

**WEE, from page 4**

only one toilet. Whereas an economic empowerment model lasts very, very long. So, if people want to support this they can donate to the World Toilet Organization, and a very small amount of money can go a long way.

**J.T.:** *How does your approach differ from country to country trying to raise the issue of good public toilets? You mentioned that it's bad for business to have bad toilets in Singapore. How would your approach differ elsewhere?*

**J.S.:** I think in developed countries it's easier to understand. We talk to tourism boards who understand that you can get a lot of income if your tourism toilets are good. And tourism toilets include a lot of toilets and it could include tourism sites, it could be the shopping toilets, the hotel. It could be all kinds of places. And if you have good toilets, then you have more tourists. So people just didn't know all these things that are actually quite obvious because they felt that toilets were unspeakable. They thought this was a taboo subject and very rude to engage in this subject, and what you don't discuss you can't improve. So what the World Toilet Organization did was effectively make people confront the subject by making it first humorous, calling ourselves the WTO, and then giving them the permission to talk about it. Once they felt it was OK, they don't stop talking about it. The conversation continues.

**J.T.:** *It was a deliberate decision to call yourselves the "WTO"?*

**J.S.:** Absolutely. And the logo was also heart-shaped seat cover saying, love your toilet.

**J.T.:** *How does your approach differ in the developing world?*

**J.S.:** The approach is the same in the developing world because we saw that people go to the shopping malls to buy things to impress other people. So in the poverty sector it's the same. We saw that

they are buying cellphones but not toilets. So if we price the toilet the same prices as the cellphone, we could sell a lot of toilets, provided that toilets are seen as a status symbol. If toilets are seen like Prada or Louis Vuitton handbags, people will buy toilets. So we are using what we learned from the shopping mall to use all the same emotional aspirational triggers to do marketing in the poverty sector, and it works really well. Jealousy, one-upmanship, acceptance by community, ego, pride, dignity – these are all top sellers.

The Japanese, when they visit your house they actually go to your toilet, and they will judge your entire family based on how clean the toilet is. If it's bad, they have a terrible impression and will talk about you behind your back.

**J.T.:** *As you've worked on this issue, how much has homelessness been linked to it?*

**J.S.:** The homeless need to have access to toilets as well, and, of course, many cities do not have facilities, so typically a lot of countries are cutting back on budget and are closing down public toilets. I heard that the Portland Loo (Portland's public toilet initiative) is open 24 hours and are doing a good job here. So there might be something we can all learn.

**J.T.:** *Would you say that the issue of having good clean public toilets is a sanitation issue, but also a civil rights issue to some degree?*

**J.S.:** I think that they just declared sanitation as a human right in the United Nations. I mean, you can't live without it. Whatever you need for human survival is a necessary human right. Toilets extend human longevity by 20 years. The flush toilet extended our lives. According to some scientists, the flush toilet is the biggest medical advancement of the last century. They could have said vaccination; they could have said a lot of other medical advances, but they said the flush toilet. It is the cheapest preventative medicine. The problem with health care is that it's driven by vested interests to cure people when they are sick, not to prevent them from

being sick. Investment in the toilets has to be viewed as the cheapest health care and hygiene tool.

**J.T.:** *In the developing world there's a litany of issues that need to be addressed. How do you make sure the issue of clean toilets is included along with issues like education and these others?*

**J.S.:** In the beginning, they refused to talk about it because water and sanitation were lumped together. They taught that sanitation is a water issue. It is not. Water is a supply issue. If you can supply clean water everybody knows how to use water. Sanitation is a behavioral change issue, which requires a lot of effort. If you lump water and sanitation together, it's like putting your grandmother next to Miss Universe, where the glamorous part of it takes all the attention. The money goes to water. In fact, water and sanitation engineers know very little about poverty and rural sanitation. So what we need is for us to decouple sanitation from water, which is what the WTO seeks to do.

