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11-008

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U.S. Bank Celebrates 120 Years of Business in Oregon with \$120,000 Grant to Innovative Ninth Grade Counts Partnership

Gift Announced as School and Community Leaders Gather for the Portland Schools Foundation's 11th Annual Principal for Almost a Day, presented by Comcast

Portland, Ore. (October 21, 2011) – Yesterday, at the lunch celebrating and debriefing the 11th annual Principal for Almost a Day program, Malia Wasson, Oregon president of U.S. Bank, announced a \$120,000 investment in the Portland Schools Foundation's (PSF) Ninth Grade Counts (NGC) partnership to the room of nearly 200 principals and community leaders.

Ninth Grade Counts represents a network of more than 20 partner organizations that come together to identify and support students at risk of dropping out, providing them with targeted support through the summer leading into ninth grade. Attached are brief bios on five students who participated in Open Meadow's Step Up, a NGC partner program at Roosevelt High School. These students' academic performance and relationships with themselves and others were positively impacted by the experiences they had between eighth and ninth grade in Step Up. *To reach one of these students contact Robin Eisenbach at robin.e@openmeadow.org or 971-404-8850.*

"U.S. Bank opened for business in Oregon on Feb. 9, 1891, so in honor of our 120th year, we were looking for an opportunity to make a \$120,000 investment to mark our commitment to programs that are making a difference in our community," Wasson said. "Ninth Grade Counts reaches kids at a crucial age – between eighth and ninth grade – which research shows is a pivotal time in determining whether or not they will go on to graduation, and ultimately successful careers. As a major employer in the state, U.S. Bank is pleased to support Ninth Grade Counts, and we hope our commitment will help inspire others in the Portland business community to join in support of this worthy program."

U.S. Bank has invested in NGC since the Portland Schools Foundation established the partnership in 2007 – this new three-year grant marks the largest investment in NGC to date. Over the past three years U.S. Bank has invested \$60,000 in the partnership and since 1996 the company has given more than \$218,000 to PSF; with this gift their investment in the success of local children and youth through the Portland Schools Foundation nears \$350,000.

"Ninth Grade Counts is truly a communitywide partnership – it harnesses the best efforts of dozens of partners to ensure that more students enter high school ready to succeed," said Nate Wass Shull, Director of Community Engagement at PSF. "This groundbreaking investment by U.S. Bank is an investment in our community's ability to partner more deeply and efficiently with even greater focus on measurable results."

(more)

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Recently PSF conducted research in partnership with the Northwest Education Association (NWEA) which identified a positive impact on students' academic outcomes, particularly in the area of high school credit accumulation. Ninth Grade Counts participants also report that after completing the program they are more prepared for high school and more motivated to graduate and continue their education. Equally important is the fact that a diverse set of partners have joined together to take collaborative action based on agreed upon data and shared goals. The community of practice that convenes around the ninth grade transition is already working to use the findings to improve future efforts. Ninth Grade Counts links to a continuum of summer support opportunities for students through the Summer Youth Connect and Future Connect initiatives.

Ninth Grade Counts also serves as a concrete example of the type of cross-sector collaborative currently under development as part of the broader Cradle to Career (C2C) partnership. Cradle to Career is a public-private partnership that supports bold, data-driven system alignment along the education continuum. This framework links social and academic indicators to help identify communitywide strategies to support children and youth throughout their development. PSF serves as the managing partner for the Cradle to Career community effort.

Portland is one of only seven U.S. cities to be an endorsed partner site in the national Strive/Cradle to Career network and recently hosted the network's national convening which brought 300 education and civic leaders from more than 80 communities across the nation to Portland. Locally, C2C is organizing to accomplish five goals for every child in Portland and Multnomah County: 1. Be prepared for school, 2. Be supported inside and outside school, 3. Succeed academically, 4. Enroll in post-secondary education or career training, and 5. Graduate and enter a career.

