

National Urban League Grades President's Initiative on Race

On the eve of the first anniversary of President Bill Clinton's Initiative on race, the National Urban League has issued its own report card on the effort. According to League President Hugh B. Price, the Initiative deserves a grade of "B+" for Good Intentions, but thus far, only "C" for impact.

The National Urban League salutes Mr. Clinton and his Administration for their Leadership on many related fronts that have improved the well-being of African Americans. The President deserves an "A" for the performance of the economy. The sustained recovery has begun reaching into cities and urban neighborhoods, and has reduced unemployment among our people. Welfare reform has helped propel poor people into the world of work, although the jury is still out on the fate of former recipients who do not make this transition successfully.

Mr. Clinton has been steadfast and highly vocal in his support of affirmative action. He has appointed an unprecedented number of minorities and women to positions of genuine authority in his Administration. And his historic trip to several African nations has helped race relations at home by demonstrating to all Americans the economic, strategic and symbolic importance of this long neglected continent.

The President's Initiative on Race builds on this base of accomplishments. Now to our assessment of its progress:

Good Intentions: B+

President Clinton's motives clearly are noble and his heart on race issues is unquestionably in the right place. We salute him for launching this Initiative, which has nudged the nation to face up to the unfinished business of race relations that Ameri-

cans would prefer to ignore. Surveys show that Mr. Clinton has placed this issue much more prominently on the nation's radar screen than would have been the case without the Initiative.

We give the effort a grade of B+ instead of A, however, because Mr. Clinton and the White House have not gone flat out in pressing this Initiative forward at the pace required. Given delays in launching it and the distractions facing the White House much of this year, implementation has sputtered badly at times. Were the Initiative on Race an even higher priority for President Clinton and the White House, we doubt this would have happened.

Impact: C

Regrettably the President's noble intentions have yet to translate into the kinds of impacts that were reasonably expected by this point in time. Hence our grade of C. We hope this mark will climb dramatically in the second year, assuming the Initiative is extended. Given the paramount importance of improving race relations, as well as the promising foundation that has been laid, we urge the President to press forward for another year. We give the impact thus far a grade of C for the following reasons:

*The Initiative on Race has flown solo more than it should have and could have. Many organizations, such as the National Urban League and our collaborators in the National Voices Coalition have been involved only peripherally despite frequent offers of assistance. This has severely stunted the reach, staying power and impact of the Initiative in communities. We've been consulted on occasion, but seldom called upon to help in any meaningful or sustained way.

*President Clinton's two televised

town meetings have helped raise the public consciousness, but the topics chosen and formats used have severe limitations when it comes to addressing the serious issues before the nation. The exchanges on air seldom illuminate or promote the fuller understanding that's required to move the ball forward. President Clinton should use his bully pulpit and convening power with greater frequency and focus.

*To the President's considerable credit, he has engaged federal agencies in figuring out how to ratchet up their efforts. The Initiative deserved good marks for stepping up overall civil rights enforcement, targeting housing discrimination for particular attention and increasing aid to minority businesses.

The final shortcoming that drags the Initiative's grade down in our judgment is its failure to address some of the toughest problems of race that still face our society. Although the televised advisory board held a meeting where they discussed race, crime and the administration of justice, the escalating problem of police misconduct was not adequately addressed. This violation-physical abuse, harassment or racial profiling-is widespread in minority communities. Yet the President and the Initiative have paid scant attention to the problem, much less proposed solutions.

Having launched the Initiative in Race, President Clinton should stay the course. In the year ahead, we urge him to devote more personal attention to the Initiative, sharpen its focus, tackle the really tough issues and consume more political capital on behalf of this cause. If he does so, both higher grades and a lasting legacy are well within reach.

Workers with Disabilities Contribute to the Success of Employers

BY JOIL SOUTHWELL

Hers was an opportunity shrouded in adversity.

When a tragic mill accident left Jo Anderson disabled and unable to return to her job, she recognized a turning point.

She sought help through Oregon's Vocational Rehabilitation Division. Five years of working and planning followed. Today she owns her own cleaning business called The Professional, is financially independent and employs others who may have mental or physical challenges.