**J.T.:** *In the U.S., it seems that we've largely privatized toilets, is that the right approach? Should this be treated more as a public good?*

**J.S.:** I think that as long as people have access. Like they say, it doesn't matter if the cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice. A lot of cities actually have laws that the private retailers have to open up their toilets for public use regardless if it's their customers, and surprisingly there's a law in America that says that too. I think that's good because then the market actually will supply the toilets. Of course, after closing hours you need to government to come in and help. I think that's where the Portland Loo is important.

**J.T.:** *Are there any cities or countries that are really serving as a model for addressing this issue?*

**J.S.:** I think in Singapore, we have 60,000 public toilets. Almost all of them are at commercial shopping centers. It's a very

dense city and we have no shortage of public toilets. So it's a good model. The other advantage is that a lot of businesses are open 24 hours so you can actually have access to them. So you might want to have some outlets that are open 24 hours.

**J.T.:** *In the developing world, are there any countries doing good work?*

**J.S.:** In the developing world, there are good models. And we find that market-based solutions are very important. Because giving people toilets is not the solution. It's not scalable. Once you stop giving, then that's the end. And how about maintenance? People have to take ownership of their toilet, and that's when they buy it with their money.

The myth that the poor have no money is only pertaining to the poorest of the poor, very destitute people. Most people have some money, otherwise they would never have survived. They would not even have bought food. But if you go to a slum, every child and adult has a cellphone, so that proves that a large majority, other than the destitute, actually have money. There are people who are just about to die from starvation, and that's not possible to solve by a market-based approach. But almost all of them can buy an \$8 toilet, or a \$35 toilet, and if you design it according to the affordability, all you have to do is give them access.

Right now, about 290 SaniShop factories have been set up, in Asia and Africa.

**J.T.:** *The Gates foundation has shown some interest in this. What has been their involvement so far?*

**J.S.:** They've funded us for our advocacy effort. In the past I was doing it without any public relations and not in a structured manner, and it's already gone very well. They thought, if we give you some money and some consultants it might be better. Last year we reached one billion people thanks to their help.

**QUIZ, from page 3**

Choosing the doll earns the crew another wrong answer, but again, many more questions were to follow as Baseden led the crew up NW Davis and then west on NW 11th Avenue.

Born and raised in Portland, Baseden graduated from Jefferson High School and has a background that is as varied as the questions he throws at his work crews. He holds degrees in education and communication from Oregon State and Portland State universities, and went on to instruct broadcast media classes at OSU. He has worked at a local television station, a company specializing in diversity training, and as a student advisor at Portland Community College.

He has even competed and trained athletes in the sport of powerlifting.

"I'm always using all of those skills," he said. "I kind of draw from all those different genres of my experience."

Even the time Baseden spent serving in the Army is evident in the quick bursts of inflection in his voice. "Here we go. Follow me," he tells his crew, sounding as if he could just as easily be encouraging troops on the march.

Baseden's sternness, however, is complimented by his compassion, which comes to light when a young man links up with the work crew about five blocks into the shift. Baseden initially dismisses him with the instruction to avoid being late next time. But after the two have an aside for a few moments, Baseden assigns him to push the trash can cart.

Baseden says that his role as community

court crew leader puts him in a unique position to help people, but that it also requires him to wear several different hats.

"You have to be a little of an entertainer. You have to be the psychologist. You have to be the counselor. You have to know when people need help.

"Today was a situation where I could see that somebody really needed some help, so I bent a little," Baseden said. "But they know they have to earn what they get. They don't get anything for free – they have to earn it. But the key element is that the job or task at hand gets done at the same time."

As Baseden continues to lead the crew through downtown and back to Old Town, the slew of questions never stops. Which grocery store was the first grocery store chain in the U.S.? Which television station was the first in Portland? How many hearts does an octopus have? Which came first, Nordstrom or the paperclip?

"I didn't expect it to be like this," Alexandria said. "It's entertaining, and you really get to know the other people you are picking up trash with. You get to see everyone's personality."

Keith, a 57-year old from California, said he too was cited for failing to pay MAX fare, but didn't expect to walk away from a shift of community service with a smile on his face.

"As we're walking, we're talking," Keith said. "We're communicating. It freshens the mind and it keeps your mind going. Instead of just picking up garbage, he (Baseden) adds a little punch to it."

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