



Education – Mentorship – Food Security

Founded on Oct 2nd 2004, Salem Dream Center is a nonprofit organization that provides education, mentorship and food security support services to at-risk, youth and families living in poverty.

Since inception, our programs have focused on the Edgewater community in West Salem, but serve children and families throughout Salem and beyond. While Edgewater is located in one of the wealthiest zip codes in Oregon, this community faces extreme income inequality with 87% of the population living in poverty.

A majority of the families we serve have mixed immigration status members. Parents tend to be new immigrants, for whom English is not their first language, and who work low-wage, menial labor jobs. Their children are typically first generation Americans who face myriad challenges growing up in poverty: unstable housing, inadequate nutrition, lack of childcare, limited health care access, unsafe neighborhoods, and under-resourced schools. As such, these children are particularly vulnerable to poor academic achievement, school dropout, abuse and neglect, behavioral and socioemotional problems, physical health problems, and developmental delays. Our programs seek to address many of these issues.

From 2004-2013, we were supported by West Salem Foursquare Church. In 2014, we incorporated as our own private nonprofit organization. Since that time, a majority of our revenue (95%) has come from the generous support of individuals and local businesses. Operating on a shoestring budget of just \$160,000 last year, we served more than 1,000 children and 235 families.

We have three core focuses, all based upon a foundation that it's through relationships that broken hearts and lives are mended. We identified our three core focuses by working with at-risk youth and struggling families these eleven plus years.

Education is a key to rising out of poverty. Mentorship is crucial to helping at-risk youth navigate the harsh realities of poverty. Food Security is vital to children and families breaking free of Starvation Mentality.

We hope you will help us reach those in our community who want to achieve a life of self-sufficiency, and leave behind poverty and the need for public assistance.



Programming:

Education Support

- With a focus on bridging the educational attainment gap children growing up in poverty experience, we partner with Salem-Keizer School District to provide Saturday morning homework tutoring and support services for youth ages 6-18. This program is entirely volunteer run, with four volunteers per 30 students. And, majority (75%) of our volunteers are teachers. In 2014, we served a total of 52 youth, ages 9-17.

Mentorship

- Through our educational programming and presence in the community, we identify children who are struggling, whether in school, social or home life. We develop relationships with these youth and their families, partnering with them in mentorship. Collaboratively, we identify issues the youth are facing, teach coping and other life skills, and help children find value in who they are. Our mentors expose youth to life outside of the Edgewater community, taking them on high school and college site visits and to arts and cultural events. This program is entirely volunteer run with 350 volunteers per year made up of a mix of high school students and adults from the Salem area.

Food Security

- Many of the families we serve can barely afford to provide one meal per day. During the school year, most youth are able to access both breakfast and lunch while at school. However, weekends, holiday and summer breaks are extremely challenging and many children go hungry. In collaboration with Marion-Polk Food Share, Food for Life and generous individuals from the community, we provide food boxes for families, targeting the times of year when children are not in school. Through this program, we have also developed a community garden. The families we serve, along with volunteers, tend the garden and all produce is picked and delivered to our Center to and to families' homes. Each Saturday we provide an average of 140 hot breakfasts and hot lunches children, just one additional way we provide food security.

Nuestra Casa

- Meaning "Our House" in Spanish, is a community center that is currently under development. We are working to build a safe, creative and productive space where members from the community can learn a new trade, take up a new hobby or simply seek refuge from the demands of daily life. All programs and services will be offered to the community at no-cost, however, participants are expected to give back by sharing their talents and skills.



Impact:

Since Salem Dream Center began serving the Edgewater community in 2004:

- The crime rate has dropped by 25% and pride in the neighborhood has increased. Graffiti, and vandalism—once major problems—are no longer.
- Gang involvement among children engaged in our programming has dropped by 100% and the gang that resided in Edgewater in 2004 actually left the community.
- More than 50 families have been empowered in rising up out of poverty, becoming self-sufficient, and no longer reliant on public assistance.
- Three of the first five children to join our very first homework club are now enrolled at four-year universities, and in 2016 twenty-one Dream Center teens will attend college.
- Volunteers, children and families have made an estimated \$500,000 in improvements to Walker Middle School.

