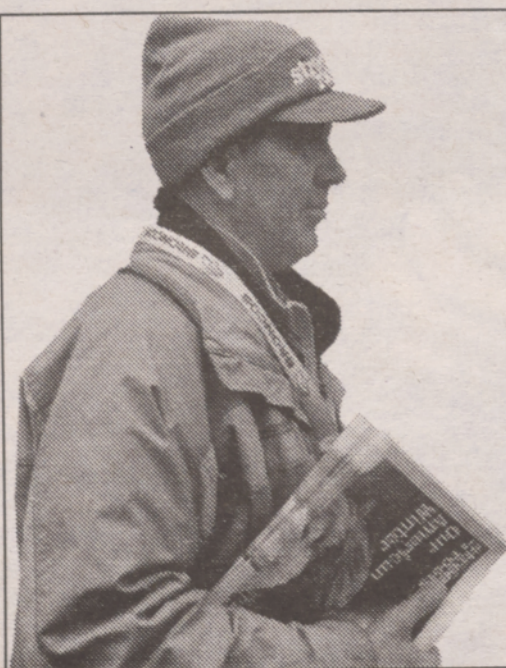
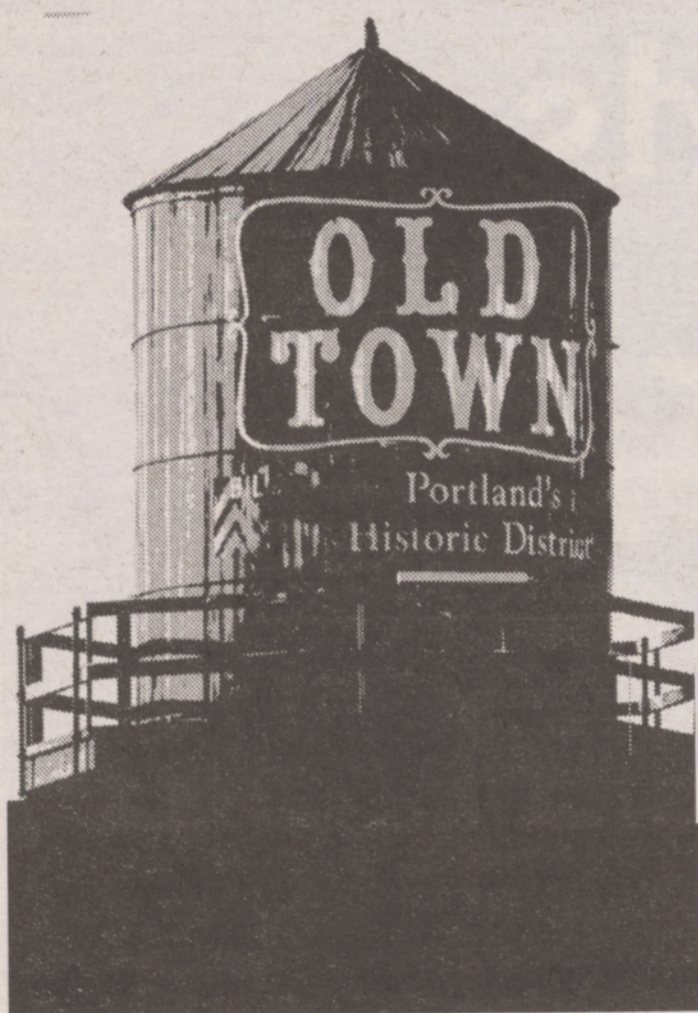


## For the RECORD

A compilation of facts, large and small, about our community

- Percentage of Multnomah County population who have a high school diploma or higher: 89
- High school graduation rate in Multnomah County: 63 percent
- Percentage of children in Multnomah County who experience food insecurity (food insecurity is defined as not knowing where one's next meal will come from): 24
- Median household income in Multnomah County: \$50,726
- Number of oceangoing vessels making calls in the Port of Portland this year: 382
- Number of World War II veterans still living in Oregon as of 2012: 23, 837
- Median home value in Multnomah County: \$281,900
- In Multnomah County, the four-year graduation rate for the class of 2011-12 was 52 percent. For black students, 65 percent for all students, and 70 percent for white students
- Multnomah County black males age 25-64 are 1.7 times as likely to be unemployed or out of the labor force as are white males
- Percentage of women callers seeking resources at 211Info's call center: 73.

