

# SEA

## seattleeducationaccess

### Meet our Students: Stazzi

*Stazzi is attending North Seattle Community College, where she plans to complete an AA degree and transfer to the University of Washington.*

*I* was born in Russia to an alcoholic mother and my father was in prison. By the age of five, I was living on the streets of Russia begging for food and shelter. That same year I

was put into an orphanage. I learned more on the streets than I did in school. At the orphanage, I was poorly fed and was not cared for; my health was bad and I was often in the hospital. ►



SEA Student Stazzi. Photo Andrew Clark

► At the age of ten I was sent to America for a month to better my health and get away from the streets. My first trip to America was very interesting, but also frightening because I did not know any English or the people. After my time was up in America I was sent back to the orphanage. I was sad to leave such a beautiful country knowing that I was going back to the dirty, scary streets. I had to face reality and I tried to forget the lovely streets of the dreamland that I visited called America. Half a year later, I found out that I was going to be adopted by the nice people who I stayed with when I first came to America. I was overjoyed and ecstatic knowing that I had better future in front of me and people who cared about me.

When I first came to America I was happy knowing that I had my own family including a brother and two sisters. The idea of having a family was awesome, but when it came to following directions and calling them mom and dad it was very hard. The only mom and dad that I ever knew abandoned me and did not care a bit about me. I was soon visiting therapists and counselors. I hated it because they told me that I had Reactive Attachment Disorder, meaning that I did not bond with mother and father figures. Soon I noticed that my adoptive parents were growing tired of me and sending me to different homes for the weekends so they could spend more time with their own children.

When I turned fourteen, I was sent to home for children who had troubles. Knowing that the people who adopted me were now sending me away to a different state far away from the only people I knew in made me even angrier. Feeling rejected and unwanted made me suicidal.



## seattleeducationaccess

*Turning college dreams into college degrees*

Seattle Education Access provides higher education advocacy and opportunity to people struggling to overcome poverty and adversity. Our outreach is focused on homeless youth and previously homeless young adults. Through our College Success Program, we help young people who have been homeless complete college degrees and succeed in meaningful careers.

### **Staff and Volunteers:**

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### **Mailing address:**

Seattle Education Access  
6920 Roosevelt Way N.E. #355  
Seattle, WA 98115

### **Student Resource Center:**

1406 NE 50th St, #202  
Seattle, WA 98105

Tel 206 523-6200

Fax 206 523-1003

[www.seattleeducationaccess.org](http://www.seattleeducationaccess.org)

[polly@seattleeducationaccess.org](mailto:polly@seattleeducationaccess.org)

Seattle Education Access (SEA) is a 501(c)(3) charity incorporated in the State of Washington.

SEA is a Member Agency of the University District Service Providers Alliance. The University District Service Providers Alliance (UDSPA) is a coalition of agencies working together to create a comprehensive continuum of services for homeless and street-involved youth and young adults. The purpose of the UDSPA is to help member nonprofits share resources and work together efficiently as we pursue the shared mission of offering a full spectrum of compassionate, quality care to Seattle's homeless and street-involved youth and young adults. For more information, visit [www.udsp.org](http://www.udsp.org).

The SEA newsletter is mailed quarterly. If you wish to be removed from our mailing list, please let us know. All requests will be honored immediately.

## ***Thanks to All Our 2008 Donors, Contributors and Supporters***

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Seattle Post-Intelligencer "Readers Care Fund"

**Special thanks to Andrew Clark for donating his time and photography skills.**

## **News**

### ***IN LOVING MEMORY OF PHIL RENSHAW***

#### **To everyone at SEA:**

We hope the furniture, miscellaneous items, and this small donation are helpful for you and the youth you serve all year long. We have admired your contribution to the community and we are delighted to help in this small way.

The financial contribution is made in memory of Phil Renshaw, a man who was orphaned at a young age and overcame homelessness to start his own company and employ several generations of Seattlites in the South End. He would be proud of the work you are doing to help these students.

