



**enterprise for progress
in the community**

2003 annual report



epic . . . we're going places!

The year 2003 was challenging for many, including EPIC. For the families we serve, hard times mean more unemployment, added family stress, and increased risks for children.



From abuse and neglect to homelessness and dissolution of the family unit, tough times mean more people than ever, more children than ever, need our services.

At the same time, the political climate and thin state and federal budgets mean fewer available funds to support the non-profit agencies who do the kinds of work we do.

The year 2003 was a time for EPIC to re-evaluate its resources and to embark in some new directions for obtaining support.

Playhouses on Parade and the opening of EPIC's Attic were two of the strategies employed this year to put our agency in a stronger financial position. Our goal: to ensure that we can continue to be there for children, youth and families at risk.

epic facts

EPIC stands for **Enterprise for Progress in the Community**. EPIC is a **private, not-for-profit** agency in operation since 1965, created by local volunteers.

EPIC mission = Working with children, youth and families, EPIC provides services to strengthen communities.

Divisions = Early Childhood Development, Youth Services

A variety of funding sources support EPIC, including: federal Head Start grants, state youth and early childhood development monies, corporate and foundation grants, and private donations.

EPIC served 3,000 children and youth in a 9-county area in Central Washington in 2003.

We have set our course, mapped our direction, and we're going places!

epic early childhood development



- The **EPIC Early Childhood Development Division** operated 14 Head Start sites and partnered with seven privately owned centers to serve 2,000 preschool aged children, making EPIC the **second largest provider of early childhood education programs in Washington state.**

- Because **parents are a child's first and best teachers**, EPIC continued to emphasize their role, enlarging family literacy programs, developing lending libraries, instituting parent/child learning activities in the home, and expanding the fatherhood program from 2 to 6 sites. Staff conducted 8,000 home visits.

- **EPIC staff members created a bus safety curriculum** for Head Start last year, which was piloted regionally and then presented nationally at conferences in Washington, D.C., New York, and Reno, NV. The National Office of Migrant Head Start began distributing the "Safety Sam" curriculum around the U.S. in September.

- Due to the success of the **Fatherhood Initiative**, which helps fathers understand the value of their role in their child's learning and development, EPIC staff and Fatherhood graduates were invited to present a workshop in Washington, D.C.

• **Alice Saiz**, EPIC Teacher, was **one of 2 people in the U.S. to be recognized** for her teaching approaches. Alice received a \$1,000 scholarship from the National Migrant Head Start Association.

• The **Virginia Whitaker Parent Resource Library** at EPIC's Jefferson Head Start Center in Yakima was dedicated in December. The Library was funded in Ginny's memory to celebrate her commitment to the early education of young children. The library offers children's books, puppets, learning toys and access to the Internet.



• **Jerry Tello**, international authority on strengthening families and cross-cultural issues, spoke to EPIC staff and clients in September about the importance of the involvement of fathers and the impact they have on family life. Tello is the Director of the National Latino Fatherhood and Family Initiative, based in L.A.

• In addition to Head Start, EPIC Early Childhood Development offered state funded **Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP)**, and two Crisis Nurseries, one in Yakima and one in Toppenish, Wash. The **Crisis Nurseries** provided respite services to overwhelmed parents in order to prevent child abuse, as well as mental health day treatment to abused and neglected children up to age 6.

• New this year was a collaborative effort with **Triumph Treatment Riel House**. EPIC Crisis Nursery provided mental health day treatment services to the children of Triumph clients, while their moms attended substance abuse treatment.

epic program gives young family an early head start



Adriana was a teenager whose twin sons were born six weeks premature. As they grew, she began to realize that, in her words, "they were a little behind in everything." By the time little Benjy and Franky were one year old, they were still not walking.

Adriana brought her concerns to Gail, the godmother of the boys. Together they began searching for some kind of help. That's when Gail learned about EPIC's Early Head

Start program. Early Head Start (EHS) is a community-based program for low-income pregnant women, families with infants and toddlers. Its mission is simple: to promote healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women, enhance the development of very young children, and promote healthy family functioning.

Participating children and their families receive all of the comprehensive services provided to those enrolled in Head Start—physical, mental and disability health screenings, family support, education, and special services tailored to meet each families' specific needs.

"The very first time we went to the program, we were nervous, but also very excited. We didn't know what we were going to do or what was expected from us," recalls Adriana. But out of concern for their children, she and Jesus attended anyway. "They made us feel comfortable and at ease. Now we have been in the program for approximately one year and we have enjoyed every day of it, and are looking forward to the next day," she says.



