

Family Living

The Portland Observer

Looking for someone?

Every day thousands of people are searching for other people. Some are adopted children looking for birth mothers, others are looking for missing spouses, their ancestors or missing friends. Many people think these searches require expensive private detectives or other professionals. In most cases this is not so. Usually these detectives get their information from the same public records that you can use.

A new book by Robert L. Berko, Executive Director of the non-profit Consumer Education Research Center will help amateur searchers in their quests for missing persons, birth parents or information about themselves that government bureaus have in their files. The book, *How to Find People With Information From Public Records*, is available for \$19.95 from Consumer Center, 1980 Springfield Ave., Maplewood, NJ 07040 or by calling 1-800-872-0121.

Many searches are as simple as looking for the name in a database containing all telephone records in the United States. There are several computer programs for sale that contain this information. If you don't want to go to this expense, Mr. Berko's organization has a database of 80 million records and can do the search for you.

Other public records that you can use are marriage, death, divorce, voter registration, Post Office, Motor Vehicle, Selective Service military and many more. The book will

not only show you how to determine what records you need, but how and where to get these records.

If your problem is a missing spouse who in arrears on child support, every state has a Child Support agency that will do most of the searching for you even if your spouse is in another state. The book lists the address of the Child Support office for every state.

For those searching their roots, there are many sources of information. Foremost is the Family History Centers which have literally millions of different studies and histories of family names of those who are working on family histories for their own family names. Some of these people could be working on your family's and could save you the search.

The national archives have records of anyone who has had any contact with the U.S. Government. This includes just about anyone who has ever lived in the county. They have Indian Records going way back and even records of black slaves owned by Indians. In addition they have land records, passenger lists, naturalization records, passports records, and much more. The address of all Regional Offices of National Archives are listed as well as their computer online address.

Increasing numbers of people are looking for parents. For those searching parents who moved away, the quest is usually not difficult. For adopted children looking for birth parents, the search is very difficult.

They have no name to start their search because birth and hospital records are changed to reflect the name of the adoptive parents. But don't lose hope of finding your birth parents. There are records that are not changed and ways to find the true facts behind the altered records. In addition, there are several hundred organizations that can and will help you in your search. These organizations provide advice and assistance from people who have made many successful searches to locate birth parents. *How to Find People With Information from Public Records* includes the names and addresses of these organizations as well as tactics for making your search successful.

Many people would like to know what is in the files kept by government agencies such as the FBI. The book contains all the rules that govern getting copies of documents about yourself or any one else. A check of FBI records, for instance, will reveal everything they have gathered about you. It would be wise to check their files before applying for a government job or any activity or permit that requires an investigation. Also included are form letters for requesting information and even forms for appealing when the agencies don't give you the information requested.

More information can be found on the World Wide Web <http://www.planet.net/cerc> or E-mail cerc@planet.net.

Childwatch: Masquerades with Meaning

by Marian Wright Edelman
Halloween "Masquerade Disco" may not sound like much of a learning experience when you first hear about it. But the Roots Activity Learning Center in Washington, D.C., has found a way to give children a fun-filled Halloween alternative that is one of the best ideas I've seen for keeping children safe, connected to loving adults, and proud of their heritage.

Sure, children still get candy and costumes. But the African-center independent school has added its own twist to tradition—instead of monsters and evil spirits, children are encouraged to dress up as their favorite black heroes and heroines. At this year's annual Masquerade Disco, some of the children showed that their heroes and heroines are as likely to be their teachers and parents as Maya Angelou and Michael Jordan. This is a night when children share their talents with elders: They sing, dance, and display their skills in martial arts. At the end of the night, there's a "parade of heroes", and the children proudly march up to a microphone to tell a little about the leaders they chose to emulate.

Seven-year-old Alethea Bell was dressed in a brown African-print dress, tights, and sandals. She wore rouge on her cheeks and her hair in a bun. "I decided to dress like my teacher, Mrs. [Virginia] Jones, be-

cause I love her so much," Alethea said. Virginia Jones, who started teaching at Roots a year after the school opened in 1978, wore a smile that covered her whole face. "I was really excited and really proud when I found out Alethea chose me as the one she would dress up like tonight," she said.