U.S. Bancorp (NYSE: USB), with \$330 billion in assets as of Sept. 30, 2011, is the parent company of U.S. Bank, the fifth-largest commercial bank in the United States. The company operates 3,089 banking offices in 25 states and 5,092 ATMs and provides a comprehensive line of banking, brokerage, insurance, investment, mortgage, trust and payment services products to consumers, businesses and institutions. U.S. Bancorp and its employees are dedicated to improving the communities they serve, for which the company earned the 2011 Spirit of America Award, the highest honor bestowed on a company by United Way. Visit U.S. Bancorp on the web at www.usbank.com.

Beginning with parent-led advocacy and funding for Portland Public Schools in the mid-1990s, to leading the ground-breaking research which clearly identified the extremely low graduation rates in Portland, to most recently expanding its mission to serve the six major school districts in Multnomah County, since 1994 PSF has advocated for excellent and equitable education for all children. To learn more visit www.thinkschools.org.

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Step Up, a Ninth Grade Counts partner program at Roosevelt High School
Student Profiles
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Keyshawn Waters is a ninth grader at Roosevelt High School. He is a 14-year-old, African American whose smile is so bright and warm that it is immediately contagious and he is gifted at putting others at ease. When asked about school, Keyshawn explains that he had bad grades in middle school, but reassures that they are much better now. He just saw his mid-quarter progress report and he has earned mostly Bs with a couple Cs. He says that he is planning on raising his grades even higher and his goal is to have all As and Bs. He credits his recent academic success to his own hard work, the support of his mother, Linnette, and Step Up, a tutoring/mentoring program participated in over the summer. His experience with Step Up began at a five-day, overnight leadership camp which Keyshawn explains, "helped me learn how to express myself."

Kianna Serrano is a 14-year-old, young woman, who describes herself as "beautifully multi-ethnic." She is a ninth grader at Roosevelt High School. Kianna went to the same summer camp that Keyshawn did and describes it as impactful. Kianna says that the best lesson she learned there was, "being able to trust people who you know care about you." Kianna explains that she feels that starting high school with the Step Up leadership camp was important because it helped her with her confidence. She describes being able to come to school as the best version of herself since she knows that there are people there who support her in being her best. Kianna has shown her best since beginning high school: she has high grades in all of her classes and just joined the varsity cheerleading squad. She is a leader.

Juanita Galeana, who is a Latina teen, is involved in Step Up and when she saw her recent mid-quarter progress report and laughed in delight. Jumping up and down with excitement she produced the progress report that read "3.7 GPA". She is very happy with her grades and explains that she gets a lot of help in her classes during Step Up. She sits by her friend, Kianna, every single day after school in Step Up, where she goes for an extended school day, most of the week. She said that she and Kianna knew each other a little bit in middle school, but not like they do now. Juanita explains that at Step Up's summer camp they grew very close. That was her favorite thing about the Step Up camp, being able to really connect with her peers and to see them as their best selves. She said that since then she knows she can rely on the group of students that she went to camp with, because she knows they would never let her down.

Brandon Saephan, a 15-year-old Latino, has participated in Step Up for over a year. When he is being honest with himself Brandon will admit that he did not even want to join Step Up. From his perspective he had to join because his older sister had gone through the program, and were he to be really honest, he would say that even at the beginning of the Step Up summer camp he was skeptical. When he reflects back now, however, his story changes. Brandon explains that at the Step Up summer camp he learned how to trust others, something that was very difficult for him to do because of some of his experiences in childhood. It was this capacity to trust, that began to develop at the Step Up summer camp and that has directly led his excellent grades. Brandon has learned to trust other adults, including teachers, and relates attributes that to what he went through at the leadership camp. He realizes now that he can lean on the adults in Step Up, other teachers and staff members at school for support and guidance.

Trhona Johnson is a junior at Roosevelt High School who is 16-years-old and African American. This is her third year in the Step Up program. When asked about Step Up's leadership camp she immediately launches into a speech about why she should be allowed to attend camp this upcoming summer...even though she would be a senior and much older than the incoming freshman. She says that she does not care about the gap in age, but that she loved camp so much she is desperate to go back. Trhona, as an incoming ninth grader, was shy, always tried to hide her smile from others, and was lacked confidence in her own academic ability. As a junior, much of this has changed. She may still try to hide her smile from time to time, but she earned excellent grades all last year and is now a varsity cheerleader. She is a confident, extremely joyful, and an intelligent young woman.