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Interaction Transition

Transitional Support and Residential Services for Ex-Offenders

Introduction

The 2003-2004 year can be seen as one that has enabled Interaction Transition to take important steps forward in its evolution as an organization.

Financially, thanks in large part to the generosity of two particular foundations, an opportunity has developed for I/T to establish a base from which it can be operationally stronger and sustainable as it moves into the future. Likewise, programmatically, the agency has been able to maintain its core efforts, while starting to test new ideas that, we believe, have the potential to impact recidivism rates in a meaningful way. The above developments, in both cases, constitute first steps and there is much more work to be done. But they also represent exciting possibilities for I/T's growth as a contributor to its clients' well-being and community safety.

Financial Status

The 2003-2004 fiscal year was, on balance, a successful one for Interaction Transition.

Our income statement was solid, as our revenues exceeded expenses by almost \$7,000.

Two particular revenue sources combined to play a key role in enhancing our financial strength. Displaying a strong vote of support for I/T's mission and programmatic integrity, the Lucky 7 Foundation awarded us a \$50,000 operational grant, to be distributed over a 3-year period. This was supplemented by a \$20,000 grant from the Seattle Foundation, a long-time supporter of I/T.

These contributions, for which we are truly appreciative, have served two purposes. First, they have enabled I/T to maintain its current programming efforts without the fear of cutbacks during this time of economic belt-tightening.

In addition, they have given us additional time to develop that critical base of individual donors on whose support we can count on with regularity. This has been a long-standing shortcoming of Interaction Transition and needs to be addressed for two reasons. First, our goal is to make our core operations sustainable through a combination of residents' program service fees, United Way of King County funding, and regular individual and institutional support. In the latter category, we wish to recognize and express our sincere appreciation to the Richmond Beach Congregational Church and Gethsemane Lutheran Church for their particularly generous contributions during this past year.

In the future, we hope to access foundations not for survival purposes, but primarily as a source of special funding needs, such as the implementation and evaluation of pilot projects, so that new ideas can be tested.

The importance of developing our individual donor base also relates to its symbolic value, as one indication that the community understands and values the

nature of the work we do in furtherance of both our clients' interests and that of community safety.

That said, we still have made only slight headway in attracting these donors. We thus plan to hire a part-time staff person to dedicate an adequate amount of time and energy to organizing our efforts in reaching out to the community, educating the public on the issues we deal with, and seeking to develop an ongoing relationship with a set of individuals interested in providing financial support for this agency.

As a by-product of the aforementioned, we also hope to reduce our level of dependency on United Way of King County. Let there be no doubt that United Way's support of our transitional housing program has been, and will continue to be, critical to the program's sustainability to the extent that it provides the key to our residents' affordable participation in our program. I/T's indebtedness to United Way cannot be overstated. Still, it is neither fair nor prudent for this agency to seek more than a modest portion of its revenues from this source, and our goal is to broaden our revenue base and gradually work toward that end. With this in mind, we are pleased to report that United Way's contribution, while still sizable, has now declined to 40% of our operational revenue.

Programs

Programming operations at Interaction Transition proceeded smoothly during this past year with some new wrinkles added.

I/T's weekly support group meetings, which help inmates anticipate and address many of the practical issues they will face upon release, continued to operate, and were well attended, at four Washington State prisons: McNeil Island Corrections Center, the Washington Corrections Center for Women, the Washington State Reformatory, and Twin Rivers Corrections Center. These sessions, which have been facilitated by I/T staff and volunteers since the agency's founding in 1967, enable motivated prisoners to better prepare themselves for both life's upside possibilities and downside scenarios in a safe and confidential setting. Feedback we have received from previous participants, upon their post-incarceration reflection, has consistently confirmed the benefit of this component of our transitional programming.

Meanwhile, I/T's other core program, Transition House, continues to operate safely as an 18-bed transitional residence for ex-felons returning to the community. Although our experience indicates that each client's success is largely a function the quality of his or her preparation while still confined, our transitional housing program has proven to be an important and dependable source of follow-up structure and guidance for the participants, and we are proud of the solid reputation it has earned. Again, we have availed ourselves of the wisdom of our "alumni" to help identify this program's strengths and weaknesses, and develop ways of constructively tweaking the program. The program receives over 300 letters of inquiry from inmates each year and maintains a waiting list of approved

applicants that usually extends out 6 months. (While we are pleased that our program is in heavy demand partly because it is well regarded, there is also an additional unfortunate reality that beyond I/T House, transitional housing opportunities for ex-offenders in Washington State are extremely limited.)

In conducting its residential program during this past year, I/T also developed a cooperative relationship with Community Psychiatric Clinic. The program concept involved I/T setting aside one bedroom to be reserved for a carefully selected CPC client, who would not only be an ex-felon that could benefit from the Transition House program, but also someone whose mental illness issues would be manageable in this environment, with the additional support of CPC staff. This pilot project, while promising, was suspended after a short period of time, as CPC's current caseload of eligible clients all proved to be individuals requiring more intensive oversight than I/T could provide. The hope of both organizations is that this project, with clients who are a good fit, may be worth reviving in the future.

Also, during this year, I/T was able to embark on another new, potentially important program, albeit on a very small scale. Thanks to a federally funded "Weed and Seed" grant, we were able to begin testing the value of practically oriented, one-to-one counseling at the pre-release stage. As a non-Department of Corrections, non-threatening outside entity, we were positioned to work with a small number of inmates at the Minimum Security Unit of the Washington State Reformatory during their several months prior to release. With a concentration on inmates planning to release to the Central Area of Seattle, we were able to start

examining the benefits of such individualized counseling, which was followed by a “hand-off” to neighborhood “role models” willing to help guide and support their re-integration efforts upon returning to the community. This program, which also included post-release referrals from Community Corrections Officers, was only funded through December 2004. Still, it has already provided a constructive learning experience for us, while showing promise as an effective programming concept. Our hope is to build on what we have learned and extend the program with the support of other funding sources.

Finally, at I/T House itself, we wish to thank Leonard Shaw for his self-healing workshops, and Chris Stroud, who initiated a weekly Alcoholics Anonymous meeting at I/T House, serving both our residents and the community at large. Our residents have also continued to benefit from the non-traditional programming services of Playback Theater Northwest and Simone LaDrumma, whose improvisation and drumming performances proven to be simultaneously enlightening and entertaining.

Board Members, Staff and Volunteers

This was a year of great stability in the composition of our Board of Directors and staff, enabling us to progress as an organization with minimal operational disruption.

At the same time, volunteers from the community have played an increasing role in interacting with our residents and supporting their re-integration processes. We are again tremendously grateful to a core of neighbors from the Squire Park

community, who visit I/T House on a regular basis and frequently invite our residents to participate in community-centered activities. We are equally appreciative of other volunteers who have become involved with our program, constructively interacting with the residents and often linking them with other supportive individuals and institutions in the Seattle area.

INTERACTION TRANSITION

2004 ANNUAL REPORT