

EPIC MOMENTS

A Newsletter for our Employees and Volunteers - SPECIAL EDITION

October 2009



Working
hand-in-hand
with children, youth & families;
EPIC provides services
to strengthen communities

Volunteers
and EPIC

The Merriam-Webster dictionary describes a volunteer as “one who renders a service or takes part in a transaction while having no legal concern or interest.”

We are very lucky at EPIC. We have several different types of volunteers willing to give of their time and talent.

We have volunteers who receive small stipends from VISTA, AmeriCorps, or Jesuits Northwest. We have volunteers who receive on-the-job training from agencies such as OIC, People for People and Community Action Groups.

We have volunteers who come to us from RSVP, the Marine Corps Toys for Tots, the Yakima Junior League, Home Depot, and US Cellular, to name a few.

And then there are the families. Parents, grandparents aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters who give their time in the Head Start classrooms; the mothers at MTCC who participate in the Strong Women Strong Families mentorship program; the foster parents who go above and beyond in being a positive influence in the life of a vulnerable teen.

You are about to meet several of these volunteers and find out how they have made a difference; how they work hand-in-hand with the children, youth and families we serve at EPIC and beyond; in the community as a whole.

Katie
Collins



Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC) Northwest connects women and men with one or more years of volunteer service and challenges them to focus on the four core Jesuit values of community, spirituality, simple living and social and ecological justice. JVC Northwest provides opportunities for

young, motivated individuals to reach out to persons living on the margins of society and vulnerable places throughout the Pacific Northwest. Jesuit Volunteers in the Northwest have the opportunity to live and work with partner agencies in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington.

Last August, Katie Collins burst on the scene at EPIC's Family Support Services' MTCC program full of fresh energy, enthusiasm, and eagerness. Katie followed in the footsteps of other Jesuit volunteers who have worked with the children and families at MTCC.

Katie grew up in the Seattle/Ballard area. She went on to Gonzaga University to graduate with a degree in psychology, with a minor in sociology.

Katie stated she was interested in becoming a JV because she strongly believes in the four core values. She was also eager to take advantage of the unique opportunity of living with six other people in near poverty conditions. JV's live as a community; they each receive a small personal stipend and there is a small community stipend as well that helps pay living expenses. The local Jesuit volunteers live in a very old house in the Downtown Yakima area. Last fall the JV's learned how to can their own foods, allowing them to take advantage of all the generous donations they received from the Valley's fall harvest. They learned how to bundle up to stave off the cold, as it is too expensive to have the heat above

60 degrees in the house during the winter. Driving a car was a luxury and eating out was done on the front porch. Times were difficult for the JV's but what they got for their experience and what we received was a reward worth waiting for.

Katie's role at MTCC was to work with the children in the trauma therapy rooms and to oversee the Strong Women Strong Families mentorship program, sponsored by the Yakima Junior League. The Strong Women Strong Families mentorship program is a peer-to-peer mentoring program for mothers. It was created to develop a mutual network of support and learning between mothers receiving EPIC's support services and women in the Yakima community. The goal of the mentorship relationships was to equip each mentee mother with the tools and support they needed to face life's challenges in strong and positive ways.

Because of the population MTCC serves, the mentorship program will never be large, but rather a small group of dedicated mothers. The program thrives off the supporting and caring relationships developed between mentors and mentees, the kind of support which is an essential ingredient for building strong and healthy families. Since the program started three years ago, a bond of community has built between the women involved. At the beginning of the program, mentee mothers came to events as participants, today they are taking a vital role in the planning and leadership of the program. This summer, the mothers of the program organized and held a fundraising yard sale which brought in over \$500 for the program! EPIC would not be able to offer this vital program if it were not for the volunteers that operate it.

Katie has moved to Boston, having completed her service to JVC Northwest, and is now employed with Wayside Youth and Family Support Network as a home based clinician working with families who have children with mental health or behavioral needs. She told me recently that she sees her life as one of service and that the time she spent with the JVC and EPIC will be the inspiring foundation for her to build on. The children, families, and staff at MTCC miss Katie and her effervescent personality. We at EPIC thank her for all she has done this past year and wish her well with her future endeavors.

