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Mrs. Frances Schoen-Newspaper R.
University of Oregon Libr
Eugene, Oregon
97403

Giving Something Back

BY JOHN PHILLIPS

On Sunday afternoon at the Midway Shopping Center located at S.E. 122nd and Division in Portland, a young man sat behind a table signing autographs for five dollars apiece. At the end of two hours, the young man had made over nine hundred dollars. But the money did not go into his pocket; all the proceeds from this afternoon of autographing were donated to Portland Saints Basketball, Inc., a nonprofit organization made up of women who play basketball in the Amateur Athletic Union of the United States.

This young man was Robert Pack, "The Packman" for the Portland Trail Blazers. Pack, a 6-foot-2, 180 pound guard from New Orleans, Louisiana, has not signed a new contract for the upcoming season, which puts his basketball future in limbo. All of this did not stop him from smiling and talking to basketball fans from 5 to 95 years of age.

With a degree from the University of southern California in 1991, pack has something to fall back on, but his love is on the basketball court.

He was discovered by the Blazers during the Southern California summer basketball league for free agents. No one could see him making the team with so many odds against him, but not Pack. By working harder than any one in the training camp, he caught the eye of the coach and made the team. The rest is history for pack, who averaged 4.6 points per game, 1.9 assists and 12.4 minutes per game in 72 games last year.

Now he is right back where he was



Photos by Veronica Green

a year ago -- no contract, and no chance of making this year's team, some say. I think The Packman will play this year in the NBA. I hope it will be in Portland. The Trail Blazers need people like Pack in their organization. Her is definitely a breath of fresh air, and a blue collar worker, if you will. But most important, he's a quality person, and one the Blazers need as much off the court as on.

I hope the kind of person robert is

stands for something. Giving something back is very important to Pack. He demonstrated this in the summer when he put on a basketball camp at Benson High School. Many of the kids from North and Northeast Portland participated in the camp free of charge. Because these kids could not afford to pay the fee to participate in the camp, Robert made room for them anyway.

These are the things most people

never hear about -- the good things that pros like Pack do for youths. Pack's grade for me is A+; and there is no higher mark you can get.

We are blessed to have him here in Portland. I hope the Blazers will realize the importance one man can be to their team, and somehow find a way to get The Packman back in a Blazer uniform this year and for many years to come.

Clarification From The Vernon Neighborhood Association On The National Guard's Support In N.E. Portland

Residents of Vernon Neighborhood have once again experienced the violence in our streets that has resulted in another Casualty and several wounded. Many of these citizens feel as if they too are casualties. Like the "walking wounded, the men, women and children who live on and around N.E. 18th Ave. bear the emotional and psychological scars brought on by regular gunfire and the accompanying violence it generates. Imagine being awakened in the middle of the night by gunfire and being too afraid to walk downstairs in your own home to call for help. How many gunshots would you have to hear before you so desensitized to the sounds that when you hear loud shots in the middle of the night that you roll over and go back to sleep? How many of us have had to lay on the floor of our homes regularly and pray that whatever is happening outside of your yard did not result in injury or death to you or one of your family members? These are some of the stories of the citizens who live on N.E. 18th Ave.

Unfortunately, the constant violence that has disrupted the lives of people on N.E. 18th Ave. is not isolated to the Vernon Neighborhood. Throughout the city similar stories of fear are being told.

Citizens are comparing their neighborhoods to "war zones." The Executive Board of the Vernon Neighborhood Association has unanimously decided to request that Gov. Roberts dispatch the National Guard to perform ancillary duties to support the work of the Portland Police Department. This request is consistent with a similar call made several years ago as a follow-up to the "Rescue Plan For A Community Under Attack," which outlined specific measures that needed to be taken in heavily drug and gang impacted neighborhoods.

Specifically, step 2 in the plan stated:

"Utilize the National Guard in

patrolling target area streets and identified hot spots throughout the community. Coordinate Guard efforts with police "Cold Taps" and planned sweeps. The following steps should be taken with the Guard:

A. National Guard placed on active duty

B The Guard used for surveillance, perimeter security, transporting prisoners, patrols, drug house sweeps, curfew sweeps."

We believe that the police will continue to work very hard to address the issues of crime with the limited resources they have available to them. We urge Mayor Clark to support our call for the Guard and to work in conjunction with the City Council to allocate additional resources to the Police Bureau so that they can increase their visibility in these areas.

We encourage citizens to actively participate in helping the police to respond to the problems by continuing to report illegal and suspicious activities. Neighborhood watches should be quickly organized. Schools and law enforcement need to look at how they enforce truancy laws.

Finally, a word of concern about the media coverage of the violence and tragedies that result from it. Media does a disservice to all of us when they sensationalize and glorify those who perpetrate violence. By allowing individuals to openly and profanely make direct threats the media becomes irresponsible and incendiary. We urge you to give more thought to the impact your reporting may have so that you do not become a part of the problem. We are looking for solutions and we need the support of citizens, law enforcement, the government, and the media.

In closing I would like to add that the theme of tonight's rally at Vancouver Ave. Baptist Church is appropriate, "Hope and Hard Work." We believe that if we continue to work hard we can improve the quality of life in Northeast and the entire city of Portland.

