

# PASSAIC FAMILY HEAD START



# Passaic Family Head Start, Inc.

## Annual Report 2009

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**Lillian M. Ramos, Executive Director**

**Robin Nayda- Burgos, Deputy Director**

## **Report of the Director**

The school year 2008-2009 marked the completion of 35 years of service to the community and family of Passaic. It also ushered in our 36<sup>th</sup> school year.

In 1974, the Passaic Family Head Start, Inc. opened its doors to 30 children from the city of Passaic. In 2008 we served 240 children within three sites and two collaborations. Our families are all from the lowest economic strata within the city - all are below the Federal Poverty guidelines.

Average monthly enrollment was 240. We strive to be at 100% enrollment every month and have been successful at maintaining that level of service. The program has nine classes which run for 12 months and two that run for 10 months. Before and Aftercare is offered to parents from the 12 month program, permitting them to be at the school from 7:30am to 5:30pm if needed. This program is offered through funding from the NJ Dept of Human Services.

Children receive screenings throughout the year consisting of hearing, vision, dental, podiatric and chiropractic. Parents are given assistance with applying for NJ Kid Care medical insurance and are assisted with finding a medical and dental home for their children. Children's immunizations are checked to make sure they are up to date.

Parents also receive a myriad of services through our Social Services component. There parents are informed of program services, services available within the community and family/parenting programs and activities available to them. Information regarding literacy programs within the community is also provided.

Children with known special needs as well as those that demonstrated a need to be evaluated are provided with services on site and referrals as needed.

Parents are offered workshops throughout the year regarding areas of interest to them. These include: Immigration, Child Support, Child Abuse, Labor & Rights, Nutrition, Education & Children, Transitioning to Kindergarten, and a host of others.

The program has worked diligently to make facility improvements which included: Fire/Security upgrades, installing cameras, additional cameras on the perimeter of the building, new floors were installed in each classroom at the Third Street Site and new floors were also installed on the first floor. New stair treads on the interior stairs were installed, all the classrooms were painted at Third Street. Third Street also received an electrical upgrade including new lights throughout the building. These improvements were done to improve the overall functioning of the program

Parents participate throughout the year on the Policy Council, Parent Center Committee, Annual Self Assessment, Review of Component Plans, and volunteer throughout the program year. A volunteer awards program was held recognizing parent and community volunteers. Parents participated in our annual International Festival.

The program consists of 48 staff members which include the executive director, deputy director, managers, family workers, secretaries, cooks, teachers, teachers assistants, fiscal officer, bookkeeper, substitute assistants, and maintenance.

Staff is training for a full week before the start of the school year as well as throughout the year. Development needs and training opportunities are reviewed and provided for all staff from maintenance to accounting to the director, maintaining a staff that is trained, educated and given an opportunity to become leaders in their field is tantamount to the success of the program.

The future for the program is very bright. Staff are qualified and committed to servicing in our program. A third of the staff have been employed with the agency for over 10 years. Funding is steady and promises to increase at both the federal and state levels. The director worked hard to finalize the real estate transaction with the city. This was a slow and complicated process but now the program owns the Third Street Site.

The program has set its goals for the future toward expansion of additional classrooms and services to parents.

We strive to bring quality, improve services and meet the ever present needs of our children and families.

***Dr. Lillian M. Ramos***

Executive Director

### **Building a Strong Program**

Over time, we have been able to transform our program from a struggling program to a leader within the community that knows how to meet new opportunities in the midst of challenges. This remains true today. Overall programming, services and program income has increased within the past nine years. This growth has been challenging yet has helped our program to develop a strong infrastructure and leadership within its program.

### **Positioning Through Partnerships**

The Passaic Family Head Start, Inc. Program has established itself as a leader and a solid program by developing strategic partnerships within the City of Passaic, the County level and within the State of New Jersey.

Building strong relationships with our partners is a key component to our program. They provide key services and expertise that goes beyond our abilities and enhances the quality of what we do and offer within our program. The result is an enduring partnership which benefits both partners and best of all our children and families.

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*Passaic Family Head Start, Inc.*

*Annual Report*

## **Financial Position**

The Passaic Family Head Start, Inc. Program is primarily funded with federal Head Start funds from the Department of Health and Human Services (\$1,975,547). It also received a substantial amount of “Abbott” funding from the New Jersey State Department of Education (\$1,098,474). The program receives funding from other sources including USDA (\$100,000) for its food program and State funding for the before and after care (\$400,000).

The financial position of the agency consists of grant funding. This funding has maintained a solid base during the life of the agency. A yearly audit is completed by the agency to review its financial position, activities, and accounting practices. The completed audit for fiscal year ending June 30, 2008 did not show any deficiencies or reportable material weakness.

Internal controls are constantly being reviewed and improved to maintain general accounting standards and practices.