AmeriCorps VISTA is a national service program designed specifically to fight poverty. President John F. Kennedy came up with the idea for VISTA. In 1965, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) was founded and incorporated into the AmeriCorps network of programs in 1993. VISTA has been on the front lines in the fight against poverty in America for more than 40 years. More than that, 170,000 VISTA's who have served since 1965 have played a key role in establishing many of the best-known anti-poverty programs; one of which is Head Start.

The Yakima County Asset Building Coalition (YCABC) emerged in 2007 as a result of a local grass roots campaign to create awareness in the community of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The EITC is a refundable tax credit that can put up to \$4,824 into the pockets of low-income individuals and families. An EITC Awareness Day was held, offering free tax preparation for two days at La Casa Hogar in order to reach out to Yakima's Hispanic residents. AARP, an active member of the YCABC, had six sites available for free tax preparation in Yakima County throughout the entire tax season. Through this effort, \$1,293,958 EITC dollars were returned to the Yakima County economy. After receiving a special grant, the YCABC was able to further their EITC promotional efforts by placing ads on buses, in newspapers, on the radio, and a television commercial.

Another program the YCABC is working on is "Bank on Yakima County." The YCABC is preparing to embark on a county-wide campaign aimed to bank the "unbanked" population who often fall prey to the high cost of check cashing and payday lending fees. This campaign requires a collaborative effort between financial institutions and non-profit and community organizations that aim to meet the needs of "unbanked" people in our community. The hope is to create a no-wrong-door web of support with a referral system that will lead to more financial education opportunities, and make it easier for clients to open and maintain bank accounts by providing lower initial deposit balance requirements, low to no monthly fees, second chances to those with poor credit, and the acceptance of alternative ID's such as the Mexican Matricula Consular ID card and Tax Identification Number when opening an account with banks and credit unions.

Lindsay Jacobson is originally from Snohomish and came to EPIC and the YCABC after having worked in McCall, Idaho for two years. She is a



Lindsay Jacobson



graduate of Central Washington University with a degree in Sociology. Lindsay was looking for a voluntary service opportunity. She wanted to give of herself; she wanted to do something bigger than herself. She looked into the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, and VISTA AmeriCorps. After applying for a few VISTA positions in Washington State, she received a call from Matthew Solomon at EPIC and was asked to consider becoming EITC Campaign Coordinator for the YCABC. She soon found herself in a brand new community with a new mission.

Lindsay knew very little about taxes or tax preparation, to say nothing of what EITC was, but she took the position and jumped right in. Lindsay is a valued member of the YCABC. She has become quite the spokeswoman, having spots on the evening news and local radio talk shows promoting the EITC efforts. Lindsay wrote a successful \$25,000 grant, giving the coalition necessary money to move forward with its Bank on Yakima County program. She has been busy preparing for the Bank on Yakima County program, and helping to facilitate the relationships between the banks, credit unions and organizations and to engage the membership of the YCABC.

I recently asked Lindsay what her future goals were. She stated she wants to return to school for a teaching degree and work with elementary age children. Lindsay's bubbly enthusiasm, optimistic outlook and professionalism have made her a very valuable volunteer to the Yakima County community. She will remain here until November. The YCABC was very lucky to have found Lindsay and have her as their first VISTA member. She has set the standard high and her efforts will help the YCABC remain strong and steady for a long time to come.

On-the-Job Training

— People for People — OIC 617 Program — —JOBS — Northwest Community Action —

These are a few of the agencies that partner with EPIC for on-the-job training experiences. The advantages are huge; the benefits are amazing!

The participants in these programs come to us for up to six months to learn basic skills in clerical, accounting, human resources, and basic data entry. These people are paid by the partner agency; EPIC receives extra help and potential new and trained employees; and the community receives the benefit of a trained, confident individual, ready to enter the workforce and become a productive member of society. Below is the story of two these individuals.

Rachel Bettles



In July 2005, Rachel Bettles went to People for People seeking an employment training program. EPIC was looking for some assistance in the Human Resources department. Rachel was interviewed by the EPIC

HR staff and soon started working part-time. Under the tutelage of the HR staff, Rachel was able to learn the basic skills of data entry, and verifying applicants backgrounds. EPIC hired her full-time after her six-month contract was up. Her duties have increased to include bilingual testing, tracking employee paperwork and files, and maintaining active and in-active employee files.

