

HOUSING

The
Portland
Observer

YouthBuilders To Train Youth, Build Homes

City Commissioner Gretchen Miller Kafoury, Congressman Ron Wyden and Mayor Vera Katz recently announced receipt of a \$1 million federal grant for Portland YouthBuilders.

The new non-profit organization, working with youth in inner north and northeast Portland, will open its doors this fall, with 30 high-risk young people.

It will provide intensive employment training, leadership development and education while they build affordable housing.

Participants will spend half of their time in classroom education preparing for their high school diploma or GED and the other half of their time on the construction site.

Initial building plans call for gut rehabilitations of 3 single-family units

and new construction of a five-unit apartment in partnership with Franciscan Enterprise, Northeast Community Development Corp., Housing Authority of Portland and Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives.

For their involvement, participants will receive intensive skill training, a living wage stipend, a \$2,300 education award upon graduation and the opportunity to participate in decision-making related to the design and operation of this new organization.

"This is the kind of program that so many people can get excited about," said Kafoury. "Young people get an education, tangible skills and an opportunity to be part of a positive force in the community; the city gets additional units of afford-

able housing and the community gains a new set of role models."

The grant, one of three awarded in Oregon and one of 72 nationwide, was selected from among 325 applications.

"This program is a good example of how the city can meet our critical challenge of expanding economic opportunities by linking new jobs with worker skills," said Katz. "And it targets an area of the city that has too long been neglected."

The grant request, submitted by the city's Bureau of Housing and Community Development on behalf of Portland YouthBuilders, was the result of almost two years of work and preparation by a 22 member coalition.

The coalition included representatives from Portland public schools,

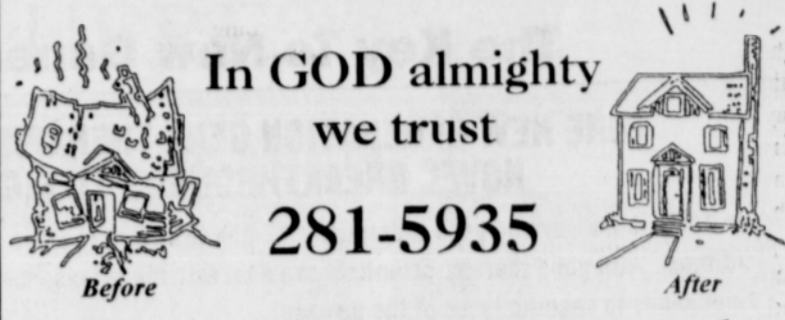
Urban League of Portland, Youth Employment and Empowerment Program, Portland Habitat for Humanity, Northeast Workforce Center, Oregon Outreach, Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, the Private Industry Council, Multnomah County Department of Children and Families, Portland Development Commission, Albina Ministerial Alliance, Tri-County Youth Services Consortium, Open Meadow Learning Center, Portland Community College and Portland House of Umoja.

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Townhouses Open At RiverPlace

Mayor Vera Katz, Trammel Crow Residential executives and others recently celebrated the completion of 182 townhouses at RiverPlace downtown.

The \$16 million development is located at the corner of Southwest River Drive and Moody Avenue. It offers a mix of studio, one, two and three-bedroom townhomes style units for low, moderate and middle-income families.

"Any vision of our economic future must include housing adjacent to our job base," said Katz. "We must locate residents near essential services to reduce vehicle miles and encourage the use of mass transit. This project and others like it move us quickly toward that goal."

The development consists of 12 three-to-four story buildings, featuring ground level stores and home office space. The project is 67 percent leased and full occupancy is expected by the end of the month.

To make high-density, affordable residential development financially feasible, the housing compo-

nent of the development is exempt from property taxes for 10 years.

Under conditions of this tax abatement, 3 percent of the units must contain low-income persons, making less than 60 percent of the region's median income.

Two percent of the units are set aside for moderate-income persons, those making no more than 80 percent of area median income. Seventy percent of the units are set aside for middle-income families. Currently the region's median income is \$34,150 for a two-person household.

The innovative design of the project combines affordable and high-density living while creating a unique, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood, officials said.

The buildings feature an exterior facade of wood, decorative block and stucco.

Twenty-one of the units are studio flats, six are one-bedroom flats, 74 are one-bedroom townhouses, 61 are two-bedroom townhouses, 18 are two-bedroom townhouses with home office space, and two are three-bed-

room townhouses with home office space. Each townhouse includes a one or two-car garage.

The Portland Development Commission has guided the overall commercial, office, recreational and residential development of the south Waterfront neighborhood over the last 15 years.

"Our goal at PDC," said PDC Commissioner Kay Stepp, "is to work with private partners to provide a full range of housing and quality redevelopment for Portland's neighborhoods and businesses. This project is an excellent example of how we are working toward that goal."

Currently, RiverPlace is home to about 700 residents and 525 jobs. With the completion of the Pacific Gas Transmission building in August, an additional 250 jobs will be located at RiverPlace.

Persons interested in leasing residential or commercial space in the new project should call Johna Sheperd of Trammel Crow at 228-1800.

Hearings To Address Medicaid Changes

Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Ore., chairman of the Senate Finance Committee held two hearings last week examining the Medicaid program.

Medicaid is the health insurance program for low-income individuals which is funded jointly by the federal government and the states.

It is the third largest social spending program in the federal budget. Only Social Security and Medicaid are bigger.

Packwood said Medicaid spending has exploded over the last 20 years and will continue to skyrocket.

He said federal Medicaid spending has risen from \$3 bil-

lion in 1970 to \$15 billion in 1980 to \$40 billion in 1990 to almost \$90 billion this year.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that federal Medicaid spending will double again in the next seven years.

"Medicaid is also a budget monster for states," Packwood said. "Medicaid is the first or second largest expenditure of every state's budget. Over the last decade, Congress had added mandate after mandate on the states. These mandates have

caused states to lose control of their Medicaid spending.

"We need to take a step back and look for ways to control the cost of this program and give states the ability to decide how best to meet the particular health care needs of their low-income residents," Packwood said.

The first hearings were held last week and received testimony from several governors' perspectives and examined the history of the Medicaid program.

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Families Escape With Fire Detectors

Working smoke detectors may have saved the lives of four adults and 11 children when flames swept through their northeast Portland apartment.


Officials said the detectors were installed about a month ago when the fire department was dispatched to a first aid emergency at the apartment at 10 N.E. Fargo St.

The crew noticed there were no smoke detectors and installed four of the devices free to the families who were living there.

"They worked tonight and may have saved the lives of all the occupants," officials said, last Wednesday, following the 9:45 p.m. fire.

A faulty electrical fan cord was blamed for starting the fire in the 2nd floor of an apartment. Fire was coming out of three windows on the second floor when firefighters arrived.

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