Needs:

- Monthly support to operate Salem Dream Center programming (\$1,541)
- Funding to support the Program Director for Salem Dream Center (\$2,400)
- Funding to support a full-time Program Director for Nuestra Casa (\$3,500)
- Capital funding to open Nuestra Casa (\$99,000)
- Monthly support to operate Nuestra Casa (\$4,758)
- ¾ or 1 Ton Diesel Four Wheel Drive Crew Cab (Needed to pull 20' Utility Trailer for food deliveries) (\$38,000)

Visit:

<http://salemdreamcenter.org> to learn more about Salem Dream Center

<http://salemdreamcenter.org/videos-edge/> to see inspirational videos

<http://salemdreamcenter.org/give/> to donate

<http://salemdreamcenter.org/events> to see upcoming events

Thank you for being a Dream Maker

Read recent testimonies from Dream Center teens...continued on next page.

To Whom It May Concern:

Please let me introduce myself; my name is Ani Hernandez. I'm a student at Oregon State, and part of their amazing marching band. I currently have a 3.8 GPA. I grew up in Edgewater and attended Walker Middle School, then West Salem High. I grew up with Dream Center.

Growing up I lived in a home with loving parents who worked hard, but couldn't completely provide for my sister or myself. Often we went to bed without food. My parents are wonderful, loving people, but they didn't have the ability to help my sister or I with our homework. Once our neighborhood was filled with darkness, the darkness that comes from gangs, violence, drugs and hunger.

That all changed when the Salem Dream Center came into our neighborhood and became part of our community. It was at Dream Center that I learned that I could achieve all of my dreams. It was at Dream Center where I got the help my parents weren't able to provide with my homework. It was Dream Center who made sure we had food, and we felt safe.


Before Dream Center, I struggled with my schoolwork, and didn't feel adequate in class. I didn't have real dreams. I honestly didn't have much hope, but all of that changed. It changed because of the amazing people who are part of Dream Center, who volunteered sharing their time and talents that I'm in college, with good grades, and with a study ethic I learned at Dream Center. Dream Center helped me believe in myself and taught me how to study, and how to realize my dreams.

My Family has lived in abject poverty for generations, but that changes with my sister, and myself, and it's in a very big part because of the mentors and teachers at Salem Dream Center.

I know you have a lot of choices as to whom you support, but please hear me when I say, Dream Center not just deserves your attention, but your enthusiastic support. They know me, they know all of the families, not just the children, but also the parents and siblings, and that's what I think it takes to make a real difference that changes lives. Their only agenda is loving us, and helping people who want a better life realize it. When you give to Dream Center, it's really my family, my friends and me that you are supporting.

Dream Center made me a priority, would you please make them your priority and support them with generosity and passion? You will be saving lives and making dreams come true.

Respectfully,



Ani Hernandez

Miguel Leon
1311 8th ST NW
Salem, OR 97304

April 2, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

Growing up in a neighborhood with a lot of crime made me think that I had no opportunity to be someone important in life. I would see my friends joining gangs, fighting for a simple color, and becoming addicted to drugs and alcohol. I would tell myself it won't be long until I get involve with all that mess. The first day when Dream Center took its first footsteps in my apartment complex is when I first saw my neighborhood fill with laughter and excitement. I remember standing in the middle of the yard and telling myself, "I have a future."

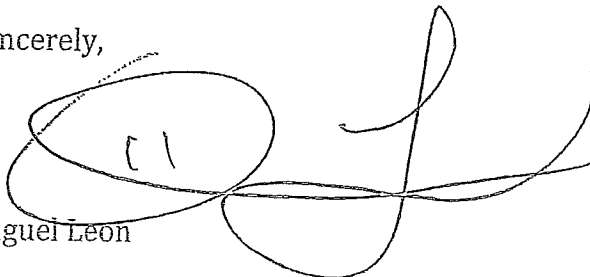
Every Saturday morning I would wake up with joy and a smile on my face because I knew I was going to go to Dream Center that day. I would play soccer with my friends inside the gymnasium. Over the time I met new people who I became really good friends and kept a strong bond throughout middle school and high school.

In high school I struggled with both math and writing. Dream Center strengthen both my writing and math skills by providing a homework club where any kid could go and get tutored or get help with their homework. I took full advantage of this resource and it paid off really well in the long run. I was able to expand my intelligence, finish my math and writing requirements earlier than expected, and maintaining a B average grade in both subjects. I didn't just stop there after being done; I went the extra mile and registered for college level courses. Now as college student, I'm very thankful of having an amazing organization that has provided me with a great resource. I was able to save up time and money because of the college courses that I took in high school.

Dream Center is who carried me and supported me through theses past 11 years to get where I am now. Not only they navigated me through a better road, but also they inspired me to keep my education growing and becoming the important person I want to be. I've accomplished and achieved more in life than I would if they weren't part of my life.

Sincerely,

Miguel Leon

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Miguel Leon', written over a large, loopy, circular flourish.