Rachel has three sons ages 7, 6, and 5 months. She has been attending Yakima Valley Community College and hopes to complete her AS degree and work in the sociology field.

Rachel is a very important member of the HR team and really appreciates EPIC for giving her a chance. EPIC has greatly benefited from Rachel's enthusiasm and dedication.

Elizabeth Arreguin



Elizabeth Arreguin came to EPIC in a similar fashion. She first joined the Central Office front desk staff through the OIC 617 program.

Elizabeth's training not only improved her skills, but gave her confidence; she soon became a valuable member of the Central Office team. After her OIC contract expired, Elizabeth worked at Central Office on a temporary basis. She was then hired to work at MTCC as a mental health worker in the Crisis Nursery. After two months she returned to the Central Office staff full time.

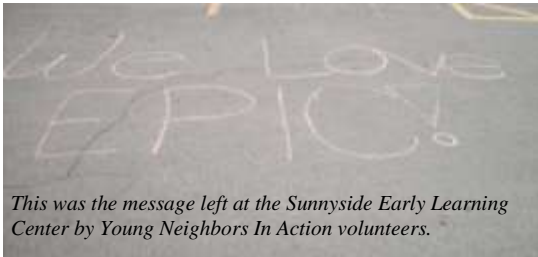
Elizabeth has two daughters ages 4 and 2 years old. She is hoping to return to school and work on a business degree. Elizabeth told me once that she really enjoys working at EPIC. From the beginning she really liked working with the Central Office staff and appreciates their friendship.

EPIC is very lucky to have Elizabeth be a part of our team.

Community Volunteers

EPIC has always been very fortunate to have support from the communities it serves. Many businesses, individuals, and organizations have volunteered their time to our programs. Below is a sample of these volunteers and what they have done for our children, youth, and families. We can't say thank you enough for all the time and energy.

Young Neighbors In Action



This was the message left at the Sunnyside Early Learning Center by Young Neighbors In Action volunteers.

In July volunteers from Young Neighbors In Action in Seattle swooped into Sunnyside and became valuable members of the Sunnyside Team for a week. They would spend the first half of the day in the classrooms and after lunch they would then turn their attention to the Region X classrooms and paint them; preparing them for the upcoming school year. These energetic kids were a lot of fun to have a round and their efforts are greatly appreciated.

Teresa Tellez



Teresa Tellez has been a volunteer for the Prosser Early Learning Center's Migrant Head Start program for the past two years. She has two young children of her own participating in the Migrant Head Start program. The children at the Prosser site

think she is a "really fun teacher," and the staff really values her dedication. Because of Teresa's past experience, education and certifications, she has been hired as a temporary teacher's aide in Room 1 Toddlers at the Prosser site for the season. Thank you Teresa for all you have done!



Kimberly Sebastian and the US Cellular Team is an important partner in the Playhouses on Parade event. For the second year in a row they will be building a playhouse. They will also be putting on a children's carnival for the Playhouse event on the day of the raffle ticket drawing, October 10th, to be held at the Valley Mall in Yakima.



Grandma Francis

The Castlevale Head Start site has a volunteer from the Foster Grandparent Program. Grandma Francis Ozuna has been a huge asset to the Castlevale Team. Grandma Francis is currently helping in Room



and is loved by the children and the staff. Grandma Francis helps in both our Migrant and RX programs. She helps wherever she is needed and is always smiling, loving and enjoys working with the children and staff at Castlevale. The staff at Castlevale greatly appreciates Grandma's hard work and love having her here. They would like to give Grandma a big thank you from all of Castlevale staff.

The EPIC Family of Volunteers

Castlevale



Jose and Ana Ibarra are the parents of two children who are currently enrolled in the Migrant/Seasonal Head Start Program at EPIC. This is Mr. and Mrs. Ibarra's first year bringing their children to the program and they are very pleased with the services the program has provided them. Both parents work during the season and now that Mrs. Ibarra is currently unemployed, she volunteers in her children's classrooms. Some of the tasks the Ibarra's perform include: preparing supplies for projects, decorating bulletin boards, making die cuts, laminating, and helping out in the classroom with the daily routine. When Mrs. Ibarra began coming into the center she had to learn how to operate the machines. Now when she comes in she simply grabs a task and is on her way. The



Ibarra's say they enjoy coming in and volunteering because they know how hard the teachers work and feel it is the least they can do to give back.

