

COMMUNITY NEWS

Local woman starts non-profit to help youth at-risk for sex trafficking

By Barbara Quinn

When we met in her genteelly decorated living room, Latasha Curry, an animated St. Johns resident, says Oregon is the number one state for sex trafficking and strip clubs in the US. She is a survivor of sex work beginning at age 13, and has started a non-profit called YaYA, which stands for Youth and Young Adults. Through her non-profit organization, she connects with at-risk young women and potentially young men and “promotes healing by creating a healthy, supportive environment while educating our community.” “I help girls as young as 11 and up to 25,” says Latasha, “Girls get targeted. Pimps identify them.”

She says prostitution will not go away—it is too lucrative. In many cases gangs are running the sex trade. “Currently in the state of Oregon, you do less time for selling women than you do for selling drugs,” said Jeri Williams, another advocate for prostitutes. “And so gangs have taken this as a money maker.” According to Jeri, gang members pick up young girls to recruit in downtown Pioneer Square, gang rape them, “And then they would say, ‘you’re a whore, you need to go out and walk the streets or we’ll tell your mom’... Psychological enslavement facilitated the physical enslavement,” Williams said. (The Daily Beast, 4-2012, Sex Traffick-

ing Survivor’s Inspiring Political Run in Portland OR).

It is not easy to leave the life once becoming entrapped. Latasha says, “once you’re in 18 years, it’s hard to get out... My two daughters are the reason I quit.” She is clearly a proud mom of her academically accomplished daughters.

Referring to the recent arrest of Homer Jackson, a man tied to the serial killings by strangling of four young women prostitutes in the 1980s, Latasha said, “It could’ve been me.” In fact, one of the young women was a mere 14 years of age. Another victim was Essie Jackson, no relation to the killer, who was an acquaintance of this writer through St. Andrew Church in NE Portland years ago. When I knew her, she was only 12 or 13, a member of the large, devout Jackson clan. I was shocked to learn what had happened to her a few years later and feel sorrow for her large family. How does a nice young woman get involved in the sex trade? Easy, just meet the wrong guy at a vulnerable age. “I was once that girl,” says Latasha. “I look for a girl that’s a follower, not a leader. How do you pro-

tect them from pimps? I identify them and get to them first.” That is what makes Latasha an invaluable champion of young women at risk for sex trafficking.

Beyond helping youth who may be targeted, Latasha would like to promote a healthier attitude towards victims on the part of the wider community. Her mission is, “Don’t be moved by what you see, be moved by what you believe.”

YaYA, Youth and Young Adults, is a fiscally sponsored non-profit under North Portland Community Works. Donations are needed. If you would like more information or can help support the mission of YaYA, email Latasha at YaYAre-course@gmail.com.





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Neodymium For A New Home
By Kay - the Light Bulb Lady

Lights to help the Winter Blues

Having trouble dragging yourself out of bed to face your to-do lists? Spring, oh spring, where are you? Still five months away!!!

The **Lightbulb Lady** knows three kinds of lights to help chase away the winter blues. The secret is to get enough of the correct high CRI (color rendering index) light for the tasks at hand. One light is the **Quartz Halogen Bulb**. Quartz has a CRI of about 99 and creates a light the color of **SPRING!**

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Aspire Program relocation

The Aspire Project relocated their dance outreach operation to the St Johns neighborhood in spring, 2015. For the six years prior, The Aspire Project had provided an affordable dance program for North Portland families. After moving to the larger St. Johns space, they were able to reach many more students with their dance program. In addition, they were able to launch a new program which had been a long-time goal for the founders, Sue & Dan Darrow.

The vision is to provide a safe, structured environment for students to complete homework and to voluntarily participate in various computer skills training programs ranging from keyboarding skills to programming. The program was initially designed to serve currently enrolled dance students. However, the Darrows want to provide this opportunity for all North Portland youth who have the desire to learn and to explore the possibilities available to them in the field of technology.

The Aspire Project will partner with University of Portland STEM major students to administer computer-based training, supervise the computer lab and to assist students with homework. Currently, the lab is open Thursdays, 3-6pm. With the support of Umpqua Bank, the program will expand to serve more students six hours/week.



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Public Open House Meeting

“The Asian Gypsy Moth Problem”

**Wednesday, February 17, 2016, 6:30pm-8:30pm,
Saturday, February 20, 2016, 9:00am-12:00pm**

James John Elementary School, 7439 N Charleston Ave, Portland, OR 97203

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) is proposing an eradication program for the Asian gypsy moth in parts of North and Northwest Portland. The department proposes three applications of the biological insecticide *Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki*, applied by helicopter from late April to May 2016, to eradicate the Asian gypsy moth from the area. An intensive pheromone trapping program will follow. The proposed eradication area is composed of three blocks totalling about 8674 acres: the northwest portion of Hayden Island, St Johns and Cathedral Park, Linnton and Forest Park.

You are invited to attend a public open house meeting to learn more about the Asian gypsy moth and the proposed eradication program. For further information please visit ODA’s website: <http://tinyurl.com/h23d6pj> or contact the Oregon Department of Agriculture: Clinton Burfitt 1-800-525-0137, Bruce Pokarney 503-986-4559, or by email at gypsymoth@oda.state.or.us. Please check your local phone book for TTY/TDD telecommunications service.

Individuals with disabilities requiring accommodations at the public open house meeting should contact Clinton Burfitt as soon as possible at the number above.