Early Head Start consists of weekly home visits by specially trained EPIC staff members. The visits are designed to enhance parenting skills and increase knowledge of the developmental stages and needs of young children. "That is where we get to talk to a home visitor one-to-one about any situations, good or bad, and difficulties we have been having. They always have great ideas and helpful hints," Adriana says. "The visits **continued, next page...**

are the highlight of the program.”

Twice per month, parents and children come together for what are called “socializations” and play groups. “The socializations are great. It teaches and helps the children interact with other children and to learn to share and care. It gives us a look at how other parents see things and that we are not the only parents with these problems.”

Each month, family nights, known as the parent meetings, are conducted. “The thing we look forward to most is the parent meeting. It is the one time in the month that we get to be like the children and have fun.”

Adriana and Jesus are no longer nervous about attending Early Head Start. In fact, they’ve become so involved that Adriana serves as the president of the Early Head Start program at her sons’ center, and Jesus is now the vice president of the Region X/EHS/ECEAP Policy Council of Head Start. “This program has helped our family create goals and shows us how to meet them, teaching us how to handle difficult situations with the boys and with each other. I don’t know where we would be today without this program!” Adriana exclaims. She says of Benjy and Franky, “they have definitely received an early head start!”

(editor’s note: EPIC operates two Early Head Start centers—one in Bridgeport, Wash and the other at Children’s Village in Yakima, and served 32 children and their families in 2003).

epic services for youth at risk

program highlights

- EPIC obtained a \$130,000 grant to pilot a **tutoring program for at-risk foster teens** in Yakima. It was so successful, it’s being continued!
- The **Partners Program** in Tri-Cities came under EPIC’s wing in 2003. **Partners** matches mentors with teens at risk, and was awarded a grant of \$88,000 from Benton-Franklin Counties in 2003 to support their efforts.
- EPIC is now the fiscal agent for the **HOPE Home Program** in Kennewick, helping young pregnant and parenting women develop life and parenting skills, with the goal of self-sufficiency.
- EPIC’s **Secured and Regional Crisis Residential Centers** in Kennewick and Yakima served hundreds of youth, offering emergency shelter and other key services to runaways, state dependent and homeless teens.
- The **Youth and Family Support Center** served 50 families in 2003, via individual, group and family counseling.
- EPIC continued to operate four **therapeutic foster care** homes to help youth transition successfully into a family setting.
- EPIC served as the fiscal agent for **Get Set**. Forty-four youth spent the summer learning independent living skills and doing volunteer work in the community.

epic helped this youth realize he could beat the odds and graduate from high school

Although most foster youth do attend high school, less than half actually graduate. Due to the pain of their past and their emotional scars, by the age of 18, many give up on themselves and their future. Michael G. could have become such a statistic, but at the age of 15, he came to live at one of EPIC’s behavior

rehabilitation group homes. The caring treatment he received from EPIC changed the direction of his life, and in 2003, Michael earned his high school diploma.

When he was seven, two of Michael’s older brothers were killed in a fiery semi-truck accident. After that, his parents’ disputes got worse, and they eventually divorced due to family violence. When he was 12, his father died.

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Michael blamed himself. "I felt like I lost everything, and I thought it was all my fault," he recalls. The cycle of domestic abuse continued, and Michael was removed from the home. After unsuccessful placements at a facility for teens and with foster parents, Michael came to live at EPIC.

"At that time, I felt like I was going to be a criminal, because I didn't have any hope of being different. I felt angry and confused," he says. "Up to then, I had always wanted to go back home, but today I see that if I had gone back home, I would not have changed."

He says the staff of EPIC handled things much more positively than his other placements. "I'd never been to a place like this—they talked to me to see how we could handle things differently. It was hard, but also amazing what they did, and I caught onto it quick. Therapy was very painful, but they were there for me every time. I learned and changed. EPIC has really helped me in living my life and choosing which way to go. It has been a remake of Michael."

Today, the soft-spoken 18-year-old has a car and an apartment, and is looking toward the future, balancing his desire to be involved in the music business with a realistic look at careers. He's considering a carpentry apprenticeship. Popular, with many friends, he is proud that younger kids look up to him. He went to state as part of the high school music program, writes songs and loves to sing.

