

Strides for Equity Award 2011: Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East

Hello, I'm Robin Boyce, Executive Director of the Housing Development Center and the Board Treasurer of the Oregon Opportunity Network. Tonight I am very pleased to introduce a new award that we will be giving each year going forward – The Strides for Equity Award.

This award was created by the Oregon ON Board of Directors in recognition of the many different ways our members across the State are trying to make their communities more equitable. This award embodies the values that Oregon ON was founded on, including ensuring that Oregon's hardworking families, seniors, and people with disabilities have an opportunity to build better lives.

Oregon ON member's residents and clients include diverse populations across the state. This is no surprise, since racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately low-income, disproportionately renters, and have fewer educational opportunities.

Equity is something that we must build into all of our programs and projects, from the beginning to the end, in order to be good community developers. It is something that we must work for within our own staffs and Boards, as well as in our outreach efforts to our communities.

This year, we are pleased to kick off the Strides for Equity Award by honoring an organization that has done so much, and is defying the economy by launching its first major fundraising campaign - and an ambitious one at that.

Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East has built, with powerful support from the community, over 200 homes for families in Multnomah and Northern Clackamas Counties. The average Median Family Income of those families is 40%. Perhaps most impressively, Habitat sold more than 80% of its homes to minority homeowners – a statistic that is most likely unmatched in our State.

So how did they achieve this? Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. taught us that nonviolence is not just the passive nonparticipation in wrongdoing, but the active struggle for social justice. Habitat sold 80% of its homes to minority homeowners by actively and passionately engaging their communities, by:

- Partnering with organizations that work with minorities;
- Doing outreach at as many events serving minorities as possible;
- Working with faith communities; and
- Encouraging word of mouth and referrals within the minority families they serve.

This year, Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East is aiming to raise \$12 million dollars to permanently increase the organization's homebuilding efforts by 50% and building 30 homes annually in Portland and Gresham. Please join me in wishing them the best of luck in meeting these goals, and in celebrating winning Oregon ON's first Strides for Equity Award!