

ROBERT STEEN

Leadership recognized

by Kathryn Bogle

Exemplifying young Black people with the "qualities of leadership needed in the 1980s," twenty-five young Portlanders were selected to receive "Leadership Scrolls" awarded to them by the Northwest Conference of Black Public Officials at a recent dinner meeting in Seattle.

Among the twenty-five chosen for this distinction were Robert Steen and Charlotte Williams, both employees of the Bureau of Labor and Industry for the State of Oregon.

Selection of the candidates hinged on each one's satisfying 14 criteria. Among these were: integrity, knowledge of community needs, education, courage, the ability to inspire others to work together and pride in the Black heritage.

Steen, now Executive Assistant to State Labor Commissioner Mary "Wendy" Roberts, is a graduate of Portland State University in Political Science. His work background includes three and one-half years as the Multnomah County Juvenile Home Director and four years as Personnel and Training Analyst.

He is a member of the Portland Urban League and of the NAACP.

Among the women recognized as leaders, Charlotte Williams, a native Portlander, is also a graduate of

Portland State University. She received her degree in Administration of Justice in 1976.

Williams worked two years as Research Assistant in the Black Studies Center at PSU and also has experience as a talk-show hostess and co-producer associated with KOAP-TV and the show "Black on Black." Currently she is a Compliance Officer in the Civil Rights Division for the State of Oregon.

Volunteer activities for Williams include work with the Black Justice Committee, the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission and the Educational Opportunity Program at PSU.

Williams is a member of the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs and of the NAACP.

Those receiving Leadership Scrolls include; Art Barfield, Nick Barnett, Carol Bryant, Herb Cawthorne, Danny Copeland, Evie Crowell, Cleo Franklin, Ron Herndon, Lucious Hicks IV, Armando Laguardia, Ethel Lee, Robert Phillips, George Rankins, Roosevelt Robinson, Robert Steen, Dr. Virgus Street, Anna Street, Bonita Stroughter, Ben Talley, Kay Toran, Ocie Trotter, Florice Walker, Charlotte Williams, Pina Williams, Zoe Wilson and Jeanna Wooley.

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PCC trains Lekoethe' optician

When Michael Lekoethe leaves Cascade Center of Portland Community College in two years for Lesotho, he'll be the only optician in a country of 1.5 million people.

Two years ago Lekoethe, 30, was a laborer and supervisor in a South African gold mine who had never dreamed of traveling halfway across the world.

"I had only a peasant background," Lekoethe said. But one year ago Lekoethe returned to his home city of Maluti to work at the Maluti Adventist Hospital where his wife is a nurse.

He became an assistant to Dr. Donald Carroll, a Morton, Washington optometrist, who was in Maluti for one year as the country's only optometrist. Dr. Carroll became so strongly convinced that Lesotho must have a local African as an optician that he began a trust fund to sponsor and educate Lekoethe.

Carroll said American Optical Company sent several thousand dollars worth of optical equipment to the hospital, but once Carroll left

there would be no one to fill prescriptions and dispense glasses in Maluti since there was no local person trained to use the equipment.

"There was an othomologist (a medical doctor who specializes in the eye) in the capital city," Carroll said. "But prescriptions were sent out to South Africa."

"It is true that Michael has a very humble background just like everyone else there," Dr. Carroll explained in a telephone interview from his home in Morton. "Really, wealth isn't as important in Lesotho as other people and how they are treated. It's a fine education to live there and learn from the culture."

Land-locked by South Africa on every side, Lesotho is a mountainous country that has limited political independence and is economically dependent on South Africa. "The South Africans are discriminatory," Carroll said. "Almost all the men in Lesotho go into South Africa to work. Lekoethe had come back to be near his wife and children. We sent him into a South African optical lab for about two months training. The

whites wouldn't cooperate and train him."

By then Lekoethe was determined to become an optician. "I wanted to learn a profession and I wanted to help people in Lesotho who need medical help," Lekoethe said.

Carroll, who had attended optometry school at Pacific University, had met a former Portland Community College optical technology student there. He wrote to PCC for applications and tests for Lekoethe, who was admitted for classes in September. Because of delays in mail service Lekoethe wasn't aware of the admission in time to arrive in September.

"Because I came late I have to work very hard -- it's quite strenuous catching up," Lekoethe said.

"My aim is to take it all in," Lekoethe said. "Since I'll be the only optician in my country I have to teach others so when I die it will go on and while I live others can learn."

Lekoethe traveled through high mountain country, at times blocked by snow storms, to help Carroll reach people in the outlying villages. He also worked in the hospital with Carroll, learning optical work from him.

Lekoethe's two children are three months old and two years old. He is the eldest brother in his family of nine.

"My father was in ill health when I finished high school, so I went to work in South Africa in the mines for five years to help my brothers and sisters go to school," Lekoethe said.

Lekoethe misses his family and fresh home cooking of Lesotho. "The fact is, I wanted to have a profession that I liked and would be able to support my family. I know I'll be able to be with them for the rest of my life if I stay here and learn."

Lekoethe's \$3,000 education trust is primarily funded by Dr. Carroll. Dr. Harold Drake of Twin Falls, Idaho, also contributed \$1,000 but Dr. Carroll said further donations are needed for Lekoethe to complete his education here. Lekoethe and Dr. Carroll are available to speak to Portland area groups about Africa and Lesotho.

County seeks committee members

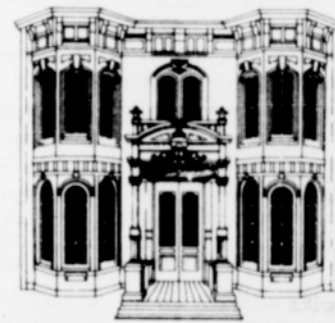
Multnomah County Executive Don Clark encourages citizens to apply for appointment to the County's citizen advisory boards and commissions which have current vacancies.

The following County boards have vacancies at this time:

Bicycle and Pedestrian Paths Advisory Committee; City-County Council on Aging; Economic Development Advisory Commission; Health Care Commission; Metropolitan Human Relations Commission; Plumbing Appeals Board.

For information contact Ms. Maggie Pendleton in Clark's office, Multnomah County Courthouse.

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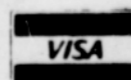
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If you have a problem that is not covered in this list, please call and ask whether we can help. Chances are, we can. If not, we can recommend someone else for you to call. One way or the other, we want to see you get the kind of professional legal counsel you're entitled to.

The best time to call us, or any attorney, is before you are embroiled in a legal problem. This is called preventative law and it makes a lot of sense.

Regardless, when you call us we will arrange for an initial consultation at your convenience. Cost: \$20. We probably can't solve anything in this meeting, but it is a chance for you to explain your particular problem and for us to give you some idea of what it'll take to reach a solution. If you want us to proceed, we'll give you an estimate of the fees you should plan on. In writing.

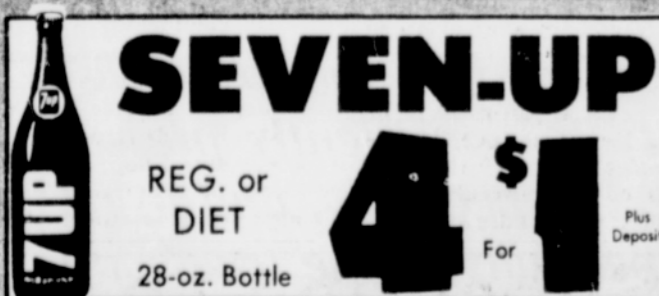


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