Sources: US Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 5-year estimates 2007-2011; Greater Portland Pulse, 2007-2011; Children First For Oregon; 2012 County Data Book; ODE; 2009-11 ACS PUMS, 211Info;



Find out more about  
Street Roots at  
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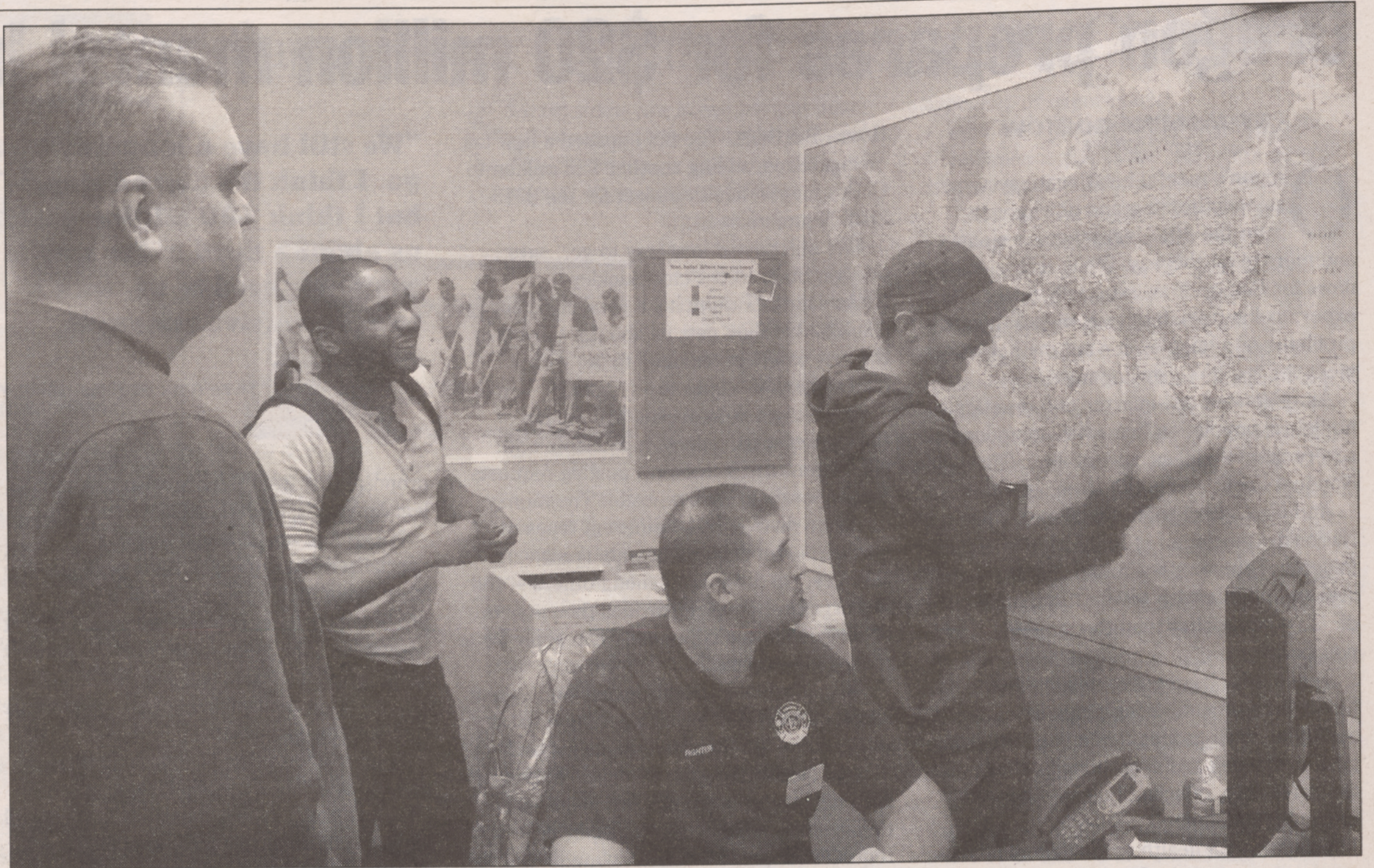


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PSU VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER

Visitors to the Veterans Resource Center gather around the map in the front of the office. All visitors are encouraged to put a tack on the map wherever they were stationed and/or deployed. They have different color tacks for each branch of service. "It starts a lot of great conversations!" says the center's director, Ray Facundo.

