

Drug Test Expert Calls For Minority Contract Opportunities

That is the question that drug-testing expert Warren Cooper continues to ask as he scours the country in search of opportunities for minority-owned businesses in this area. Cooper is president of Accu-Lab Medical Testing in Chicago, one of the few (if not the only) African-American-owned drug-testing laboratories in America.

Drug-testing labs competing for federal contracts must be certified by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The certification process costs \$55,000, discouraging many new and/or minority-owned businesses from entering the field. "There also are other requirements that may push actual costs closer to \$100,000," Cooper explains, "and that certification still does not guarantee a nickel's worth of business. It's just a federal screening formality."

Cooper adds that other public agencies and private corporations also are choosing to use SAMHSA certification as a screening agent, "thereby quietly expanding the lockout of minorities on all levels."

"We are not looking for hand-outs, we are looking for answers and opportunities to compete fairly. What good does it do to have one mandate for minority participation in contract

opportunities that is automatically discarded when a financial requirement disqualifies every minority without \$55,000 from directly participating?" Cooper asks.

For 1995, alcohol testing has been mandated throughout the transportation industry. This is a \$27 million opportunity, according to Cooper. Additional opportunities are anticipated within the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and crime-related legislation.

"Statistics continue to show that African-Americans are more likely to be arrested and endure heavier sentences for drug-related convictions than other ethnic groups, even if we are not the heaviest users or traffickers. Therefore, this is a great opportunity to positively affect convicted communities." It is more cost-efficient to serve inner city residents than to jail them.

"But, regarding the business side of drug testing, we are more than a day late and a dollar short. We are not informed, not considered and, ultimately, not included in an industry that affects our community more than any other," Cooper continues.

Despite the "lockout" of minority business development, Cooper remains committed to serving African-Americans. Accu-Lab provides free drug testing to many who cannot afford it, often reuniting families previously separated by drug abuse.

African-Americans Named To Sports Council

President Clinton has appointed three African-American sports, fitness and community leaders as members of the President's Council on Physical Education and Sports.

The appointees are Ralph Boston, an Olympic long jump gold medalist from Atlanta, Ga. and Tennessee; women's pro tennis star Zina Garrison-Jackson of Houston, Texas; and former pro football player Calvin Hill of Great Falls, Va.

The president also appointed 12 other council members from diverse backgrounds. President Clinton sought individuals from a wide range of backgrounds with outstanding records of leadership and community involvement. The three newly appointed African-Americans will join Griffith Joyner and Tom McMillen, council co-chairs. All the new appointed African-Americans have been active in their communities, working on behalf of inner-city and disadvantaged citizens.

"When you're involved in teamwork,

you learn how to deal with the disappointment of defeat, and frustration, you even learn how to manage unfairness. These are important things, lessons in life that have to be learned," Clinton said.

Clinton emphasized greater individual personal responsibility by challenging all Americans to ask "what you can do to improve your own health, the health of your communities, and the availability of sporting and teamwork activities for kids."

The president lamented the shortage of sports and recreation facilities in many urban areas.

Urban residents and African-Americans in particular stand to benefit from increased physical activity and fitness. Sports and recreation activities and programs have been shown to be effective in improving general health, reducing youth participation in drug activity, crime and violence, as well as teen pregnancy rates for girls.

OPB Awards Jon R. Tuttle Minority Internship

Oregon Public Broadcasting Awarded The First Jon R. Tuttle Minority Internship to Reina Cardenas, a UCLA Communications Major. The internship is designed to help prepare minority students for careers in telecommunications and journalism.

Cardenas, from Del Ray, California, will serve her internship from mid-June to mid-September as a production assistant on several projects, including OPB's Oregon Trail documentary and the statewide Sesame Street Pre-school Education project (PEP).

On Thursday, June 16, OPB will inaugurate the internship with a reception at its Broadcast Center in Portland. The Charles Swindells family, and others who have contributed to the internship's endowment, will be honored at the event. In January, OPB announced a \$26,000 gift from Swindells, more than half the total funds needed to endow the internship fund.

The internship was named in memory of Jon Tuttle, a Peabody Award-winning broadcast journalist. Tuttle died of leukemia in 1991 after more than 25 years with KGW-TV News and OPB's Television Documentary Unit.

Oregon Public Broadcasting is a statewide public television and radio network serving Oregon and Southern Washington.

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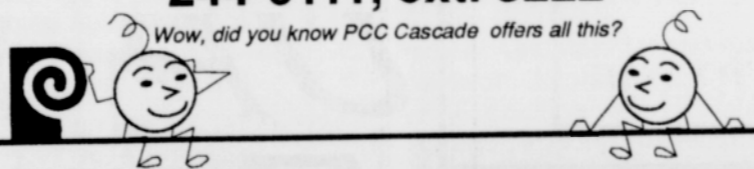
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