

WALLINGFORD COMMUNITY SENIOR CENTER WILL STAY OPEN & REVITALIZE OPERATIONS!

SEATTLE (March 8, 2010) – The Board of Directors of the Wallingford Community Senior Center (WCSC) recently reached a decision to keep the Center open and rebuild its operations and finances through a strategic restructuring process in 2010. The success of these efforts is predicated upon immediate and strong fundraising efforts, and significant volunteer support. “New engagement with our community has brought the will, commitment and intention to move forward – all vital for us to climb the hill to success,” says Jim Stillman, Board president.

To mark this decision, the Center will host a “New Start Celebration” at a community pancake breakfast on Sunday, April 25, from 9 am to 12:30 pm. This event will be open to the public.

WCSC’s financial deficit, which initially prompted a public announcement of impending closure last fall, was considerably reduced as a result of a financially generous response from the community. In another strong showing of support for the Center, a matching challenge grant of \$25,000 was recently made by an anonymous donor from the Wallingford community. Kathleen Crompt, WCSC’s executive director, reflects, “I am so touched by the generosity of this gift and the confidence in our potential that it represents. The donors’ intent is to invest in building a strong resource for this community, and to spur others to step forward in whatever way they can. We are honored to have this opportunity and will reach out widely to achieve matching funds over the coming months.”

Since early February, WCSC board members and the executive director have been mapping out the revitalization of its programs and researching more financially sustainable organizational models. Community advocates believe that services and programs for seniors are an essential element of a healthy, vibrant community. With other senior programs having either closed or faced similar crises, WCSC is one of only three remaining senior centers north of the ship canal. Closure of WCSC would be a further loss to already-thin aging services, leaving even fewer options for seniors – especially in north-central and northeast Seattle. One long-time member says, “I don’t know what I would do if the Center goes away. I count on it so much.”

Since the crisis unfolded last fall, WCSC has been operating on a reduced 4-day a week schedule. This includes a senior nutritional lunch program and a few self-sustaining social activities and groups. In April 2010, the Center will begin restoring selected programs, with a goal of achieving full programming by year-end. Among the first programs to come back will be those that foster healthy aging and positive social connections among seniors. As a direction, WCSC and the community will move toward an “all-ages” community center - with a strong commitment to seniors at its core and the creation of intergenerational programs in a new model.

Despite a financially challenging landscape for providing services, the Center’s crisis has turned out to be a catalyst for new thinking, positive change, increased outreach, and enhanced community partnerships. As the Center faces the challenge of strategic restructuring, it will depend upon this growing network for its success.

To find out how you can help, please call (206) 461-7825.

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