diverse community. The event was held at Keizer Civic Center Wednesday, Aug. 3.

Discussions ranged from the relationship between minority communities and police to broader topics of the black and minority experiences and what it can be done to change the status quo.

Benny Williams, president of the Salem-Keizer branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said that moving to Salem 15 years ago was a shock because of the lack of a significant African American community.

"All of us here have a place outside of home where you can look around and see people of your own ethnic background.

the young people, a sense of our community," Williams said. 'The lack of African American faces in the job setting, civic life and just living here can be upsetting ... and when we see young black men being killed while in restraint, it's disturbing."

Navneet Kaur, a member of the local Sikh community, said her status as a minority has likely held her back. Despite earning a master's degree in English, she has never been offered the opportunity to teach English courses in a highlevel classroom.

"I've been followed in stores, passed in queues and told to go back to where I come from, Kaur said. "When confronted, I try to look for reasons other than the race reason, and I've yet to find that. I've more often questioned my skills and wondered if I was good enough. It's made me wonder if there is It creates not for the adults, but more I had to do to get where I

dreamed of getting." Rev. Jose Dominguez, of Keizer's Light of the Valley Church, said that education is needed to "break down the barriers of fear and cultural differences."

Dominguez cited actions of former Marion County Sheriff Raul Ramirez as one example of the type of education that was needed. When local officers and deputies noticed a spike in the number of citations for driving uninsured or driving without a license among the Latino population, Ramirez commissioned a set of Spanishlanguage driver training videos.

"We've invited our colored brothers in the door, but we've failed to give them the keys. We haven't trusted enough to give the keys to the door," said Dominguez. "It takes time, effort, energy, and most of us would be willing to sit down and talk about the issues no one

wants to talk about."

A second panel of local public safety officials and Marion County District Attorney Walt Beglau, finished out the evening. Chief John Teague, of the Keizer Police Department, wasted no time in getting to the heart of the matter.

While audience the in attendance was more diverse than is typical for civic gatherings, white faces dominated the crowd.

"About 30 years ago, I knew a very handsome, very intelligent and well-spoken man and he told me he saw a black person every time he looked in the mirror. Being black was a liability. That day or the next day or the next week, the color of his skin, that immutable characteristic, was something he was going to have to overcome. That's something we as white folks will never experience," Teague said. "If you live under the narrative that you're going to get shot and killed, going along to get along isn't going to change anything. It's incumbent upon white people and white cops to make the first step toward changing it."

Marion County Sheriff Jason Moore added that police trainings are now threaded with discussions of procedural justice and police legitimacy.

"That means we are trying to give people a voice, listening and not coming into situations with preconceived notions," Moore said." We'll walk away if (our presence) is going to cause more harm than good, and we're trying to empower our frontline officers to make those decisions."

Salem Police Chief Gerald Moore expressed disappointment at having to have meetings like Bridging the Gap, "When it comes to race relations, why can't we get it right? We can't predict the future, but in a community our size, something bad is going to happen, but we've set up a system that will help us deal with the anger and the confusion. Picking up the phone and talking with a friend is going to make a big difference."

tough questions, no easy answers

In addition to providing insight on race relations and minority experiences in the Salem-Keizer area, members of the panels at Bridging the Gap answered questions from the audience. Below are a few of the highlights from that portion

Questions asked of the community panel

Question: How are you speaking to your children about the violence?

Rev. Michael Weaver, Free Church of Oregon: I'm a father of seven and it starts with listening to our kids, listening to what concerns them. Their number one means of consuming news is their peers, that's where their opinion is formed, and if we are not talking to our children honestly and openly then we miss a huge opportunity. Too often we address our youth as if they are incapable of understanding and we miss an opportunity to really hear.

Q: Is the preconceived notion of police a form of preju-

Benny Williams, president of Salem-Keizer **NAACP:** We've heard as citizens that police have a code of silence that when issues come up, the community asks how can that be. If we look at one of the young men who has been killed, if we see that he's been properly restrained, how can it be that no one is held accountable? The police chiefs, superintendents need to be able to show in a more open way that they are policing their police.

Q: What do we do now that the time to talk has passed? **Weaver:** As a community, we have pacified what we know to be true for a very long time. as parents. Community starts at home, how we as parents raise our children. Begin the conversation at the parent level. Let's educate our children.

Q: How do allies support our communities of color with regards to deep systems of discrimination?

Williams: The change we're talking about is removing the fear and apprehension and the reasons why we think we are not equal to one and other. It's not rocket science, if the heart and the mind is open and honest we can have better relations than what may be the case.

Questions asked of the public safety panel

Q: If you have a firearm and it is registered, how would you handle this during a traffic stop?

Chief Gerald Moore, Salem Police Department: You need to let the officer know that you have a firearm and keep you hands on the steering wheel. They may ask you to step out and secure the firearm. And you need a concealed handgun license.

Q: Do you think differently or feel differently when you pull over a person of color?

Sheriff Jason Moore, Marion County: There is no monolithic person of color. There are a lot of other earmarks I'm looking for like criminality or lack of care or concern. My bias is making sure there's a really good earmark.

Q: How can police raise the level of awareness regarding implicit bias?

Moore: About four or five years ago, we learned through the Oregon Innocence Project that people were being wrongly convicted through faulty eyewitness accounts. Overnight, Oregon law enforcement changed. Cops want to do the right thing, we're eager for this advice.

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Road, he said, a renovated space such as the current redevelopment at Schoolhouse Square will go for about \$1.50 per square foot and existing tenants have already fled.

"With a redeveloped space, you're looking at \$2 or more per square foot," Nash said. Nash also cited the need for

additional parking along River Road as a possible barrier because it would require removing existing assets and starting

"Creekside (Shopping Center) is a perfect example. It's not safe, (has) poor functionality, (and it's) hard to get in and out. If you want something done, the city should buy it, scrape it and then sell it. You're going to lose \$2 million, but immediately the market demand will be there," Nash said.

Keizer Community Development Director Nate Brown added that a small, local government like Keizer simply doesn't have the funding available to free a property like Creekside of the perceived en-

"The dollar values a program like this would require are so high, they are going to be offensive," Nash said. "It might be something to work toward long-term, but we need a different solution in the short-term. My advice would be to start hoarding money now that you are going to give away."



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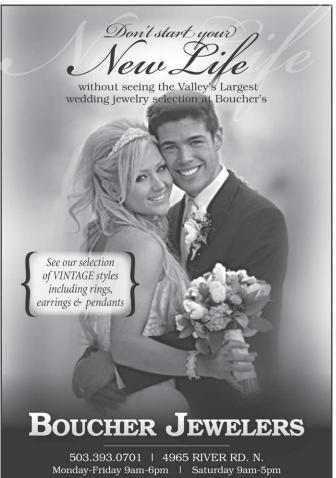
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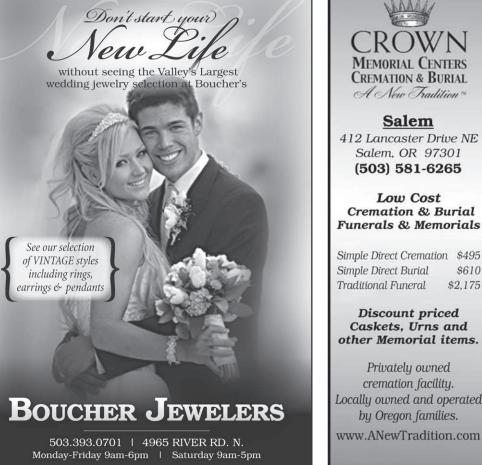


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