Walter Coleman, 8, wore a policeman's uniform, which included a cap that was much too large. "I want to be an artist," Walter said, "but I like the way my daddy dresses for work." Nimaako Ali, 5, wore a miniature bus driver's uniform. "My mom's a Metrobus operator," she said, beaming.

Then there was Gregory West, a proud father, who stood against a back wall, his chest poked out as his eyes followed two young men around the crowded room. "Those are my children," he said pointing to an eight-year-old named Quentin, who was dressed in a white doctor's coat, and six-year-old named Harrison, decked out in black suit and tie.

"I'm suppose to be George Washington Carver," Quentin said. "He was a scientist who discovered many important uses for the sweet potato and the peanut."

"I'm Martin Luther King, Jr.," Harrison cut in. "He was a good man, but he was shot."

"The idea is to offer an alternative to a holiday in which black is ugly

and evil, as in black cats and black witches," said Bernida Thompson, the principal and founder of Roots, which caters to preschool children through eighth-graders. "This is a chance for our children to see our ancestors as people who are to be celebrated, not as something scary and ghostly. That's why the children are dressed up as role models and black leaders instead of horrible creatures."

Bernida said that Roots' goal is to develop the "leaders who will bring about positive change for our people," so the older children are given the responsibility for handling many of the details of the celebration. "We do a lot of responsibility training," Bernida said. "The idea is to teach them how to be in charge."

Bernida and the Roots Activity Learning Center have the right idea. Not only have they provided a much safer alternative to trick-or-treat at a time when the streets are becoming increasingly dangerous, but they have given us a good example of how many community can convert negative messages into positive, culturally relevant ones. Just imagine how many of our children would benefit if community centers, churches, mosques, and schools all across America would offer them fun and enriching alternatives to the streets—not just on Halloween, but on a regular basis.

An aid to locate vital records

Vital records are just that...vital. We need access to them.

In this age of bureaucratic documentation, everyone has need of copies of records of birth, death, marriage or divorce. An application for benefits from the Veterans Administration or Social Security, a passport or marriage license requires not only the information in the records but usually copies of the records themselves.

All these records are stored permanently by municipalities, counties, states and the Federal government. We all know this, but where each document is kept frequently unknown.

The Consumer Education Research Center, a national non-profit consumer group, found there was little uniformity on where the records were available and the costs. In some states, birth records are kept by the city and in others by the county or state. To further complicate matters, often older records are held in different places than current ones. In addition, the addresses where the records are kept are changed quite often.

The consumer group found many people had difficulty in locating the records they needed. Often, it was necessary to make expensive

long distance calls just to find out where to write, what information was required and how much money to send. For that reason CERC has been publishing a book entitled *Where To Write Worldwide For Vital Records* which contains a state-by-state listing of the addresses and telephone numbers of the archive where each record can be found, the cost of a copy of the document and sample form letters containing all the information needed to get these and other vital documents.

For those needing information from foreign countries, the book contains a list of government offices where you can get help in locating vital records kept in almost every country. Even U.S. citizens born overseas, on a ship or aircraft can locate the place where their records are kept.

CERC found that many people have used previous editions to locate their family trees or roots. For those, the book includes informational on the Family History Library of the Mormon Church. This library contains over 200,000 volumes of family history records and a list of almost a quarter-million people who are willing to share information to help you find your family roots.

CERC has just released an updated

1996 edition. To get a copy of the useful book, send \$8.97 (plus \$2 s&h) to Consumer Center-Documents, 1980 Springfield Ave. m Maplewood, NJ 07040 or call 800-872-0121 with credit card. More information can be found on the World Wide Web <http://www.planet.net/cerc>

Robert L. Berko, executive director of CERC says that originally the book was published to satisfy the needs of persons applying for various benefits but many others have found it useful. He has received letters from libraries, coroners, law enforcement, social agencies, credit grantors, collection agencies, stock ownership tracers, lawyers, persons searching for missing heirs, adoptees and those interested in searching their family roots. All these and others have found use for a book that helps them locate and prove the status of individuals.

