

# Education Update: Critical Deadline At Hand

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT  
THIS IS THE WEEK PORTLAND SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT JACK BIERWIRTH PROPOSES CUTTING 500 JOBS, 300 OF THEM TEACHERS.

The 1995-96 budget, which anticipates no new funding (235 million), is said to mean the loss of another 1,100 teaching jobs. It was a very sober crew indeed that conducted the last school board meeting. Shall we characterize the approach as numbness?

We are all becoming more familiar now with the term "triage"; that is the allocation of medical treatment for victims of a disaster. Not only do we have an operating room full of "board-certified" surgeries (pardon the pun), but there is an entire spectrum of would-be practitioners waiting in the wings, prepared to offer temporary solutions or just one-liners. That cacophony of voices from the sidelines, previously so strident, is still there, though quieter and more measured (frightened?).

As more and more fingers for the dike are measured, some members of the parenting populace, are competing with teachers in looking across the Columbia River for jobs and housing. Apparently, no one looks for any kind of guidance or pearls of wisdom to be handed down from that less-than-August body, The Oregon State Legislature. Nor for a balanced initiative from a teachers union whose contract expires soon.

Some of the most highly-priori-

tized agendas of both professionals and laymen alike have been put on hold; of course that could be the handiwork of an all-knowing media. But, suffice to say, we have not heard much lately about Baseline Essays, Bilingual education programs and drop-outs--except that the latter issue is seen to arise with considerations of school violence provoked by outside interaction, i.e. gangs. A lot more, of course, can be said on this subject if one simply correlates current media high-lights with the information on school programs given in "The School Tool", published by The Portland School District.

As I have mentioned before in connection with education and other issues, I am part of several community focus groups or sounding boards. It is interesting to see the varying emphasis placed on issues, depending on demographics. My more informal interactions range from the neighborhood coffee clique to a monthly downtown gathering with members of the public who have attended a meeting of the Portland Water Quality Committee of which I am a member.

The first group consists of working class African Americans for the most part, with a sprinkling of retired seniors. The second group is exclusively white and the constituency runs the gamut from housepersons to engineers and from doctors to environmentalists. The interesting thing about both groups is how the pressures of the current education crisis had stripped

even the most garrulous of their usual rhetoric.

Similar to others I have described as having been afflicted with a certain numbness when faced with so many shortfalls, members of my groups have nevertheless calmed down enough to bring some nagging issues into clearer focus. For instance, downtown there has been a heated and continuous discussion on why Seattle, a city twice the size of Portland, had a school budget half as big. Rationality has now replaced hysteria and clearer heads have not only plugged "White flight" into that equation--but see the possibility of such racial events occurring here as middle class parents, fearing a catastrophic disintegration of public schools, opt for private schools and suburbia.

In the meantime we have it--but not on very good authority--that "maybe" assistant principals in the middle and high schools will have to go. A teachers union rep thinks that "maybe" the Park Bureau will pickup tennis, golf and swimming--and that the seven elementary principals could be reduced to half-time Board member Panaretos says "maybe" protecting class size is not the highest priority. And member Lucious Hicks perhaps says it best; "... This is the first generation that's been more concerned about what it has or has not than what it is going to leave behind." Right on my man! I wish you would tell that to some of my former students who are interacting in the community.

## Need Something To Do On Spring Break? How About Camping?

Get out your camping gear and enjoy a few days at nearby Oxbow Park, now managed by Metro Regional Parks and Greenspaces. Only 20 miles east of downtown Portland, 45 campsites are available year-round on a first come, first served basis. RVs are welcome; however hookups are not available.

Vehicle entry fee is \$2 for weekdays or \$3 for weekends and a camping fee of \$9 is collected in the campground each evening. Park rangers sell dry firewood for \$3 per large armload or you can bring your own. Park gates are locked from legal sunset until 6:30 a.m. for security. Due to conflict with resident wildlife, pets are not allowed.

For recreation, hike through a 180-acre old growth forest to a waterfall on more than 12 miles of trails. Bring a mountain bike and explore eight miles of biking trails. Wildlife and early spring wildflowers are abundant. Two playgrounds and numerous sandy beaches will keep youngsters and adults busy for hours.

Also, the Regional Parks and Greenspaces Department is currently taking reservations for group picnic sites at Oxbow Park, Blue Lake Park and Bybee Howell Territorial Park on Sauvie Island. Group camping reservations for non-profit youth organizations are also being taken for three group camping sites at Oxbow Park.

For more information or to make reservations, call 797-1850.

## Willard Scott To Host Tax Information Program

A full hour of tips on preparing 1993 federal tax returns is scheduled for public television station viewers on Saturday, April 2, 1994, at 11:30 am over the Oregon Public Broadcast stations:

- Portland Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) KOAP-TV
- Bend Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) KOAB-TV
- Corvallis Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) KOAC-TV
- LaGrande Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) KTVR-TV

Hosted by Willard Scott, the popular member of the "Today" program on NBC, "TAXBREAK 94" is designed to help people prepare their tax returns. The program features two tax experts talking about common income tax return problems. Several video profiles of representative taxpayers are featured as well as a segment taped at an IRS office.

To 1-free assistance will be available during the program and until 2:00 pm at 221-3960 in the Portland area or 1-8--TAX(829)-1040 for the rest of Oregon.