MYCAP Banquet Honors Youth, Focuses On Unity

BY TONY WASHINGTON

The business shingle that hangs over the entrance of MYCAP contains Good Enough."

The phrase represents the motive and spirit of staff, board members, mentors and the collective volunteer force of the MYCAP organization. The phrase comes from one of the last speeches given by Col. McNair, the first African American in space. The excerpt is from a commencement speech to a class of graduating seniors.

Said Sam Pierce, MYCAP's Executive Director and Co-founder, "I was trying to find a phrase that would consistently remind us of why we were here and to keep us on track." Col. McNair, along with six other astronauts were killed in 198 when their spaceship, Challenger, exploded during take off. Pierce continues, "but since Col. McNair's death, the phrase has come to have a double meaning. along with the phrase acting as an inspiration, it is also a memorial to an African American astronautical hero who overcame great odds to fulfill his dream."

Honoring those who have worked very hard to fulfill their dream is the primary focus of MYCAP's First An-



nual Banquet and Awards Dinner being held at the Oregon Convention Center, Saturday October 17th at 6:00 p.m. The banquet and awards dinner will honor youth from several programs that work with gang impacted youth. The programs include MYCAP, Portland House of Umoja, Maclaren School, Portland Youth Redirection, Yaun, and others.

Thus the theme of the banquet is: "A Celebration of Youth, Unity, Family and Community."

"We want to take this opportunity to honor those young men whose example says clearly that it is possible to get out of gangs and lead a productive life. In addition, we want to honor other organizations and community leaders

who have been an advocate for youth," says Pierce.

However, MYCAP does not view the banquet solely as a MYCAP function, but an opportunity to demonstrate the unity and cooperation between the various groups that are working with this population of youth. Some other organizations participating in the event are: Christian Women Against Crime, Gang Enforcement Team, Gang Resource Intervention Team, Gang Strike Force, Give Us This Day, Juvenile Justice's Street Law, House of Umoja, Mallory Avenue Church's Night Court, One Church One Child, Portland Organizing Project, Portland Youth Redirections, the YMCA's Midnight Basketball program and Youth Gang Task Force. These organizations will be joined by such standard bearers as the Albina Youth Opportunity School, Lentz Learning Center, Mainstream Youth Program, Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center, Portland Urban League, Private Industry Council, Self-Enhancement and Yaun Child Care Center.

Concludes Pierce, "We have always espoused that we are only a part of the solution. It does indeed take a whole village to raise a child. The above organizations have a role in that village."

Coats For Kids Drive On The Way

People cleaning their closets for Fall can now put their old coats to good use by participating in The Salvation Army's sixth annual Coats For Kids Drive.

Used coats can be taken to one of fifty dry cleaners in the Portland metropolitan area between October 1 and 31. The dry cleaners will collect, clean, press, bag and deliver the coats to The Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army will give the coats to low-income children through

five family services offices, the Moore Street Community Center in North Portland and the Greenhouse Center for street children.

The campaign is sponsored by the Oregon Dry Cleaners' Association, KXL radio and Katu television.

People wishing to donate a coat should look for the Coats For Kids sign in their neighborhood dry cleaner's window or call The Salvation Army at 234-0825.

Minority Business
A N N U A L
A Portland Observer Special Issue
Starting on page 11

Blumenauer Calls For Neighborhood Public Safety Stations



City commissioner Earl Blumenauer is urging a group of citizens examining Fire Bureau operations to consider transforming fire stations and police precinct buildings into neighborhood public safety centers.

"It's time to take a fresh look at the need for independent fire and police stations," says Blumenauer. "I believe we could deliver more service at less cost if we put all of our public safety services in one neighborhood center."

Blumenauer spoke this week to the Fire Study Committee, and independent

group of 16 citizens appointed by the City Council to examine the operations of the Fire Bureau. The group is working with a team of consultants who are preparing a three-part report. The first part studied existing fire operations, the next part will consider future alternatives.

"The first phase of your report confirmed what I've seen for myself during my six years on city Council," Blumenauer told the group on Wednesday. "Our Fire Bureau has been on the cutting edge of fire prevention and sup-

pression efforts. I'm proud of that, and I support it."

Blumenauer said creating neighborhood public safety centers would not require closing existing fire stations or police precinct buildings. "As we remodel existing stations or build new ones, we could transform them into public safety centers. Besides fire and community policing services, we could also add fire and crime prevention programs, citizen foot patrols and block watch programs."

"There are two other key areas I

think you should address in the second phase of your report," said Blumenauer. "First, we need a full public discussion about personal responsibility in fire prevention and tougher laws for reckless behavior that causes fire. We should also examine safer construction standards and their cost to the private property owner versus the benefit to the community at large if fire damage and incidents can be reduced."

"Second, we should discuss how our community provides emergency medical services," said Blumenauer.

"Right now, we may have the worst of both worlds: a fire crew is dispatched to the scene but a private ambulance is also called to transport patients. We need to bite the bullet here and decide what is the best system for the people of Portland."

"Our goal should be to deliver the maximum public safety service we can to the community," said Blumenauer. "I believe the best way to do this is to coordinate our community policing and community fire protection efforts as much as we can whenever we can."