet the investee's needs?**

There were not good volunteer opportunities at FGLCN. I think there could have been, had the investee taken the time to define them and had the program continues along the original grant key focus (namely shoring up the community-based organizations and not just the school district). What was available to us was less meaningful, less professional work. There was only one significant volunteer opportunity, and it was not set up well for success.

On the availability of volunteers side, it is unlikely that we would have found sufficient volunteers had the investee done their part. As a result of the change in the investee's objectives, they were looking for more Spanish speaking volunteers than we had originally expected. Also, they type of volunteer they sought was different from originally expected.

### **Was there strong, sustained leadership at the Investee when we began the investment and throughout the investment period? Did this leadership strength/weakness at the Investee affect our ability to make a meaningful impact?**

The original leadership at the investee was exceptionally strong. However, a key person left the community as we were getting ready to invest. Her replacement leading the program convinced us that there was strong commitment for the original mission to move forward, but then did not participate to the level expected once the grant was given. By the start of the second year of the investment, all of the lead players had left, and the remaining team and new participants did not know what the original program was. We realized late in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year that the original leaders had never communicated the grant program to the rest of the community. As a result, there was quite a bit of anger and frustration on the part of some of the community players.

### **Have we increased the self-sufficiency of the Investee as a result of our investment? (i.e. have we significantly impacted the organization)?**

While many things worked against the success of the original plan, there was still tremendous improvement in the target community served (western Washington county Latino students and parents) and an improved perspective on the part of the Forest Grove school district (FGSD) on how to meet that community's needs.



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### **Lessons Learned, What would you have done differently if starting over?**

There are two areas where early changes would have resulted in a different outcome for this grant. First, the Investment Team sub-team investigating this opportunity should have delved further into how committed the rest of the Forest Grove community was to the success of the program once the key driver left. The plan had been to fund the community coordinator through the FGSD, and we only talked with school district personnel about continuing. Besides getting more players involved early, we would have realized that these players had not been brought into the program after the initial meeting. Some of them also thought they'd be getting some money from this grant, and dropped out when they didn't. I do think the other non-profits involved would have gotten onboard, as they were interested when I started questioning them in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the grant. However, by then too many things had changed, especially the perspective of the FGSD.

Secondly, the original Lead Partner did not follow up on the community network aspect of the grant which was our key motivation for the grant. While the FGSD did many things to involve community partners in the district's activities, there was no driver for the creation of a community network, the focus on which was to be capacity building of the local CBOs, and which was the key aspect of the grant program. Since the "new" leadership for the program worked out of the FGSD, the community network aspect of the grant was most likely less significant to him than the success of the FGSD programs. The Lead Partner would have been able to bring some of that back on course early in the grant cycle.