## Through The Eyes Of A Child

Children in all their innocence have a way of looking at life in the most precious way. They can always see the positive, and can find hope in everything. One evening ago my granddaughters, Whitney and Shea, were standing in the yard looking up at the sky, the stars were just coming out. Shea (short for



Shawntell) reached down to take her cousin's hand and pointed to the sky and said, "Look, Whitney your Dad is in the sky moving the stars around." They gently put their heads together and smiled. Whitney's Dad, Cory died several years ago leaving two little girls in a painful void. But they always find something positive to fill his absence. We could all learn something from these two little girls!

## IRS Information Lines Open On Saturday's Now

Internal Revenue Service's toll-free taxpayer assistance telephone lines will be open every Saturday through April 9 to assist Oregonians with federal income tax questions. The telephone number is 1-800-Tax(829)-1040.

This Saturday service will be available from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. It is an effort to provide service to people unable to contact the IRS for assistance during regular business hours.

## OMSI and National Science Foundation

Offer Summer Young Scholars Research Program

Applications are now being accepted for the OMSI Young Scholars Research Participation Program, an intensive six-week research experience for students presently in their sophomore or juniors years. A total of 30 OMSI Young Scholars will be selected to participate as members of a research team studying one of three subjects: Aquatic ecology, paleontology or archaeology.

Each team of ten students will conduct field research under the supervision of professional researchers including Dr. Richard Raymond, CH2M Hill environmental scientist, Dr. Erick Bestland, University of Oregon geologist, and Dr. James Keyser, U.S. Forest Service Archeologist. Young Scholars will assist scientists with on-going research at several locations in Oregon and will complete a project of their own which they will present as a scientific paper and oral presentation.

All expenses for the six week program and academic year follow-up are paid by the National Science Foundation. Young Scholars are selected based upon a demonstrated interest in science, an application essay, teacher recommendations and grades. For applications contact Dr. Jeffrey Gottfried or Keri Keltner at (503) 797-4571.

## North/Inner Northeast YMCA Fundraising Passes Half-Way Mark

The North/Inner Northeast Branch of the YMCA has passed the mid-point in its drive to obtain \$10,000 in new pledges to support the work of the branch. As of March 10, the campaign had received more than \$6,200 in firm pledges. Money raised will be used to launch a Black Achievers program which will link African-American managers and executives with school children. The program, already a success in several U.S. Cities, is designed to link children with successful adults to inspire them to stay in school and to make something of their lives.

Campaign Chair is Maxine Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives, Inc. Honorary chair is Portland City Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury.

Branch Executive Bill Deiz says the Black Achievers program is one of a number of programs planned for his Branch, which presently has an office at the Matt Dishman Community Center at 77 NE Knott, Portland, Oregon.

## Food & Nutrition Training Opportunity

Do you want to learn more about food and nutrition? The food pyramid? Food shopping and label reading? Food storage and safety? Then volunteer to assist Oregon State University Extension with a variety of community education programs in Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington counties.

Men and women, young adults and retired folks, of all ages and ethnic origins are needed. The ten hour training program begins April 14th, from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. Additional classes are April 21 and 28, and May 5th. The classes will be at the State Office Building, 800 NE Oregon, Portland (near the Lloyd Center). Interested persons can call the Multnomah County Extension Education Center, 254-1500, ask for the home economics department and request an information and application packet.

The registration fee of \$25 includes a basic resource notebook. Some scholarships are available. Additional reference materials will be available at cost.

## Employment In Oregon: February 1994

Oregon's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 7.1 percent for February - a one-tenth drop from the January revised rate of 7.2 percent - and an indication of a fairly stable employment picture the first two months of the year.

February data was the second month the U.S. Census Bureau used the redesigned Current Population Survey, which measures the number of employed and unemployed individuals.

The Employment Department's survey of Oregon businesses showed a 7,300 increase in nonagricultural wage and salary jobs between January and February, a little short of the seasonal expectation of 7,500 jobs for February. In the past year, between February 1993 and February 1994, Oregon employers have added 40,100 full and part-time positions.

Nearly all manufacturing and nonmanufacturing sectors of the economy were up to seasonal expectations for February. The most significant changes were in the wholesale and retail trade sectors and in construction and government. Wholesale trade was expected to gain 400 jobs, but a sharp drop in fresh fruit and vegetable distribution caused a net loss of 300 jobs. Retail trade continued its post-holiday decline, but as in January, not as many jobs were lost as expected.

Although the construction trades lost 800 jobs during the month, the level of employment remains very strong at 51,800, about 5,400 more positions than one year ago. Government sectors added 3,600 jobs over the month with nearly all of the increase being in state and local education, where employment levels returned to normal after winter vacations ended and new terms began.

In Oregon, employment strength continues to be seen in several industries. As has been reported during the past two years, construction continues to provide employment for many Oregonians.

## Happy Birthday! To Our Mom Freida Murray



*The Is A Wonderful Mother  
She is a wonderful mother  
Dear old mother of ours.  
Her soul shall go on forever,  
on thorough the fields of time,  
for there'll never be a mother for  
us like the wonderful mother of ours.  
Author Unknown*

From Your Family And Friends

YOU'RE HIS  
role model,  
mentor,  
friend  
AND  
master  
chef.



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