



# From the director

By: Liz Dunbar, Executive Director

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2010, our Centennial Year. We have a busy year planned to celebrate our history, acknowledge where we've been, and build an even better future. This includes many exciting events planned to celebrate our 100 years of service to Tacoma and Pierce County. On January 10, we held our first event: the Centennial Sunday service at Mason United Methodist Church. It was a wonderful opportunity to recognize the many contributions of the Methodist Church, and especially Methodist Women, who founded TCH. The Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church officially recognized that day as Tacoma Community House Centennial Sunday and many churches took up special offerings on our behalf. Thanks to Joanne Francis, our amazing historian volunteer, we have a traveling exhibit showcasing our Methodist history. Look for that at a Methodist church near you.

Our next big event will be our 100th Annual Luncheon on April 15th at the Greater Tacoma Convention Center. We will commemorate our 100 years of service and recognize some of the many "alumni" of TCH - participants, volunteers, and staff who have come through our doors and enriched our lives as well as their own. Having been part of this community for 100 years, TCH has impacted many organizations and individuals. Every time I mention where I work, someone has a story about their connection to us. I firmly believe there are only three degrees of separation between TCH and anyone in Tacoma!

Join us at one or more of these celebrations and share your story of your connection to TCH. I'm sure you have one and I'd love to hear it!

*Liz Dunbar*

## Settlement House History

Tacoma Community House began as Tacoma Settlement House  
By: Monica Jonen, Development/Communications Intern

The settlement house movement originated a hundred years ago in East London with Samuel Barnett who founded Toynbee Hall. Toynbee Hall was established to meet community needs and campaign for ethnic minorities. Jane Addams and Ellen Starr visited Toynbee Hall in London and when they came back to the United States in 1889 they founded the Chicago Hull House. The Hull House served a diverse community of immigrants with recreational and educational activities, employment services, child care, social ethnic gatherings and labor and union organizational support. By 1913, 413 settlement houses were established across the nation to nurture the sense of ownership of various groups living in the same geographical area from all over the world. Central to the settlement house approach was responding to the changing needs of the community. Tacoma Community House was born amidst this powerful movement and settlement house values continue to influence our mission, vision and services.

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## Upcoming TCH Centennial Events



### Scrabble Rousers: Alfred Hitchcock Day

March 12, 2010 - 6:30pm - 9:30pm  
University of Puget Sound Rotunda

In partnership with Click! Cable TV and the Office of Community Engagement at UPS, TCH welcomes Scrabble players of all skill levels to attend our Alfred Hitchcock Scrabble Rousers. Join us as we create our own MacGuffins on the Scrabble board. \$10 entrance fee.



### Tacoma Community House 100th Annual Luncheon

April 15, 2010 - 11:30am - 1:00pm  
Greater Tacoma Convention and Trade Center

Help us celebrate our 100th anniversary in TCH's largest event ever. Learn about our dynamic history and how TCH has served various groups in the community.



### Murder Mystery Scrabble Rousers

April 22, 2010 - 6:30pm - 9:30pm  
University of Puget Sound Rotunda

By the end of this Scrabble Rousing everyone will be asking, "Who killed Alfred Butts?" Put on your trench coat and grab your pipe to help solve this mystery, but don't worry, there will also be time to get some Scrabble Rousing under your belt. \$10 entrance fee.



### 100 Acts of Kindness

Throughout 2010

Tacoma Community House has launched 100 Acts of Kindness, a campaign aimed at inspiring individuals, community groups, faith communities, and businesses to engage in service in honor of TCH's Centennial.



# the OPEN DOOR

A TACOMA COMMUNITY HOUSE  
publication

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## New Mission, Vision, & Strategic Plan

By: Liz Dunbar, Executive Director

The board of Tacoma Community House has been working with staff over the last several months to develop a new strategic plan which guides us in achieving our new mission and vision:

### New mission and vision:

*Mission: Strengthened by our history of service to immigrant communities, Tacoma Community House empowers people to improve the quality of their lives and become fully contributing members of society.*

*Vision: Informed by the social justice mission of the United Methodist Church, we envision a society where social justice matters and everyone fully participates.*

These statements reflect the thoughts and input of our board, management team, and all staff. Since we serve a broad array of people with a variety of services, we looked for a mission statement which encompasses that breadth and variety. We believe that everyone who comes to TCH wants a better life for themselves and their families. Our goal is to raise their quality of life and to give them the tools to become contributing members of society. We believe skills they develop at TCH make them successful. Our vision statement talks about that "perfect world" of the future - where all people are treated with justice and have the opportunities to participate as workers, students, parents, citizens, and voters. Our strategic plan has goals and strategies to improve the way we work so we can more effectively achieve our mission and vision.