**-Michelle Wilkinson**

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### ***Seattle Post-Intelligencer "Readers Care Fund" Awards SEA \$30,000***

**Seattle Education Access (SEA)** was selected as one of six agencies to receive contributions from the Seattle P-I "Readers Care Fund" in 2008. The Seattle PI ran five stories about SEA and our students. To read the PI stories about SEA, please visit - <http://readerscarefund.org/index.asp>

"SEA recently received \$30,000 from the P-I, and this funding will provide more "gap" scholarships to impoverished students whose financial aid packages fall short of their needs," said Polly Trout, Executive Director. "It will also fund more staff time, so that we can continue to provide free academic advising, career counseling, advocacy, and tutoring for our students."

Since 1978, P-I readers have opened their hearts and their wallets to help selected agencies provide for individuals and families in need -- generosity that now exceeds \$5.6 million.

### ***SEA Needs Donations of:***

- Student School Supplies
- Computers
- Printers
- Monitors
- After School Snacks

**Contact Allison at [allison@seattleeducationaccess.org](mailto:allison@seattleeducationaccess.org) for more information**



**Front: Blue, Back (L to R): Samantha, Anthon (Program Director), Stazzi, Hira. Photo: Andrew Clark**

## Letter From Polly

April 2008

Dear SEA Community:

At SEA, our mission is to provide college opportunity to ALL young people struggling to overcome poverty and adversity. Two groups that we have identified as being in dire need of our services are homeless youth and immigrant youth. 91% of our students have experienced homelessness, and 17% are immigrants to the United States. Many, like Stazzi (see front page), have gone through both. We provide college access for young immigrants who are Washington State residents and who live in or go to school in King County.

Homeless youth and immigrant youth face many similar barriers to education. Like homeless youth, immigrant youth have frequently suffered violence, trauma, poverty, dislocation, and loss of family. Both groups are marginalized and disenfranchised in our society. Both groups have been uprooted from their communities of origin, and have had to struggle to start life over in a new and sometimes hostile environment. Most importantly, both our students who have been on the streets and our students who are immigrants are survivors who have worked hard to overcome obstacles and are deeply committed to their educations.

Too often, public debate about immigrant rights overlooks the rights and needs of immigrant children, who are caught in the crossfire of political events and adult choices that they neither understand nor control. These youth deserve and need an education, regardless of their immigration status.

Most of the immigrants we work with came to the United States legally, and are legal residents. When this is not the case, we partner with the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project and help the student navigate the immigration bureaucracy so that their legal difficulties can be resolved. This takes time, patience, and vigorous advocacy. We continue to provide educational opportunity for them while their paperwork is being processed.

Washington State law demands that state educational institutions serve all state residents, regardless of whether or not they have a social security number. Education is a human basic right, because it is a means to self empowerment. Immigrant youth need extra advocacy to access these rights. Often, their families are not able to provide adequate advocacy and advising, because their parents have not been to college and do not understand how the system works. At SEA, we are working to ensure that these youth have the resources they need to stand up for their rights.

Best wishes,

Polly Trout, Executive Director

### ***Seattle Education Access is a community committed to these shared values:***

We believe that every person deserves a good education.

We believe that education is a life-long process of self discovery and world discovery.

We believe that education is its own reward and enriches life.

We believe in the inherent worth and dignity of each human being.

We believe that each person is responsible for his or her own life.

We believe that by helping others, and by accepting help from others, we add meaning and beauty to life.

We believe that every person has unique gifts and that when those gifts are nourished and given a chance to flourish, both the individual and the community benefits.

We welcome gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community members, and celebrate their right to self-determination.

We welcome people from all ethnic, cultural and national backgrounds.

We welcome people from all religious faiths and philosophical worldviews who share our values and promote our mission.

We are committed to using our financial resources in the most efficient and responsible way possible to further our mission.

We measure the success of our organization by the success and wellbeing of our students.

**“Finally, I got connected to Seattle Education Access, where people are helping me go to college and pursue my life to the fullest.”**

*continued from page 2*

At first I wanted to prove to my parents that I cared about them and wanted to get better for my own good. Two months passed and I grew more angry and rebellious knowing that my parents did not acknowledge that I was trying so hard to do better. I was put into detention and over time I didn't eat or care what people thought of me.