## **Infrastructure**

Maintaining a solid infrastructure is vital to the existence and growth of the program. We have purposely positioned ourselves to grow in every aspect of the program, including enhancing and developing our current infrastructure.

Our facilities are well maintained and are constantly being reviewed for repairs, upgrade and improvements. Hand in Hand with our facility is the mechanical infrastructure of our facilities which includes heating and air conditioning. These are reviewed for their efficiency and life span. We look not only at this current year’s needs but plan for replacement needs for the future which in most cases will be at great financial cost.

We look to use and introduce new technology to the program that will improve services, programming, improve overall quality to the program and show a cost savings down the line.

Last year at the Third Street site we made some electrical upgrades, including replacing all the light fixtures with energy efficient lights, retiled the floor in all of the classrooms and the first floor, painted all the classrooms, carpeted the conference room, created a media room for training for both staff and parents. We also replaced the playground at the Third Street Site. In the coming years we will look at replacing a few of the HVAC units, wiring the facility for internet and networking, look at installing solar panels and. We will also make some facility upgrades to keep us in compliance with the American Disabilities Act (ADA) at both Highland and Third Street. We will continue to seek funding to build additional classrooms at Highland and Third Street.

## **Leadership in Challenging Times**

Our program has faced many problems and challenges in the past few years as we reorganized ourselves. It was the strong vision and leadership of the program that made it possible. The Board holds our leaders to a high standard of accountability but also allows room for creativity and for true leadership to take place. Having well educated, capable and trained leaders has made the program successful and we are confident they continue to secure the continued growth of our agency.

## **Staffing**

Our staff are some of the most qualified and dedicated staff available. All of our teachers have their bachelor's degree and our teacher assistants have their CDA's (Child Development Associate Certificate). Historically we have very little staff turnover.

Of 48 staff members, 10 have worked over 15 years, of these 10 employees three have been here over 20 years, and an additional 6 have been here over 10 years. Fourteen individuals have been here 5 or more years and 18 individuals have been here less than 5 years. We have had a number of our seasoned employees retire within the past few years. Two of our managers retired after giving 35 years of service to the program.

As you look at the constitution of our staff, more than half are seasoned staff. This shows experience, degrees and continuity despite all the changes to the programs. The other portion of the staff is young or newly hired. This provides a good balance with our seasoned employees and our younger staff. New ideas and experience is readily shared within our program.

Half of our staff have been program parents. Parents are encouraged to develop goals and to volunteer in the program. This has made for a good combination. As parents receive support and are encouraged they are willing to develop goals that will qualify them for new employment opportunities. We have benefitted from this philosophy.

## **Non Discriminatory Policy**

The Passaic Family Head Start, Inc Program in its operation of program and services does not discriminate against anyone because of race, color, national origin, disability, age or sex.



### **Mission Statement:**

The mission of the Passaic Family Head Start, Inc. Program is to provide an early quality educational opportunity to three and four year old children from low-income families within the City of Passaic and neighboring communities. In addition, it is the Passaic Family Head Start's mission to help Head Start eligible families become self-sufficient and productive members of society through educational, health, social services, parent involvement, emergency, and advocacy support.

### **Vision for the Future**

The Passaic Family Head Start Program has served children and families from the City of Passaic since 1974. Over 4,000 children have been educated within our institution. With excitement and joy we are welcoming new generations of Head Start families into our program.

The program has been challenged to the core of its existence for the past 9 years. These times have been challenging yet have made the program stronger. The program has always seen itself as a leader within the City of Passaic in pre-school education and in providing services to its families. We see our role as educators and as advocates for families in need and for the voiceless.

To that end we continue to forge forward looking to meet the needs of our families whatever they may be. In the past our parents went from a home based program to a part day program to a full day program.

We have established ourselves purposely in the last few years to allow for continued growth of our program. We have accomplished this through the acquisition of properties that lend themselves to continued expansion. In 2006 we purchased a facility with 24000 square feet. We presently are utilizing 10,000 square feet of this facility. Leaving a great deal of room to build additional classrooms as funding becomes available.

In 2009 we purchased the Third Street facility we have been in since 1986. We have made this our facility our own. We have made many enhancements and improvements throughout the years. This year we will continue in our endeavors to upgrade the facility to make it a better facility for teaching and learning.

We plan to position ourselves to grasp every opportunity that will allow us to continue to grow. We envision adding additional classrooms both at Highland Avenue and at Third Street. We plan to continue to make improvements to the physical plants to enhance teaching and learning. We will seek to add as funding becomes available additional components to our programs, such as literacy classes, other classes and programs available to our community. We will attempt to bring them to our facility. We will also seek to build our Social Services into a unit that serves families from the community beyond our Head Start Families. Partnering with community and State agencies will make this possible.

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**Robin Nayda Burgos** – Program Director  
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