We face many challenges in meeting our mission these days, with the difficult economic situation, high unemployment, and deficits in the state budget. The strategic plan will guide us in making the right decisions to advocate for and serve those who need our help.



Tacoma Community House is proud to present our second season of Scrabble Rousers. Scrabble Rousers is a series of nontraditional, themed Scrabble tournaments aimed at increasing TCH's awareness in the community and raising money for our Student Scholarship Fund. This year's season runs monthly, from February through September.

Scrabble Rousers welcomes everyone, young and old, from beginners to experts, to attend. Each Scrabble Rousers will have two, 45 minute games. The event costs \$10 to attend, and is from 6:30pm - 9:30pm at various locations around Tacoma. Visit [www.tacomacommunityhouse.org](http://www.tacomacommunityhouse.org) for more information on the Season Deux event schedule.

For more information on any TCH event, please visit [www.tacomacommunityhouse.org](http://www.tacomacommunityhouse.org) or call Derrick Rhayn, Development/Communications Officer at 253-383-3951.

## ► REFLECTIONS ON A RICH PAST

Tacoma Community House history 1910-1940

By: Joanne Francis, TCH Volunteer Historian

### The 'Open Door' of the Tacoma Settlement House

Home visits were always a staple of settlement house work. In 1910, immigrants from around the world pinned their hopes on a better life in America, many coming from Italy. But then as now, others fled oppression in their countries of origin. The settlement house 'open door' often meant the difference between a smooth transition and a difficult one.

### English as a second language

For most immigrants, learning a new language isn't easy. It never has been. For that reason classes in English were made a free and fundamental part of the settlement house program, as were translation services. The first translator of record, Mrs. Biaggetti, worked in Tacoma's 'Little Italy' community.

Meanwhile, children could attend settlement house kindergarten classes for the modest sum of 2¢ per week. Cooking classes for mothers and girls cost 3¢ a week. A full afternoon and evening schedule offered everything from music and games to business and Americanization classes. It wouldn't be until 1934 that a standard kindergarten curriculum was introduced requiring a trained staff member.



### Health and welfare

For five long weeks in 1918, a deadly influenza epidemic virtually shut down Tacoma. That served as a wake-up call. Four years later, the Public Health Nursing Association, with the support of Junior League of Tacoma opened its second free clinic in the newly dedicated settlement house at 1311 South M Street. The new clinic's child nutrition emphasis set the stage for later health partnerships including diphtheria and small pox immunization programs.

### Partnering and the Tacoma Community Chest

In 1922, Tacoma Community House joined forces with 27 other organizations to launch the first Community Chest campaign. This meant everyone would work together to raise and distribute funds. TCH remains a valued founding member of the United Way of Pierce County to this day. A progressive idea for the time, it introduced mutual assistance on a large scale to the social service sector of Tacoma.

Jan. 10, 1910 - Tacoma Community House opened its doors.

1910



Up to the point of joining the Community Chest campaign, TCH had relied on subscription sales, rummage sales, concerts, banquets and other entertainments to sustain its programs. The Federation of Social Agencies' office downtown further enhanced opportunities for the exchange of ideas.

### Labors of love

Still, TCH survival always depended on using the talents of both volunteers and unsalaried staff. The most prominent contributors to TCH were unpaid board members and resident Methodist deaconesses provided with only a tiny allowance. Critical support came also from Woman's Club citizenship classes, College of Puget Sound student supervision of after-school programs, and facility improvement projects done by Rotary, Kiwanis and Methodist men's groups.

### Leadership laboratory for women

From the beginning only Woman's Home Missionary Society members served on the settlement house board of directors. Single women, fulfilling the office of deaconess, held positions of superintendent or associate superintendent following completion of a demanding two-year training program. Never a large group, a new assignment ideally brought old deaconess comrades and their complementary skills together again.

In 1931 Mrs. Helen Thompson, Associate Superintendent from 1922-1934, was honored by the Chamber of Commerce as 'Tacoma's most useful citizen' and by Rotary 8 as 'woman of the year'. In 1934, the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee requested her expert testimony on the dissemination of birth control information.



Nov. 10, 1919 - A proud moment for all of Tacoma as our \$19,000 state of the art facility is dedicated at 1311 S. M St.

1919



► TACOMA COMMUNITY HOUSE hosts our 100th Annual Luncheon

TCH will be hosting our 100th Annual Luncheon on April 15th from 11:30am – 1:00pm at the Greater Tacoma Convention and Trade Center. This historic event will showcase how TCH has changed over time, who we have impacted, and where we are headed in the future. The event will be the largest in TCH's history, with a goal of bringing 500 people together to celebrate this occasion.