Finally, I jumped out of a two-story building and landed on concrete, trying to end my horrible life. Unfortunately, I ended up OK, not breaking any bones. I could barely walk for weeks and could not run for some time. After that my parents sent me to a mental hospital because they did not want me at home. I tried to do better and start again. I was sent even further away from home, in Utah. I did well at first trying again to impress my parents so I could go back home. But then I stopped progressing, because I only heard from my parents in letters that they sent me on holidays. I started hating them more than ever. I stayed in Utah for a year and three months.

Then one day my adoptive mother came and picked me up and told me that she was taking me to another home. I was confused as ever and hated my parents for doing this to me. The home

was in California and was run by a lady who was about sixty years old and was into religious stuff and therapeutic stuff. This was not the same as any other place I had been in. She had eight girls about the same age as me who had similar diagnosis as me: Reactive Attachment Disorder. I hated this place. The lady told me to call her “mom” and was always watching us and telling us girls what to do and to talk about our feelings. If we didn't she would put us on the back porch and feed us poor food, which made us lose weight. We had to do extra chores and not talk to anybody.

I turned sixteen at the home in California and totally did not care anymore what happened to me, knowing that I did not control what happened to me. At this place the schooling was even more poorly managed than before; we were being home schooled, but barely studied anything because we were told that we needed to fix our emotional problems more than we needed academics. I was seventeen and still doing ninth grade work. I was treated like a dog there, and I stopped caring about anything: family, school, and even where I would end up. I could not see a future for myself that was any better than what I would have had in Russia. ►

“By eighth grade, I could not concentrate on school because I did not care about my future.”

► One day I finally had enough. The lady’s daughter yelled at me and grabbed my shoulder and neck. After that I stayed in my room for two weeks not eating or going anywhere but the bathroom. I was growing weak. I was not allowed to eat until I told what happened to me and why I did that and how I felt. I never felt like this in the world before, not even in Russia because I had a choice in Russia, but here in America, my land of dreams had turned out to be my nightmare.

I told them I did not care where I went, but I had to leave. My adopted family, who I had barely spoken to and had seen only once during three years, gave me an airplane ticket back to Seattle. I was glad to go. When I came to Seattle, the people I called mom and dad did not care about me and had given up on me. That night they took me to a youth shelter. I was overwhelmed and scared again knowing that I was in the same place as I was when I was in Russia but only now I was in America.

I started hanging out on the streets of down town with other homeless kids. I just had shelter for the night, no other support. On the streets I was introduced to alcohol and drugs. I did not care about my schooling and was doing stupid stuff. I lost my respect for myself and was begging on the streets and going to places for

homeless kids to eat.

Then one day I heard about the YWCA Zine Project at the University District Youth Center (UDYC) where homeless youth can be creative and get paid to write. This was an internship that would last for 12 weeks. I loved every second of it. Even though I was living on the streets at the time I did my best to attend because money did not come easily to me. During that time I met Anthon and he wanted to help me. He told me to pursue my dreams and not to give up. I did not listen right away because I was enjoying the way I was living, doing drugs and drinking and still coming to work. Soon I grew tired of that and finally I got into school at UDYC. I had a place to stay and a school that I attended every day and work that I was enjoying. I got a job and continued to do what I thought was best for me.

When the summer started I was still going to school and was thinking of going to college like I always dreamed of, but knowing that I had no support from my family. I attended school until I finished my GED. Finally, I told Anthon I was ready and got connected to Seattle Education Access, where he is helping me go to college and pursue my life to the fullest. I finally have people who care about me and want me to do the best as I can.

~ Stazzi.

**Yes! I want to help Seattle's homeless youth overcome poverty through the power of education. I have enclosed a gift to the SEA scholarship fund:**

- \$1,000 – tuition for one quarter at a local community college
- \$400 – books and school supplies for one student
- \$100 --- student bus pass for the quarter
- \$50 --- college application costs for one student
- \$20 – one GED study guide

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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To pay with a credit card, visit [www.seattleeducationaccess.org](http://www.seattleeducationaccess.org) and click "Donate Now."  
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6920 Roosevelt Way N.E. #355  
Seattle, WA 98115

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