Thank you for a great 2009, 2010 will be even better with your help.

Transforming lives, taking risks, telling the truth

By Timothy Harris
Executive Director

2009 was the year Real Change hit the wall, and years of running beyond our capacity turned into a crisis that could not be ignored. To those outside, the news was always a surprise. “You look like you’re doing great,” they’d often say. In some ways we were.

For three years straight, circulation rose 17-18% annually. Over those years, the numbers of vendors served doubled. During this time, we embraced a more grassroots, direct-action style of activism, with sleep-outs and civil disobedience at City Hall and a ballot initiative to stop a new jail.

We were on fire, and, we were falling apart. The vendor numbers went up and the organizing became more ambitious. But the stuff that once got done when there was time — the grant writing and reporting, the long-term planning and evaluation, the general administration — got pushed aside.

Grassroots support of our work in 2009 came to 63% of total income. Nearly all our other income was from newspaper sales.

867,000 papers were sold, putting over a million bucks back into mostly empty pockets.

There was more. We outgrew our office. Our technology infrastructure got older and cranner, Staff burnout became a serious issue. The bumps along our road became more frequent and harder to handle. We had no cushion. The word crisis started coming up.

Over the year, we wrestled with the change that was needed. We hired an Operations Director to strengthen internal management. We brought on a bookkeeper. We strengthened fundraising, cut expenses, paid off debt, and made critical investments in staffing and infrastructure. We created systems and found stuff we didn’t need to be doing. Grassroots support of our work, because we asked, grew by 10%.

As our vendor numbers continue to rise, we will create transformational community throughout the organization.

At fifteen years, we are a community institution. The resources we need to operate reasonably are there to support our good work. And we have recommitted to using those resources as effectively as possible by investing in their proper administration.

Circulation grew in 2009 by 19%. We won prestigious journalism awards. We changed the landscape on the jail issue with a grassroots campaign that took on race, class, and inequality.

As we enter 2010, Real Change is out of crisis and operating with a very different sense of the possible. We are changing fast as well.

We’re moving. Our new location in Pioneer Square will offer more space to vendor operations while moving the newspaper and administration upstairs.

We’re organizing on the criminalization of poverty, and rebuilding the work of bringing vendors and other supporters together in action.

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Celebrating Michael

Stilly 2009 brought the death of a Real Change friend, Michael Garcia. A vendor, an activist, a Real Change staff member; Michael was a man who tragically died suddenly just as all the pieces of his life came together and he was finally doing what he was born to do.

As a young teen in foster care, a fireworks accident blew off several of his fingertips. There were surgeries. Painkillers led to heroin, years on the street, and eventually, prison. While incarcerated, Michael decided to make something of himself and sought education. His dream, he told me, was to work in the field of waste water management and he was certified to do so while in prison.

There were, however, barriers after his release from prison. His poverty. His battle with Hepatitis C. His felony record. Michael was engaged in an epic struggle toward what, for many of us, would seem a humble goal.

He was deeply compassionate, quietly brilliant, and utterly committed to improving the lives of others. Michael was an amazing staff member, doing the work from a place of passion and understanding. “For most of my life, I was a fuck-up,” he said. “Now I’m making up for lost time.”

The Real Change movie, Turning Points closes with his powerful life story and is dedicated to his memory.

Michael drives it all home in his own words:

“I want to see some justice done to these people out here, not only because I’m one of them, but because we’re all together in this thing called life and we have to look out for each other.”

We are excited that as Real Change moves onto the next phase of our life and growth, that we have the opportunity to honor Michael Garcia with a lasting tribute. Our new Vendor Learning Center in Pioneer Square opens on May 24th and we are naming it after Michael. He would be thrilled. Please donate now to help fund this new resource for vendors and be part of a community tribute to a great man. And take a few minutes to think about the fragility of life and how we all need to, like Michael, do what we can, while we can.
Thank you to the more than 1,300 people who invested in issues, Insight, and Impact.

Our Amazing Publishers


Laurelle Haapanen, Duncan Haas & Btg Walbaum, Phyllis & George Haas, Ana

I look forward to getting the paper each week. My regular vendor is always knowledgeable about the week’s content; it’s great to see the vendors proud of the paper. Please pass on to the editorial staff that the election year coverage this year was the best in the city. Real reporting! -a Donor