The program will feature a blend of video presentations along with first person accounts of TCH history and will acknowledge those who have made our work possible. The event is free and open to the public, but will include opportunities to donate to TCH. If you are interested in sponsoring or hosting a table, or would like to attend, please notify Derrick Rhayn at 253-383-3951 or by email at [drhayn@tacomacommunityhouse.org](mailto:drhayn@tacomacommunityhouse.org).

March 1922 - We join 27 other social service agencies to form the Community Chest. The original Settlement House listing reads 'for the social, educational, recreational and religious betterment of the people of the community of all ages'. We're grouped under 'Character Building and Citizen Making' organizations along with Girl and Boy Scouts and YMCA and YWCA programs.

1922



If you ask any Tacoma Community House staff member about how they came to TCH, you will hear lots of different and interesting stories. Like many before me, I developed a connection with TCH long before I became a full-time employee. First as a client, then as TCH AmeriCorps team member, and for the last 12 years as full-time staff, I began to appreciate, admire, and respect the TCH staff. I wanted to join the team and give back to the agency which helped me. I am a proud employee of TCH!

Currently, I coordinate Multilingual Services including the Language Bank and Immigration Services. The Language Bank is a division of TCH that provides written translation services and oral interpreter services to organizations and individuals throughout the region.

I see our translation and interpretation services as a bridge between non-English speakers and the community in which they live and



## ► The best kind of crazy

A story of a woman who gives boundless energy to her work.

By: Emma Williams, Literacy NOW Project Assistant

Tuoi Staggs admits that many people think she is crazy. And indeed, the energy she gives her work seems boundless, but this same energy has enriched both herself and the community. Born in Vietnam, Tuoi majored in English, minored in French, and taught English for 20 years. In 1995, Tuoi was sponsored by her sister to come to the US where she started working at a Safeway deli. She became certified first as a social interpreter in 1997, which allowed her to interpret in a Social Service setting for welfare and other clients in non-medical departments of the State. Later in the year, she became certified as a medical interpreter. After receiving her certification, she was contacted by the Language Bank. At first, she continued to work at Safeway from 10pm-7am and interpreted during the day. Eventually, she had enough work to quit the deli and become an interpreter full-time. Tuoi's career has since blossomed to include contracts from nine agencies.

She happily accepts interpretation assignments that include taking calls for urgent jobs in the middle of the night and encouraging clients to call her with quick questions. Because Tuoi didn't drive, her husband would take her to all of her appointments—whether those appointments were during the day, or were the result of last minute phone calls in the middle of the night. They were a team. He interacted with her clients almost as much as she did. Sadly, Tuoi lost her

Nov. 4, 1927 - A long awaited city-wide sports program can now begin in the new TCH gymnasium.

1927



work. Can you imagine going to see a doctor or taking a child to the dentist for the first time and not speaking English well enough to understand what is being said to you? How would you communicate with teachers at your children's school or with your social worker?

Even though interpreters are there to interpret only what is being said between the parties, I truly believe that they provide not only language services to the clients, but also give them moral support and reassurance that questions will be answered and problems will be resolved. Interpreters and translators make the everyday lives of non-English speakers a little bit easier, and that is why we do the work we do.

husband in 2006, but continues the work he supported. Tuoi learned to drive in order to get to appointments because, to her, interpretation is crucial to spread information, education, and knowledge to those who are unable to access it on their own. She uses her knowledge of Vietnamese culture to explain to clients how to care for themselves without going against their cultural beliefs. By delivering information to clients in their native language, Tuoi ensures that information is accurately relayed and understood.

Tuoi's compassion for others is evident in her work. In one instance, Tuoi and a Maternity Support Services Nurse visited a woman from Vietnam, a victim of domestic violence who moved to a shelter while pregnant with her first child. Tuoi supported her during her pregnancy and in the room as the woman gave birth. In 2009, Tuoi went to Vietnam to interpret for heart surgeons as they performed open heart surgeries at a children's hospital. She will make the same trip again this year. She continues to interpret in the community while sending part of her income to family in Vietnam. When asked about the future, Tuoi says that she will continue to interpret as long as she can drive, and interpret over the phone after that. Crazy? Maybe, but wouldn't the community be stronger if more people were crazy like Tuoi?

During the depression year of 1936, more than 4,000 Hilltop families earned less than \$600 annually. TCH Boys' Work programs such as Radio and Kodak Clubs kept boys out of trouble.

1934



## ► Why we do the work we do

By: Yana Cosme, Multilingual Services Coordinator