Thank you Jose and Ana; we are very appreciative of their hard work and generosity.

East Wenatchee

Last summer seventy-five parents from the East Wenatchee Early Learning Center painted a mural on the front of the building. Artist Jonathan Godina designed the mural and the families

brought it to life. The sense of community, team work, and EPIC pride that this piece of art brought out is immeasurable. Thank you Jonathan and thank you parents of East Wenatchee.



EPIC Employees Giving Back to the Community

It is said that the busiest people are the happiest people; tired but happy. At the end of the day the world is a better place because they care and because they give of themselves.

Here at EPIC we have several staff members who volunteer their time to other organizations and causes after they go home from a busy day at work.

Some are members of boards, volunteers at their children's schools, and coaches for various teams. How many of you give up your weekend to go to the park and work on a new pathway or help the elderly do their errands? How many of you volunteer your time through your church, synagogue or temple? How many of you give your time to service clubs such as Rotary, Kiwanis, or the Lions Club? And lets not forget the Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts, or Camp Fire for Boys and Girls.

EPIC's employees are a very generous group of people. They give back to the community what was freely given to them. Below are four stories of EPIC employees giving back to the community.

Jennifer Weiss-Standley

Jennifer Weiss-Standley has volunteered for many years at St. Joseph's School where her children attend. She also has been a volunteer basketball coach for Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) and the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU). At one game every single girl had scored a basket.

Jennifer was so excited; she was jumping up and down so much that the girls thought they had won the game! One year a basketball team from Kittitas could not afford to attend a basketball tournament so the St. Joe's team held a yard sale to pay for the entry fees for the Kittitas team.

Now that her older daughter is in high school at La Salle, Jennifer finds herself coaching for the YMCA Iddy Bidy t-ball, basketball and soccer teams for her younger daughter. Through her guidance and patience these young people have learned the important lesson of fair play, citizenship, teamwork and leadership.



Jackie Gamache

Jackie Gamache became a member of the Young Ladies Institute (YLI) in 2000. The YLI is an organization of Catholic Women dedicated to the Christian principles of charity and love. Through their fundraising efforts they are able to help support seminarians and other causes such as our own Baby Bottle Brigade, just to name two. She has served several times as chairman of the annual salmon dinner and as president of her local chapter. When Jackie was ill, the members of her chapter were a great source of support and strength to her and her family.



Sue Pitman

Sue Pitman has been a volunteer for the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) for 21 years. She started out as a den leader for her son's classmates and recently finished a term on the Executive Board. Over the years she has given countless hours locally, state-wide, regionally, and nationally with her duties ranging from running camps for Cub Scouts to instructing adult leaders, to working with third graders on how to tie knots for the first time.

Sue stated that she thoroughly enjoys working with the BSA. Seeing a boy grow from a timid six-year-old into a confident adult is very rewarding. Some of the former Scouts she has worked with are now returning to the program as parents themselves, being leaders to their own son's Scout groups.



Karen Lehman

One Sunday a month for 10 months out of the year, Karen Lehman, with the assistance of other members of her family, goes to Riverview Manor in Selah and holds Christian services for the residents. Many of the residents are shut-ins and are unable for one reason or another to attend services at their own church.



I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder. ~G.K. Chesterton

Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better.
It's not. ~Dr. Seuss

*Everybody can be great.
Because anybody can serve.
You don't have to have a college degree to serve.
You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve....
You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve.
You only need a heart full of grace.
A soul generated by love. ~Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Volunteers are love in motion! ~Author Unknown

Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see. Mark Twain

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world. ~Anne Frank

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. ~Winston Churchill

I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands. You need to be able to throw something back. ~Maya Angelou

We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future. ~Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Have you had a kindness shown?
Pass it on;
'Twas not given for thee alone,
Pass it on;
Let it travel down the years,
Let it wipe another's tears,
'Til in Heaven the deed appears -
Pass it on.
~Henry Burton, *Pass It On*