The Case for Hope

Real Change meets direct human needs while we organize for a better future.

The trends are clear as a mountain lake.

Over the past two years, Real Change has seen an unprecedented forty-one percent increase in active vendors. In December of 2008, Real Change provided opportunity to 355 poor and homeless people, up from 239 the same month two years prior. In 2007, sixty-three percent of our vendors reported a disability that interfered with regular work. A year later, that number had risen to seventy-two percent.

These numbers tell a story of rising need and increasing desperation. Troubled waters are rising, sweeping the most vulnerable out to sea.

The first few months of 2009, with deepening recession and dismal budget scenarios at all levels of government, pointed toward more of the same.

Real Change stands up for those who have nothing. Fifty-six percent of our vendors are currently homeless and thirty-seven percent are formerly homeless. Forty percent of our vendors survive without housing or emergency shelter. They sleep outdoors, couch surf, and live in cars. Just twelve percent of our vendors stay in emergency shelter. For another thirty-six percent, Real Change offers the income they need to maintain a sometimes precarious hold on subsidized housing.

The view from the front desk of Real Change is that times are hard and getting harder.

Yet, amidst the crisis, there is room for hope. Our vendors report a growing hunger for progressive, community-based, journalism, and take great pride in selling a paper that is read and respected. Circulation rose by eighteen percent last year alone, with 722,371 copies sold. With three 2008 awards from the Society of Professional Journalists, Real Change brings you quality reporting on the issues that matter.

Survival services save lives, but they don’t touch the dismal math of growing inequality. They don’t alter the equation of economic winners and losers. Real Change has worked hard to build an activist response to growing poverty and homelessness. “Power,” we understand, “codes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will.”

Our organizing has leveraged our strongest asset — the strength of our relationships with one another — to work across class, race, and issue barriers and build for power.

Our leading role in working for system change was honored with the 2008 Washington State Jobs with Justice award for “leading the movement for social change.”

Hundreds of people have participated in our ongoing encampments at City Hall to oppose Seattle’s homeless sweeps. Hundreds more came out in support of the Nickelsville survival encampment. Thousands have registered their support for alternatives to increased incarceration of the poor. All of this takes place at a time when millions have declared their desire for system change by electing an organizer to the Presidency.

Our challenge is simple to describe but daunting to solve. Over 2008 we struggled to meet growing vendor demand. At the same time, a great moment of possibility has arrived, and the time for organizing is now.

Real Change’s campaign to stop Seattle’s sweeps on homeless encampments demands solutions to poverty that do not inflict further harm on the very poor. Our leading role in challenging the new municipal jail and the perverse logic of ever-increasing incarceration demands that scarce public resources be used to rebuild rather than destroy lives.

Caught between the demands of service provision and the dire need for system change, we ask that we not have to choose one or the other.

With your help, Real Change met this challenge over 2008. Grassroots support for our work grew by 22.5%. Earned income — mostly in the form of higher circulation revenue — increased by 23% as well. During a year of recession and a print media largely on the ropes, this was truly remarkable.

This year, we need to do it again.

The social services that vendors depend upon are growing more scarce and over-burdened, and the self-help opportunity Real Change provides is an increasingly essential survival alternative. Real Change is a critical catalyst for progressive activism during a time of unparalleled possibility. We are limited only by our resources.

Since 1994, Real Change has steadily grown, but the need has grown faster. We need your help once again to catch up to the challenging realities of our times. Our broad base of grassroots support and understanding of the real needs of our vendors leads us to fully embrace our role as truth-teller and catalyst for change.

2008 was a year of political risk-taking, aggressive activism, and pushing our capacity to the very limit. Over 2009, we need your help to strengthen core operations while we continue to fight like hell for the change we believe in. The next few years promise to be a wild ride. We need you at our side.

Darcie: “We bleed the same blood ...”

Laughter and homemade cat food are all I need,” Darcie said. “This was my year; I wouldn’t be this far.”