Many times documents can be used to prove things other than what they record. For instance, one woman wrote to the group telling them that a birth certificate for her child proved her residence at that time in the United States and helped her become eligible for legal residence and citizenship.

Discover the artist in you

The Portland Art Museum presents Museum Family Sunday *Discovering the Artist in You* free to the public, January 19, 1-5 p.m.

It is hosted by the Urban League and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

The Portland Art Museum celebrates Martin Luther King Day at *Discovering the Artist in You*, a Museum Family Sunday in conjunction with the exhibition *Discovering Ellis Ruley*.

Children are invited to learn about self taught African American artist, Ellis Ruley, through hands on activities. Utilizing commonly found materials, children are encouraged to discover the artist in themselves. Activities will include creating a collage of animals from fabric, using latex house paint on posterboard and window screens to create an outdoor scene, and designing a tropical paradise with wallpaper.

Children and their families can also enjoy a dynamic performance of music and dance from the instructors of the Jefferson Dancers and the Cultural Recreation Band and Brass Ensemble.

Museum Family Sunday takes place

in the North Wing of the Museum at 1119 SW Park Avenue. Admission is free and includes entrance to the *Discovering Ellis Ruley* exhibition.

Discovering the Artist in You is sponsored by PaciCorp Foundation Tri-Met, Odwalla and Costco. Season sponsors of Museum Family Sunday are: Gordon Soundland and Katherine Durant Endowment Fund, The Oregonian, Fox 49 KPDX, KINK fm 102 and Cole & Weber. *Discovering Ellis Ruley* is sponsored by Ford Motor Company.

For more information about exhibitions and programs, please call the Portland Art Museum at (503) 226-2811.

Lincoln High Wins State Title on Constitution and Bill of Rights

Students from Lincoln High School in Portland have once again won the State Finals of the "We the People...the Citizen and the Constitution" Competition. The team of thirty students will represent Oregon at the National competition, April 25-28, in Washington, DC.

The students have studied for months to prepare for their role as "experts" testifying on constitutional issues in a simulated congressional hearing.

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PORTLAND ART MUSEUM

In Celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day the Portland Art Museum Presents

Museum Family Sunday

Discovering the Artist in You

A day of art and hands on activities for the whole family!

January 19 1-5 pm

FREE TO THE PUBLIC!

ADMISSION TO THE ENTIRE MUSEUM IS FREE ALL DAY FROM 10 AM - 5 PM. RIDE THE BUS TO THE MUSEUM AND GET A "FREE RIDE HOME" TICKET FROM TRI-MET.

Discovering the Artist in You is sponsored by PaciCorp Foundation and TRI-MET.

Additional support is provided by Odwalla, Costco and The Black United Fund of Oregon, Inc.

Season sponsors of Museum Family Sunday are: Gordon Soundland and Katherine Durant Endowment Fund, The Oregonian, Fox 49 KPDX, KINK fm102 and Cole & Weber. *Discovering the Artist in You* is hosted by the Urban League and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and The Oregon Association of Colored Women's Clubs. *Discovering Ellis Ruley* is sponsored by Ford Motor Company.

1219 SW Park Avenue (503) 226-2811

Art College classes

New spring term adult and youth Continuing Education classes will be starting soon at Pacific Northwest College of Art.

Classes run from six to 12 weeks beginning February with some classes beginning in March and April.

Openings exist in the following classes: Digital Imaging for Photographers; Quark Immedia: Learning the Basics; Basic Drawing 106; Visual Elements 106; Advanced Concepts in Drawing; Glassblowing; From Design to Digital Production; and Architectural Rendering Watercolor.

Children and young adult classes also include: Pattern and Color for ages 10-12; Experimental Painting, ages 13-16; and Fantasy Drawing, ages 13-16. Spring course catalogs and registration information are available by calling the registration office at (503) 226-0462.

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