

# METRO *Life*

The Portland Observer

SECTION B

## Community Calendar

### School physicals for food

School and sports physicals are offered for a donation of two cans of food and \$15 at the National College of Naturopathic Medicine eastside center, 11231 S.E. Market. Call 255-7355 to schedule an appointment.

### Staying slim and fit

Free exercise and wellness classes are offered every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 10 a.m. at the Northeast Multicultural Senior Center, 5325 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

### Virgo birthday bash

The annual Virgo Birthday Bash will be held at the Mecca Temple, 72 E. Burnside, featuring a dance, all-male fashion show, food and entertainment. This is one event you don't want to miss. For more information call 238-3552.

### Jazz concert in park

Fremont United Methodist Church is inviting friends and neighbors to a jazz concert in the park as part of its 75th anniversary celebration. The Jon Nilsen Combo will perform Thursday, Sunday at 4 p.m. in Alameda Park directly behind Alameda School on 27th and Fremont.

### Sanborn joins symphony

Superstar saxophonist David Sanborn will join resident conductor Murry Sidlin and the Oregon Symphony for a special event concert on Tuesday, Sept. 30 at 8 p.m. at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall.

### Life skills for over 50

"Getting your second wind: Putting Meaning and Purpose into the Second Half of Life" is the title of a four week workshop offered by Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation. The class meet Tuesdays, Sept. 30 to Oct. 14 from 7 to 9 p.m. at Luepke Center, 1009 E. McLoughlin Blvd. To register call (360) 696-8236.

### Prostitution alternatives

The Council for Prostitution Alternatives, in conjunction with the Red Rose School, will conduct an eight week course on the subject of prostitution. The class will begin with a historical look at sexual slavery, including a slide show on the impacts of pornography. For information call 232-5043 or 230-0488.

### Equinox party set

Saturday at 7:30 p.m., OMSI and the Rose City Astronomers, will celebrate the Autumnal Equinox with a free star party! Here's your opportunity to view the planets Jupiter and Saturn, star clusters, nebulae and other objects up close and personal through telescopes and learn more from local experts.

### Create better tomorrows

Guila Muir will present a workshop on how to make your community a safer and healthier place to live and how to make sure our kids don't get in trouble with alcohol, drugs and violence, during a better tomorrows meeting Oct. 2 at 5 p.m. in the community room at 8920 N. Woolsey Avenue.

### Women's show coming

Three entertainment stages, hosting celebrity appearances, fashion shows, aerobic demonstrations, hair styling, beauty makeovers, seminars and more will take place Sept. 26-28 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., at the Northwest Women's Show at the Oregon Convention Center.

### YWCA hears Roberts

Former Gov. Barbara Roberts, will speak at the annual meeting of the YWCA of greater Portland, on her experiences as a woman in politics and the importance of women taking leadership roles in their communities. The public address at the Central Library is held Sept. 23 at 6 p.m.

**SUBMISSIONS:** Community Calendar information will be given priority if received two weeks before the event date.

## New curriculum tackles low test scores



Portsmouth Middle School teacher Abby Myers leads morning reading for students like Alix Schwartz (left) and Justin Walston. (Photo by Neil Heilpern)

BY NEIL HEILPERN

Everybody reads more these days at Portsmouth Middle School, where a new chapter is being written in its educational approach.

Reading has become the school's primary focus this year, with all 450 students poking their noses into books for the initial 45 minutes of each day's first class.

Like other area schools, Portsmouth educators last year took a look at alarming reading test scores and decided to answer the challenge.

In November 1996, a score of 212 was considered okay for high school graduation, said Pickett. New state-mandated benchmarks require fifth graders to achieve a 215 score, eighth graders to have 231 and 10th graders to have 239.

Pickett said 61 percent of his incoming students could not read at the 5th grade benchmark levels.

"The children were in school five years, with certified teachers, before they got

## School's morning routine now starts with reading

here," he said, "but they didn't learn to read and we knew we needed to do something different."

Many questions were posed about the inability of so many students to grasp reading concepts. In his search for answers,

Pickett talked with professors at most area colleges and zeroed in on the theories of Dr. Ellen Arwood of the University of Portland.

With a wide mixture of cultures represented in Portland schools, it was important to realize that "the reason most children didn't learn to read the first time is they are visual learners, not auditory learners," said Pickett.

He said the theory recognized that some cultural groups learn language from a visual

viewpoint, seeing pictures as ideas, while other culture groups made wider use of auditory signals to convey the same ideas. Pickett also noted how "television has a significant impact on the way we deliver instruction."

The program started changing last January, with 30 minutes of morning reading, upped to 45 minutes this year. The students were tested and each grade was grouped according to reading level.

Extensive reading inventories were taken and replacement reading materials were sought.

At first the school found older 1980 reading textbooks from the school district warehouse basement. This year, the school "worked out a wonderful arrangement" with

textbook publisher Houghton-Mifflin," said Pickett. "We became a demonstration site and got a lot of instructional materials for nothing."

Now, when teachers ask students to open their "Images" reading texts they see livelier responses to the magazine style graphics.

Pickett vowed that "until our eighth graders reach the 231 level, I will keep asking why. If we teach every student to read before sending them to high school, they will have a chance to graduate in four years."

The tradeoff is less emphasis on science and math, but the principal noted that without good reading skills students will not succeed in those other subjects.

Results? "The kids are coming up, and it will take time," said Pickett. Standard tests are due in April, but the end of October will bring the school's first quarterly tests to see if it is on the right track to better reading.

## Celebrating cultures



Walnut Park neighbors are entertained Saturday on stage by Vicci Vei, Mr. Rue and Mikel, while other area residents in native costume dance to share their cultural roots. The community multicultural celebration was sponsored by the Walnut Park Community Committee with the help of the Northeast Community Development Corp. (Photos by M. Washington)



### Faces of northeast workforce

Kimberly Mason (left) and Marnie Vlahos work at Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives, 4829 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr., to bring affordable and attractive housing to north and northeast Portland. See related story, page A3. (Photo by Gary Washington)

### Brandon shows support for Grant

Terrell Brandon visited his alma mater, Grant High School, Friday and presented a check for \$25,000 to the school.

Brandon, National Basketball Association sportsman of the year, made the presentation during an all-school assembly in Grant's new gym. The two-time NBA all-star said the gift can be used for either academics or athletics at Grant, although he hopes to ensure that all interested students can participate in athletics, even if they can't afford athletic fees.