

Smith Pleads for YO Center

Northeast job center at center of presidential visit called critical to helping disadvantaged

A fight to keep government funding for the Youth Opportunity Center on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. has entered a new round.

Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore. has sent letters to the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Committee's Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Subcommittee, asking that they retain funding for the job-training program in next year's budget.

The YO Center was the backdrop of a visit to promote the economy by both Smith and President George W. Bush in January, but support for the center turned sour when the Bush administration cut its funding as part of proposed cuts to all Youth Opportunity centers across the country.

"The Youth Opportunity Center in Port-

land is critical to helping disadvantaged youth realize their dreams," said Smith. "Congress should make clear its commitment to young people by assuring that funds for the Youth Opportunity Center are included in next year's budget."

The YO center assists youth 14 to 21 years of age who live in a high-poverty area plagued by a dropout rate of 55-65 percent and poverty rate twice the city average.

The center offers young people a chance to develop the necessary skills they need to pursue education and job opportunities. As part of Worksystems Inc., the center has developed an effective program that depends on the full amount of the grant, originally sched-

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Investing in Early Childhood Literacy

Training, staff and materials to help Boise-Eliot school



Judi Johansen (from left), chief executive officer for PacificCorp, joins Boise-Eliot co-principals Deborah Berry and Eileen Isham, and Isaac Regenstein of the PacificCorp Foundation for Learning at a state summit on increasing early childhood literacy.

Boise-Eliot Elementary school in inner north Portland has earned a grant from the PacificCorp Foundation for Learning for training, additional staff time and materials to make kindergarten students better readers.

The foundation is spending \$1 million in three western states to dramatically impact early childhood literacy levels at selected elementary schools.

Administered through the Oregon Department of Education, the project delivers specialized reading instruction to kindergartners to the targeted schools.

Already, the program has shown dramatic

improvements in reading, with 96 percent of children in the program brought up to appropriate levels by the time they reach first grade.

The project is part of a continuum of service, including one-on-one reading assistance through programs such as Start Making a Reader Today of which the foundation has been a longtime supporter.

"We are extremely excited about this program. This will mean a lot to all of our students, especially that it will give us the opportunity to put resources toward targeted students," said Deborah Berry, co-principal at Boise-Eliot school.

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