

# HOUSING The Portland Observer

## Housing Shortage Closes Low-Income Waiting List

Sometimes a seemingly small bureaucratic action symbolizes a major community concern. The Housing Authority of Portland needs to close the waiting list for two-bedroom units in its Low Rent Public Housing (LRPH) program. This impacts over 1,000 families in Multnomah County.

HAP has an inventory of 641 two-bedroom units while the current two-bedroom waiting list totals 1,008 families. In addition, there is only slight turnover and few vacancies. Last year, HAP was able to house only 140 families from the two-bedroom waiting list. Staff is now reaching applications submitted in 1993 for applicants with special preferences and in 1990 for applications with no preferences.

At the present rate of turnover, it is expected to take seven years to exhaust the current list. With that time frame, it makes little sense to add names. There is little housing available for people of low income.

"The decline of federal funds does not stop the need to provide housing that is affordable for people who have little income," said HAP Executive Director Denny West. "The people who need housing don't go away just because the funding does. In fact, the number increases."

Most families want very much to find decent housing with a rent that they can afford. This wish, often termed "affordable housing," has become an issue throughout the community. Both in Multnomah County and the City of Portland, making

affordable housing available for all citizens has become an active goal.

Yet, the goal of providing housing for very poor families faces severe challenges.

To begin with, providing affordable housing for households at the bottom 25 percent income level is not profitable. To have decent housing and an affordable rent, it is necessary to subsidize construction costs and rents. For the past few decades, these subsidies have come from federal taxes, but that is changing.

Federal funding for new construction has been very limited for years and was recently eliminated. Money to subsidize rents is decreasing. New construction in HAP's Low Rent Public Housing program has resulted in only 70 new units since 1985.

## Summer Safety Guidelines

Now that the weather is warming up and you and your family plan to spend more time outdoors, Portland General Electric reminds you to think about safety when working and playing outside.

"Homeowners working around the house and in the yard may be vulnerable to potential electrical hazards if they're not aware of their surroundings," says PGE energy expert Mel Eldrid. "We want them to be prepared when they step outside."

For that reason, PGE offers the following 10 simple safety precautions that can be incorporated into every Oregonian's summer routine.

- Ensure that electrical tools are properly insulated and have a three-way grounded plug. Outdoor electrical outlets should be grounded and have weatherproof covers.
- Before digging in the yard, call PGE to find out the location of underground power lines at 246-6699. Some lines can be buried as shallow as 18 inches.
- If kids are playing in swimming pools, be sure they don't touch anything electric. Keep electrical equipment at least 10 feet away from wet surfaces.
- Don't touch fences, ladders or other metal objects that are touching power lines.
- When trimming trees, making sure limbs don't fall on a power line.
- When children are flying kites or

climbing trees, be sure they stay away from overhead power lines.

• Be aware of overhead lines when swinging long metal objects such as ladders or swimming pool nets.

• Expert every power line to be live. If you see a downed line, don't touch it. Call PGE at 1-800-542-8818 or call 911.

• Never climb power poles, transmission towers or fences around substations. Teach your children to stay clear of all electrical installations. Heed danger warning signs posted on utility equipment.

PGE encourages you to have a fun, safe summer. Take some extra time to plan ahead for safety. Be aware of your surroundings and stay clear of dangerous situations.

## Presentation On Building Housing In China Features Kent Sorensen

The China Business Network will host a luncheon featuring a slide presentation and talk by Kent Sorensen, CEO and President of Dessen Homes, Inc., Wednesday, June 5, noon to 1:30 p.m. at the House of Louie Restaurant, 4th & Davis. Sorensen will speak on his experience with exporting and building expatriate housing in China.

Dessen Homes, Inc., located in Vancouver, has been involved in exporting and building prefabricated houses and apartments in China since 1992. The company was founded in 1990 to design, manufacture, and ex-

port custom homes, apartment buildings, and commercial buildings to Asia.

Using sophisticated computer technology and automated manufacturing equipment, the company has become a leading U.S. exporter of America-style prefabricated homes to China and Japan.

Sorensen has had a long and distinguished career as an executive manager in administration, marketing, and biomedical research. He has been a guest lecturer at a number of colleges and universities in Califor-

nia, Colorado, Germany, and Japan, and has been very active in the community.

He has been a member of the Northwest China Council since 1994; and Dessen Homes, Inc., has recently joined the China Council as a corporate member.

Sorensen's experience will be of interest to business people involved in China trade, or those who are interested in starting a business in China. Reservation's must be received by June 3: 503/725-4567.

## Easier Gardening For Seniors

There are several easy ways to make gardening easier and more pleasurable for senior citizens, according to Jan Powell McNeilan, education program assistant with the Oregon State University Extension Service home horticulture program.

Powell-McNeilan recommends the following simple modifications with gardening tools and techniques that can make all the difference for the novice or experienced mature

gardener.

- Paint garden tools a bright color so they can be easily found.
- Buy seed and seed tape for ease of handling and planting.
- Grow plants that feel or smell nice, such as herbs and velvety leafed plants.
- Garden vertically. Grow climbing and rambling plants such as cucumbers and squash on trellises and other support structures that allow the gardener to tend plants without all the

stooping and bending.

- Build raised beds. Design beds so they provide a place to sit and weed.
- Use a stool to avoid constant stooping or squatting.
- Use long handled and curved handled tools with better grips for more leverage.
- Garden early or late in the day to avoid the heat. Encourage gardeners to drink plenty of liquids and to wear light, loose clothing, a big sun hat and gardening gloves.

## Experts Optimistic About Real Estate

Real estate owners, investors, and managers throughout the U.S. are feeling more confident about the strength of the real estate recovery than they were a year ago. But their confidence is still tempered with caution and most of them expect only modest improvement in occupancy levels and property values in 1996.

Institute of Real Estate Management second annual Business Barometer, a national research study conducted by the Institute of Real Estate Management asked participants to rate the current health of business conditions for their companies or firms.

Seventy-two percent of respondents described their busi-

ness conditions as either "very good" or "good." Another 11 percent felt that their business prospects were in excellent shape.

A year ago, however, only 28 percent of 1995 Barometer respondents thought the industry's health was very

good and just 8.5 percent rated it "excellent." The strongest consensus, 42 percent, was that industry conditions were merely "good."

Even more encouraging, the 1996 participants strongly agreed that the market recovery will pick up even more steam next year.

## Tel-Law Offers New Topics

"Rent increases," "Evictions" and "Getting Repairs Made" are three of the new subjects regarding landlord/tenant issues recently added to the Oregon State Bar's Tel-Law taped legal information service.



Available To Oregonians statewide through a toll-free phone call, Tel-Law now provides access to 104 taped legal information messages.

The free service is designed to help people better understand and recognize potential legal problems and where to go for help, as well as understand how the justice system works.

Each tape is prepared by volunteer lawyers with expertise in specific areas of law. Tapes are divided into 15 legal subject areas, including Family Law, Ten-

ants and Landlords, You and Your Estate, and Courts. The messages do not refer people to specific law firms, but do offer other sources of legal help including public agencies and the state bar's legal information pamphlets, books and Lawyer Referral Service.

Tel-Law offers 28 legal subjects in Spanish, and 10 in Vietnamese. The public service operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and receives approximately 50,000 calls per year. Tel-law directory is 620-3000.

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