

METROPOLITAN

Union Square breaks ground dancing

by Nathaniel Scott

Break dancing, poetry reading, gospel music, jazz and soul stirred the fancy of many who partook of Union Square's grand opening, Friday and Saturday of last week.

The five-store shopping plaza is located at N.E. Union Avenue and Morris Street.



"Rapper" Vitamix at the grand opening.

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Complimenting the festive entertainment, the five stores: Convenient Food Mart, the Flower King, Nike, Ronaldo's Ice Cream, and the Sunshine Pizza Exchange, provided customers and potential customers, with discounts galore.

Union Square, according to Warren Wong, project coordinator with the Portland Development Commission (PDC), is the result of

two years of planning. The plaza represents "\$1.5 million of private and public investment."

Moreover, he said, the five businesses in the plaza received a total of approximately \$250,000 of low-interest PDC loans. Three of the businesses are reportedly minority owned.

While not being at liberty to talk about specifics, Wong said, "There are a lot of developmental projects in the making in the North-Northeast," referring to low-interest PDC loan business ventures in the North Northeast.

Ron Herndon, co-chair of the Black United Front, said, "A lot more money is needed in the community, and not just from PDC."

During his brief statement, Herndon praised Union Square's Nike store, "For entering into a contract with the Black community."

"A percentage of the proceeds," a portion of Nike's receipts, he said, "Are going into the development of the community." He added, all of the companies doing business in the Black community should do likewise.

LaRue Martin, manager of the plaza's Nike store, said business at the Union Avenue site has been "quite good."

Another of the Square's proprietors, Alvin Manus of the Flower King, said his business has also been good. In fact, he said, his business has been "outstanding."

Manus showed his appreciation by selling long-stemmed red roses Saturday for ten cents each. His reason was, "I appreciate the people who have supported me so far."



Geraldine Avery helps Larry Richard, age 15, fill out a copy of the BUF survey on teenage health care needs at the Union Square grand opening. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

BUF teen care project seeks community involvement

by Nathaniel Scott

The Portland Black United Front (BUF) received \$5000 from the Tri-County United Way for a teenage care project, Venita Myrick, chairperson of the project, said. The \$5000 will assist the BUF's efforts to educate Black teenagers about pregnancy, and about health problems in general.

Citing statistics compiled in 1982, Myrick said, at that time, 33.3 percent of the city's teens lived in the North and Northeast. Furthermore, she maintained, 42.2 percent of the 33.3 percent figure were Black. In addition, she said, the percentage of Black teen pregnancies continues to be alarmingly high.

The acuteness of the BUF's concern was demonstrated Saturday, July 7th, at Union Square's grand opening celebration. At the festive occasion, thirteen representatives from the Front distributed health care leaflets to teenagers and concerned parents.

Avel Mayfield, one of the numerous volunteers with the BUF's project, said the Teenage Care Project will be located at 1640 N.E. Alberta, the Black Educational Activity Center.

Mayfield said the overall concern is the number of Black teenage pregnancies in the Black community. "Our target is to reach 200 teens," she said. "We are striving to reach 100 who are actually parents, and an additional 100 who are sexually active."

In addition, she said, a number of physicians, dentists, and nurses from the Black community, have pledged their support and services.

The BUF circulated a teen-needs survey at the Union Square grand opening. Mayfield said, "We wanted to find out what the young people felt their needs were; we intend to take the information and channel the program (Teenage Care Project) to meet those needs."



"Poppers" Arthur Jacobs and LaRon Harper make some eyes pop at the opening. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Deaf increase visibility

by Nancy Solomon

Deaf people—the nation's second-largest, yet most invisible, disabled population—became more visible Tuesday.

For the first time in Portland's history, leaders of the deaf community held a press conference to speak out about the lack of respect, social services and government funds they receive.

"The hearing world has a lot to learn about deafness. It understands nothing about being communicatively disabled," said Betty Wood, coordinator of the Interpreter Preparation/Deafness Program, at Western Oregon State College.

Wood was one of six deaf leaders who addressed the large number of media representatives and deaf community supporters who attended the conference. Held at the Greater Portland Association of the Deaf (GPAD), 8134 N. Denver, the speakers represented five separate deaf organizations in Oregon.

"Hearing people need to learn to respect our differences, to accept us on an equal level, and not as being intellectually inferior," Wood said. "The majority of decisions made for deaf and hearing impaired persons are made by people who know nothing about deafness," she added.

To remedy this situation, Wood suggests the Oregon Legislature establish a state-funded position for a full-time deaf service coordinator. Many states, including Washington and California, have similar positions, she said.

This coordinator would give Oregon's deaf population access to social services such as health care, vocational training and legal advocacy.

"Mental health programs are virtually non-existent for the deaf and hearing impaired," said Calvin Johanson, president of the Oregon Association of the Deaf (OAD). "Drug abuse programs, for exam-

ple, flourish all over the state and are lavishly funded, but none of these programs provide direct service to the deaf and hearing impaired population."

The communication barrier between deaf and hearing people became evident during the press conference itself, despite the fact that sign language interpreters were available.

After the last speech was given by George Kosovitch, who is hard-of-hearing, the reporters eagerly began to ask him questions. When Kosovitch yielded the floor to Wood, who is profoundly deaf, the questions immediately ceased.

"The point is, hearing people are not comfortable with us," Wood said after the conference. "That's the whole problem with the community at large."



BETTY WOOD (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

"I'm not upset, I understand (the reporters) know nothing about deafness. But at the same time, they need to be more patient with us," she added.

It is this discomfort hearing people feel towards deafness which perpetuates her isolation, Wood said.

In continuing that fight against isolation, Portland deaf activists are seeking money for a multi-service center here, they announced.

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