# Soldiers on campus

Portland State gets back to its roots with a new resource hub for returning veterans

BY ALEX ZIELINSKI  
STAFF WRITER

Disconnected. That's the word army veteran Dave Christensen used to describe his first year on the Portland State University campus.

"It was very difficult for me to get traction," said Christensen, a computer engineering major. "I didn't feel part of the community, and veteran services were spread across campus—I wasn't sure where to look."

To Christensen's surprise, PSU, a campus founded by a Navy veteran in 1946 specifically for returning World War II veterans, had little to offer its veteran enrollees. Eventually he found a group of inconspicuous veterans grappling to form some kind of information hub for like students. Dubbed Viking Vets, the small group slowly bloomed into a notable and reliable resource center for veterans across campus, fueled solely by student volunteers.

"It was a booming business," said Christensen. "We all became quickly aware of how lost and misguided new student vets are. We're not just your average out-of-high school college student — we have families, serious medical conditions, side jobs. It's different."

Now, four years after Christensen helped get Viking Vets off the ground, the university — that has the highest population of veteran students in the state at nearly 12,000 — has finally acknowledged the pressing need for a funded veteran student group.

Over the summer, PSU hired Iraq War veteran Ray Facundo to take the reins as the new Veteran Resource Center's

director. Officially opening its doors on Oct. 1, the center couldn't have come at a better time. The center received a wave of questions about the government shutdown,

its impact on GI Bill benefits delays and accessing counselors who were furloughed. Veteran-specific issues like these further the need for a social hub on campus. Many veterans find it difficult to relate to the typical student, let alone the entire college structure.

"We always say that there's no reverse boot camp," said Facundo. "When you go to boot camp, they break you down to become a person that follows orders to a T, working with a team to get tasks accomplished on time. Once you're out, and have no one scheduling your time, you're pretty much on your own. It's hard."

Another symptom of the transition from military to college is the untranslatable fields of study. While some veterans who worked in communications or engineering positions can transfer their field work to school credits, many find their past expertise lost in the college curriculum.

Facundo, who was a field artillery surveyor in the army for six years, found it hard to bring any of his past experience to PSU. Instead, he started afresh with a focus in social work.

Even with the boost of GI Bill support, it would be easy to feel overwhelmed by the new, foreign environment of a college

campus without the comfort of a veteran community like the VRC. Decked out with a friendly lounge, computer bank and a information desk, the VRC acts as a haven for many veterans on campus.

"I never felt comfortable eating in the main lunch room or studying in the study hall," said Air Force veteran Jeff Lamont. "Students are almost too liberal and happy here. I felt out of place."

Lamont said he was close to dropping out of PSU, due to feeling so out of place. Luckily, the VRC helped re-guide him.

"There are a ton of us who wouldn't be in here if it weren't for the GI Bill, since it helps us take care of our families and stay afloat," said Lamont. "But it's hard to know how to use it correctly. The VRC helped show me the way."

Christensen, now Vice President Program Director, seconded Lamont's concern.

"We've had numerous people come to us who are about to run out of GI benefits and still need to finish their degree. It's easy to not maximize the bill's benefits, just because of bad planning," he said. "That's where we can help."

The VRC's next goal? Lobbying for all student veterans to receive in-state tuition.

"We have great backing and great potential to have our voices heard," said Christensen.

Looking to the future, Christensen said that he hopes PSU isn't just seen as a campus with a great veteran program, but a campus that attracts student veterans.

"Our student veterans should never feel lost," he said.



Ray Facundo

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