

December 2006

I know what you're thinking: Didn't Teri just send an 826 Seattle update a couple of weeks ago? Well, it was about a month ago, and you are getting this one so soon for two reasons:

First reason: Because so much has happened since.

Second reason: Therese made me do it.

Therese is our Development Director. Therese does things like hand me (and the board members and staff) lists of people to call. She makes charts and develops strategies and insists that we keep folks as informed as possible. She only officially works 25 hours a week, but it seems more like 60. I like Therese. She is a bit of a whip-cracker and I respect her for that. She gets stuff done.

And, truthfully, of the many parts of my job that I enjoy, you might intuit that writing updates is high on my list. I always feel warmed (by folks' generosity) and a little smug (wow, who would have thought we could do THAT in this short amount of time) and humbled (uh oh, I said we would do what??). I like the combo package of warm-smug-humble.

Here's what's been happening since the last update:

- Might as well get **our biggest news out first**. 826 Seattle is one of two recipients of the Anne V. Farrell Leadership Grant – a \$100,000 award to help develop leadership and literacy skills in middle school students. Starting next fall, 826 Seattle mentors will work in collaboration with the teachers at Hamilton International Middle School, “saturating” a group of 90 select students with writing activities both at Hamilton and at 826 Seattle. We are, in a word, speechless. (Ha...just kidding...that'll be the day!) But, we are beside ourselves.

This grant will allow us to do the work we do best (helping young people write and supporting our public school teachers) with a select group of students over a two-year period. We will also be able to really measure the success of our work, success not only as demonstrated by improved grades, but also by what happens to young people when you help them tell their stories well: Does it increase their self-esteem? Are they are less likely to drop out of school? Go to jail? Does writing make their lives easier?

We will be definitively answering questions like these once and for all.

(Well, maybe not definitively, but we will be asking these kinds of questions and hopefully getting closer to the truth.)

Let's have a cyber-round of applause for the Anne V. Farrell Foundation/Seattle Foundation, not to mention a couple of high fives for 826 Seattle...and, while we're at it, another couple for the Seattle Mesa Project, which will also receive \$100,000 for its project at Denny Middle School. We are so pleased to be in such worthy company.

- **Our first birthday party** was a complete success, thanks to the efforts of Kelly and Aaron (again) for an amazing planning job. Deb Caletti, Sean Nelson, Natalie

Portman's Shaved Head, Ellen Forney, Ryan Boudinot, Nate Lashes and Sherman Alexie all donated their time to make the day super fun.

- **Congratulations to Max Nicolai** from the Northwest School for winning our grand \$3,000 prize for the Hartley-Marks/Paperblanks Three Elements contest. We hope he really uses his winnings toward his future education (as suggested), and we hope you all get a chance to read his wonderful story, which is now posted on our web site: www.826seattle.org/words/studio/

While you're there, check out the stories by Alec Heckert (from North Shore School District) and David Gonzalez (from Brighton Elementary). They were the second and third runners-up, each winning \$1,000.

And, if that isn't enough, keep an eye on our web site, because we will soon be posting the stories by all ten finalists. We were wowed by the quality of the stories entered. Eighty-two young people took the requisite writing workshop at 826 Seattle, and 48 turned in finished stories. Warning: Next year the competition will be pretty fierce.

- Also, **we unveiled our new Space Competency Tester** at the birthday bash. Research has shown that many people are interested in space travel but lack the confidence to take that first step. Why not pop by the Greenwood Space Travel Supply Co. and find out if you have what it takes to be a successful space traveler? For a mere \$3.00 we will provide you with the requisite paper authorization, which can be extremely handy when embarking into space and, also, at cocktail parties. By the way, the Greenwood Space Travel Supply Co. has special holiday hours through December 24. Come on by! Monday–Saturday from 10– 6 and Sunday from 12:00–5:00. We have stocked up on stocking-stuffer-sized space-travel gear in this season of giving.
- I think Tim Miller (and others) have finally stopped presenting us with checks for their fundraising efforts for **the Mustache-A-Thon**, so I can finally announce that our grand total for this event was \$10,073.05. We're tickled (and the recipients of kisses from the Mustache-A-Thoners were too)!
- In our ever-vigilant quest to improve our services, we've been having a series of Strategic Potlucks with teams of volunteers. They have been quite fun, quite informative and quite tasty.

Strategic Potluck #1: The Store Volunteers. This potluck was a small affair at Teri's – pulled together quickly for the purpose of introducing store volunteers to Celine Rabago, our new store manager. Justin Allan brought potential products from Archie McPhee, Cary Grief brought her notepad since she had laryngitis and Scott Rosen brought Halloween cupcakes because he thinks potlucks are for "people my mother's age" and he couldn't imagine what else to bring. (Scott has since attended the Mustache-A-Thon Potluck, and we suspect he is starting to get the magic of potlucks.)

Strategic Potluck #2: The Drop-in Tutors. This happening happened at 826 Seattle with Alice Pedersen and Jennie Shortridge rounding up folks to eat and discuss ways to (a) get more creative writing from our students, (b) keep other

students focused on their homework (after six hours of school) and (c) keep our drop-in hopping and calm at the same time.

Strategic Potluck #3: The Workshop Leaders. Back to Teri's house where the folks who lead workshops, would like to assist with workshops or have ideas about workshops came together over cheap beer and wild salmon to talk about comic books, nature writing and essay workshops. People were witnessed saying things like: "I'll help you on that one!" and "I'm afraid of high school students. Maybe I should be an assistant."

We are, by the way, still looking for a team to teach the Creative Math Story Problems workshop. We're certain we can get Doug to provide Real Math if some creative story writer wants to help him rustle up a group of young people to create their own mini-math book...to be sold in the Greenwood Space Travel Supply Co., of course.

After the new year: **Strategic Potluck #4: The Field Trip Folks.**

Have a little extra time on December 24th? Take the out-of-towners over to Peet's Coffee in Fremont for FREE coffee all day. But, you might want to leave a donation in the jar, since all donations that day go to 826 Seattle – the non-profit of choice voted on by their employees!

Speaking of donating: It's the end of the year. Have you reached your giving goals for 2006? Check out our web site for different ways you can honor your loved ones with a gift to 826 Seattle. We would be honored if you would consider!

This is frightfully longer than I wanted it to be, but that's why I strategically BOLDED topics for the skimmers in the crowd.

Happy holidays to you and yours. May 2007 be fruitful for all. And again, thank you so much for your support this year. Teri