Mark Dalton, Sean Daly, Adair Damman, Robert Damman, Mark Damman, Joseph Damman, Betsy & John Darragh, Stephen Daschle, Joy Da- vidson, Zach & Jill Davies, Charles Davis & Janice Daniels, Ava & Marcus, Laurel & Anne Annule, Krist De Launay, M F Degoeode, Lisa Ann & Keith Dekker, Margarette Dekker, Elvira & Schuyler DelBene, Michael & Lisa Del Vecchio, Edwards, Gloria Derbarka, Erica Des Oel, Mark Diamond & Deborah Perlsus, Barbara B Dennis, Janea & Morgan Des Mett, Margot DeSaisy & Martha Dietz, Carol Digard, Ronald & Maria Dilgiano, Martha Dilts, Anita & Jack Dingrani, Jeremy Dinedel, Peter J. Manos & Ingrid Dinter, Christine Di Stefano, Cynthia Domingo, Donald & Gloria Swisher, Kaesi Dones, Mark Dooing, Ernst Dornfield, William Dowd & Kathy Reichgerdt, Gordon Dowrey, Lavinia & Ray Downs, Patricia Downs, Downtown Emergency Service Center, Anthony Dyre, Maryclay & Ian Kennedy, Dewey Edsforth, Debra Edwards, Bill & Frauline Edwal, Kathryn Eichman, Fifth Avenue Hearing Center, J Howard Boyd & Karen Finkenhofer, Judi Eksel, Steven & Sue Eisenberg, Ira & Berneta Walbaum, Susan Eisen, Maureen Elsberry, Bill & Robin Els, William Elwood, Andrew Emerson, Robert & Therese Eldred, Michael Elsten, Joel Ellis, Jeff Everitt, Erin Ellis, Matthew Ellis, Antoinette Ellis & Evalt Ellis,3 & Stephen Finney, First Student, Susan & Ken Fitzgerald, Stephen Fjelday, Mary E Fjelday, James & Robert Fjelday, Andrew Fleming, Robert S Fletcher, Jeanne Florance, Patricia Furrner, Anne P Fung, Brenda M L Fong, Roger Forbes, John Fosse, Tamara Franklin, Roberta Forrest, Mel Poster, David Foye, Itaehal Frankel & Joelle & Michele Frauenheim, Phyllis Friedman, Timothy M Friedman, Michele E Frohse, Jeff Fujii, Patrila Fuller, Susan & Alan Fulk


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The Real Change Homeless Empowerment Program is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Real Change is a member of the North American Street Newspaper Association, the International Network of Street Papers, and the Greater Seattle Business Association.

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SHARK! Helping the Homeless - Working To End Homelessness, Seattle Business Association.

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Margot Jacobs, Maria Jacobson Blaser, Jager Law Office PLLC, Christine James, Irene James, Cheryl James, Ken Jackson, Brian Jaeger, Catherine Jener, Sue & Neil Jenson, John Jerin & Cynthia Ricciardi, Cindy & Bill Jirikowsky, Betty Johnson & Roni Gilkes, Ebden Johnson, Emily Johnson, Hannah Johnson-Breimier, Cynthia TJohnson, Anne Johnstone, GinaJonas,
Surviving the Streets and 15 Forwards annual breakfast a success

Good deeds acknowledged

Real Change thanks Michael Grabham and Patti Dunn for chairing 2009's Surviving the Streets survival gear giveaway in November and December. Over 100 people, businesses and churches donated coats, camping gear, socks, gloves and funds to ensure that hundreds of vendors and other homeless people received cold weather gear. To volunteer for the 2010 event, please contact: volunteer@realchangenews.org.

The 2009 Breakfast, 15 Forwards, was a big hit, raising over $60,000 for Real Change. The keynote speaker was travel writer and television personality Rick Steves and the 2009 Change Agent of the Year award was presented to Roberto Maestas by King County Councilmember Larry Gossett. Save the date for the 2010 Breakfast at 7:30AM on September 30th, at the Seattle Center Fisher Pavilion. For more information or to sign up to be a Table Captain or Sponsor, please contact: development@realchangenews.org.

Vendor Profile

Gender:
- Male: 75%
- Female: 24%
- Transgender: 1%

Age:
- 18-29: 3.5%
- 30-39: 7.5%
- 40-49: 35%
- 50-59: 48%
- 60+: 11%

Race/Ethnicity:
- American Indian or Alaskan Native: 7%
- Asian, Asian-American: 2.6%
- Black or African American: 24.6%
- Latino or Hispanic: 4.4%
- Pacific Islander or Hawaiian Native: 0.9%
- White/Caucasian (non-Hispanic): 59.2%
- Other: 3.5%

Housing Status:
- Currently Homeless: 58.8%
- Previously Homeless: 35.5%
- Never Homeless: 4.8%

The vendor who sold you this paper works. So does Real Change.

Real Change is a quality newspaper, organizing project and low barrier economic opportunity. Real Change works.

Every month, more than 350 homeless and vulnerably housed people earn money and build confidence by selling Real Change. We bring you community voices you won’t hear elsewhere and quality in-depth reporting on stories often left out of other papers.

Real Change is reader supported in the same way that Public Radio and TV are listener and viewer supported. Last year more than 1300 people helped make Real Change work even better by being donors and volunteers.

Please join them and help us in the fight against poverty and homelessness.