You can find Darcie selling the paper at Seventh and Seneca. To her regular customers, Darcie says, “I’m so grateful and appreciative... if it wasn’t for you, I wouldn’t be this far.”
Thank You To Our 2008 Circle of Friends.

Resources = Capacity. Please Support Opportunity, Organizing, and Caring Community

$20,000 +
- Duncan Ross and Brigit Wallbaum, The Lucky Seven Foundation, Kimmie O'Malley and Christopher Thresher

$10,000 - $19,999
- Anonymous, Microsoft Giving Campaign, Shauna Massene, Melvis Fund - Alan Preston

$5,000 - $9,999
- David and Marcia McCracken, Puget Consumers Co-op, Inc., Seattle Foundation

$1,000 - $4,999

$500 - $999

$250 - $499
- Adalene Hannah Gift Program, Amita Mattoo, Anne and Jack Farnentine, Anne Johnson, Anonymous, Ben and Bessie Meyers, Betty L Wagner, Beverly Page & Michael Verach, Biju Mathew, Brie Gyncld, Carol Brown, Carol Dignn, Carol Sothe, Christina Arminno, Christine and William Kesler, Christophe Lufi Verdecia, Claire and Bob Brooks, Daniel Ford, David Stratchfll and Matkline Wilde, Debrah


Calvin: “A place where I could be at home ...”

Four years ago I was sleeping under a bridge, and I woke up with this old man sitting next to me. He was counting a pile of money on a stack of Real Change newspapers. At the time I was this frustrated Vietnam vet — I was mad at the world, the government wasn’t doing anything for me. I figured let me go check out this paper, at least I can put some money in my pocket.

Eventually I understood what the paper was really about. I saw people who didn’t know how to express themselves and who didn’t have a voice. I wanted to use Real Change as a voice for activism, and I saw a place where I could be home.

“I was part of the founding of the Real Change Organizing Project. RCOP really opened my eyes to how classism affects people and how there needs to be a cross-class organization that really makes changes in this country at a grassroots level. RCOP members pleaded with the Mayor to stop the sweeps. He continued to turn his head and ignore that homeless people were losing their property and their identification. So RCOP decided to step it up and do some civil disobedience. It was a great success — I think I was on every television station in the city.

Now RCOP is continuing to stop the sweeps and working on an initiative to stop the new jail from being built. I intend to be out there getting signatures left and right and make sure we stop this. Spending money on a jail to incarcerate misdemeanants versus spending that money upstream to build schools and provide education and training to help and crime and homelessness — why spend it on a jail? Obviously if you’re spending money on a jail you’re not planning to educate or help people, you’re just planning to incarcerate people. If you get caught sleeping in a park with a blanket over you, you can get charged and put in jail. You shouldn’t be criminalizing homeless people, and you especially shouldn’t be building a new jail to put them in.

“Real Change helps you get your self-esteem back, and then you start taking all these other steps that are required to get you back into life. “I just finished my associate certification through the Goodwill program and graduated after finishing an internship at a major retailer. But I have never stopped selling Real Change because to me this paper is like my humble beginning. And the activism part of it you can’t get away from.”
Calvin: "A place where I could be at home..."


**$100 - $249**


- Financial support. We ended the year with an energized staff.

- Over the year, we restructured our staffing to meet the growing demand.

### Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
<td>$284,664</td>
<td>$348,811</td>
<td>+22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Circulation</td>
<td>$181,097</td>
<td>$215,440</td>
<td>+19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>$8,413</td>
<td>$47,750</td>
<td>+462%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advertising/Ads</td>
<td>$11,861</td>
<td>$19,463</td>
<td>+64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>$539,084</td>
<td>$621,464</td>
<td>+14%</td>
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### Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>Change</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Payroll Related</td>
<td>$381,510</td>
<td>$408,987</td>
<td>+7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Printing and Copying</td>
<td>$89,299</td>
<td>$94,458</td>
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<tr>
<td>Events and Marketing</td>
<td>$26,316</td>
<td>$21,106</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rent/Utilities</td>
<td>$26,432</td>
<td>$22,894</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing/PR</td>
<td>$16,042</td>
<td>$13,747</td>
<td>-14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office Supplies</td>
<td>$12,307</td>
<td>$22,619</td>
<td>+84%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone and Internet</td>
<td>$8,096</td>
<td>$8,067</td>
<td>-0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postage and Delivery</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank and debt service</td>
<td>$3,245</td>
<td>$3,525</td>
<td>+9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT/Computer Services</td>
<td>$3,974</td>
<td>$4,116</td>
<td>+4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Taxes</td>
<td>$2,346</td>
<td>$3,951</td>
<td>+72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dues and Subscriptions</td>
<td>$1,368</td>
<td>$2,200</td>
<td>+60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel &amp; Food</td>
<td>$1,320</td>
<td>$3,623</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>$787</td>
<td>$772</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital Equipment</td>
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<td>$1,149</td>
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<tr>
<td>Property &amp; Maintenance</td>
<td>$488</td>
<td>$495</td>
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<td>Video Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>$95</td>
<td>$90</td>
<td>-6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Income         | $581,031 | $589,493 | +1%          |

### 2007-2008: Every Budget Tells A Story.
Breakfast Thanks

Big thanks are due to everyone who made our 14th annual breakfast our most successful yet. We raised $74,362, netting about 50% more than last year’s breakfast. This strong increase in community support lifts us up to meet the growing demand for our services.

Thanks to our primary sponsor, Community Health Plan of Washington, as well as community sponsor PCC Market, the UW Honors Program, and FareStart for providing fantastic catering. Our table captains and keynote Sherman Alexie ensured that we packed the room and showed the strength of 450 people taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

Volunteers Rock

As dedicated as we are, Real Change staff alone cannot create change. Just as the reader/vendor relationship is the crux of what works about Real Change, we rely on people from across the Seattle community to make our office run. Our operations depend upon volunteers who function like staff, from editorial and community organizing work to redesigning our website — launching March 2011 — and running the front desk.

Our volunteers come together across class boundaries to learn each other’s history, and from this piece of connection we organize most genuinely and effectively. This tight-knit and ever-growing group of volunteers enables us to step up our organizing while publishing an award-winning newspaper.

There are lots of ways to volunteer with Real Change. Contact volunteer@realchangenews.org to get involved.

Stuff Warms Our Vendors

When we put the call out to Real Change readers for survival gear donations, you responded with overwhelming generosity. Our office was completely overflowing with bags and boxes full of warm clothes, sleeping bags and tents. The donations became impossible to count — many people slipped them inside our office door and left, because, as vendor staff Michael Garcia will tell you, “People who donated really didn’t think it was a big deal. But it was a huge deal.” Your gift of survival gear made a life-saving difference to our many vendors who sleep outside.

Books Are Cool Too!

Also thanks to the Real Change community, we received approximately 4,000 books for our 2008 booksale. Our next booksale is May 2, 2009 at the University Congregational Church. We will gladly accept donations of sellable books, CDs, DVDs, and records at the Real Change office during the month of April.

Vendor Profile

Gender
Male: 71%  Female: 29%

Race/Ethnicity
Caucasion: 56%  African American: 15%  Native American: 10%  Multi-racial 8%  Latino: 4%  Asian: 1%  Other: 6%

Age
18-30: 4%  31-50: 54%  51-70: 40%  70 and over: 2%

Housing Status
Currently homeless: 56%  Formerly homeless: 37%  Never homeless: 7%

Current Situation
Sleeping outside: 19%  Sleeping in a shelter: 12%  Not housed, sleeping in multiple places: 10%  Subsidized housing: 36%  Staying with friends or family: 7%  Has their own housing: 7%  Sleeping in a car: 4%  Other: 5%

Physical or mental disability?
Yes: 72%