Michael says what kept him going was not losing faith. "The only person who is going to change is you—you gotta make it happen for yourself, hang in there, recognize that not everything is your fault, and remember every day is a new day. I have a lot of things to conquer. It has been hard and it's still hard right now, but the past is past. After I got to EPIC, I learned to be positive, to love and care for my friends and family, to forgive my mom and dad, and to think about the possibilities."

2003 agency highlights

- EPIC received the **2003 Impact Award from United Way of Yakima County**. This award is presented annually to the agency that has gone the extra mile to fulfill its commitment to serving its clients.

- The **Grand Opening of EPIC's Attic**, "an emporium of pre-owned treasures" at 516 W. Lincoln Ave. took place in Yakima. Thrift store proceeds go to help children and youth at risk.



- **Playhouses on Parade** was a new fundraising venture for EPIC in 2003. Six playhouses were designed, built, decorated and promoted by a small army of talented volunteers, including architects, builders, landscape designers, interior decorators and others. Raffle tickets were sold by volunteers at The Valley Mall for \$2 each. **EPIC raised \$80,000 to benefit its Crisis Nursery** programs in Yakima and Toppenish, which help children at risk for abuse and neglect.

- In December, EPIC welcomed **Peter Goldberg, President and CEO of the Alliance for Children and Families** to Yakima. He spoke about national trends, the value of the non-profit sector in challenging times, and how to strengthen the capacity of non-profits.

enterprise for progress in the community (EPIC)

Administrative Offices

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Yakima, WA 98902

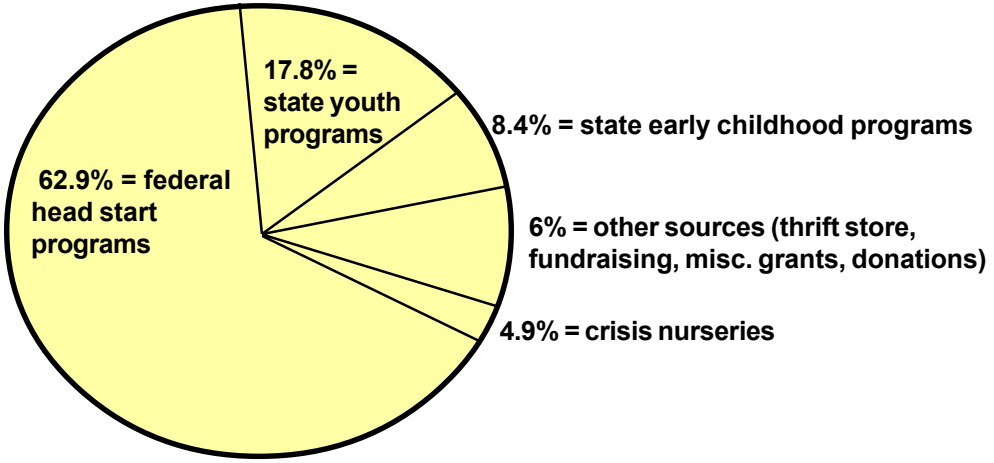
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the bottom line

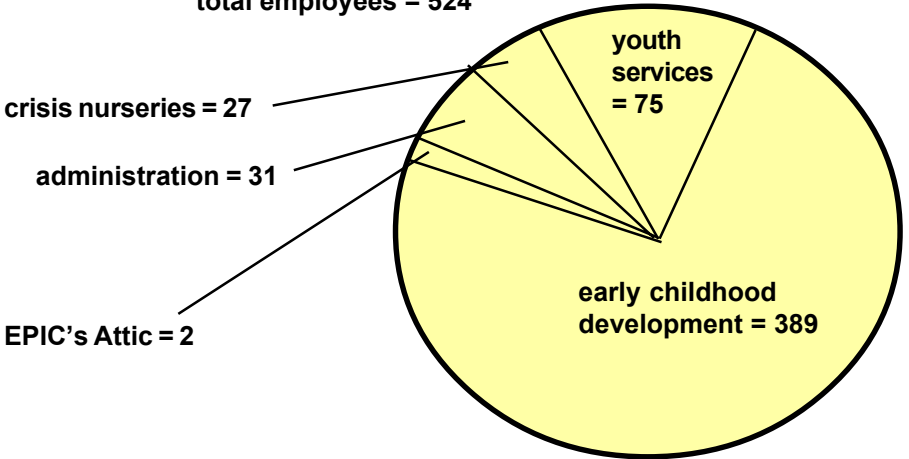
actual revenue = \$17,934,952
2003 in kind gifts = \$2,381,074

where our funding comes from:



number of employees by division:

total employees = 524



2003 epic board of directors

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