

# Our Data, Our Voice

## Youth Creating Positive Community Change

### Cops Mentoring Youth

Oregon HIDTA and Oregon Partnership's Cops Mentoring Youth initiative assisted teens in becoming catalysts for positive change by engaging Portland Police Bureau officers as their mentors in a community-wide education and awareness campaign known as Our Data Our Voice.

Oregon Partnership's team mentoring approach included a dynamic combination of educators, youth development and law enforcement professionals and community members. Research tells us, young people can capitalize on their potential for positive growth when they are provided the chance to gain life skills through having access to mentors who collaborate and who enable them to lead.

While the Our Data Our Voice campaign is charged to prevent substance abuse among the student population, the creation and development of a united youth leadership team is also the intended outcome. The theory of change is: the development of messaging campaigns orchestrated by trained youth leader volunteers who have been mentored at their respective high schools. The idea was to create a more localized project that allowed youth volunteers a legitimate role in program implementation and evaluation while working alongside trained, caring adults.

Students were recruited from two high schools in Portland: Marshal High from Southeast Portland and Wilson High in the Southwest.

The Lents neighborhood, which encompasses Marshall High School has a high level of crime and is known as a traditionally low income Caucasian neighborhood. While continuing to face severe economic challenges, the demographics of the Lents neighborhood have evolved and the area is now extremely diverse with many Asian, Russian/Eastern European, and Latino immigrants.

Marshal High School (now closed but transitioning students into Franklin and Madison High in September 2011), and its feeder middle schools have high student rates of substance abuse, low attendance rates and high dropout rates. At the invitation of Franklin High School, Oregon Partnership is exploring funding opportunities to assist in the transition of Marshal Students to Franklin High.

Data from the Portland Police Bureau indicate that for the first six months of 2009, 144 drug related arrests were made in the neighborhoods that feed into Marshall High Schools. This is significantly higher than other neighborhoods on the east side of Portland and indeed the highest of any area in Portland except downtown.