Jo is one of our success stories. And while there are others, there could be many more. Census data tells us that one in five people in this country has a disability. In Oregon, 220,000 working age people with disabilities want to work; 79% are unemployed. This is Oregon's untapped labor pool of skilled, motivated and responsible men and women.

Employed Oregonians with disabilities work in every job sector. According to a 30-year Dupont study, workers with disabilities are equal to or better than their non-disabled peers in the following areas:

- *97% have above average safety records
- *86% have above average attendance

*90% have above average job performance

*76% are harder workers

*78% are more dependable

As the workforce ages and more people move toward retirement, we will have to look at all our resources-including people with disabilities-to fill the vacancies.

At VRD, our mission is to assist Oregonians with disabilities to achieve and maintain employment and independence. The federal Rehabilitation Services Administration recently recognized our rehabilitation section, ranking it seventh nationally for its successful employment initiatives. In 1997, VRD provided rehabilitation services to more than 16,000 Oregonians and successfully rehabilitated and placed more than 2,400 individuals in jobs. On average, those receiving VRD service, versus those who do not earn five times more money.

Thousands of Oregon businesses have found a labor resource in this pool of people with disabilities. Diverse individuals bring new ideas and new approaches to business challenges. The more diverse the workforce, the stronger the business advantage.

Employers who adjust an existing workplace for a worker with

disability finds it is not costly and actually is good for business. Reasonable accommodations may include ramps, bathroom grab bars or large print menus. The average cost of a job accommodation is about \$200.

By making our places of business accessible for our employees, we also make them more accessible to our customers. Future marketplace success depends on attracting a diverse customer base and making all customers feel welcomed and valued.

Employers report that the training and recommendations provided by rehabilitation agencies have improved morale and productivity throughout the company.

With good jobs, people with disabilities become taxpayers and contribute as productive citizens. U.S. citizens with disabilities control \$15 billion and patronize the same businesses-perhaps your business-as everyone else.

If you are looking for motivated workers like Jo Anderson for your business, I encourage you to tap into one of Oregon's greatest labor pools. You will discover a working relationship that wins.

For more information about hiring persons with disabilities, call VRD at 503-945-5880 (voice) or 503-945-5894 (TTY).

The Salvation Army receives 25th Grant this Year

The Salvation Army received a grant today for \$5,000 from Oregon Community Foundation, marking the 25th grant from this generous foundation to The Salvation Army this fiscal year.

Oregon Community foundation's grants to The Salvation Army this year have touched thousands of lives in the past year alone. Some of the programs funded include:

*Greenhouse-a resource center for the estimated 2,000 young people, ages 12-21, who live on Portland's city streets. Greenhouse just celebrated another year of success stories with a prom for youth who achieved their GED's.

*The Medford Transitional Shelter-a shelter providing an intense, three level transitional program for 500 homeless individuals and families in Southern Oregon each year.

*White Shield Center-a "last re-

sort" for pregnant and parenting teens who might otherwise have their babies removed from their custody by the state. White Shield's residential treatment program helps these young women keep their babies and change their lives.

*The West Women's & Children's Center-a safe place to begin again for families surviving domestic violence. The West provides temporary and long-term transitional shelter and a therapeutic preschool.

The Salvation Army serve over 1,000 people each and every day in the Portland Metro area, with a wide range of services for everyone from infants to seniors. To make a donation, volunteer, or inquire about services, anyone may call The Salvation Army at 503-234-0825.

GET THE KIT

Want to help keep the air clean on DEQ Clean Air Action Days? Get the kit!

Fresh Air Kits are available offering free rides on Tri-Met MAX light rail land buses on Clean Air Action Days.

The kits will help attract new passengers on days when the DEQ urges the use of mass transit because of smoggy air conditions.

The kits contain three free tickets, a trip planning guide and a Tri Met system map.

Each tickets provides rides all day long on MAX and buses. The free tickets are only good on Clean Air Action Days.

Kits are available by calling Tri-Met at 238-RIDE from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm, weekdays.

Jack & Jill went up the hill & played near poles and wires. A line was down & Jack soon found if touched he would EXPIRE.

Kites and balloons should be flown in open areas away from lines

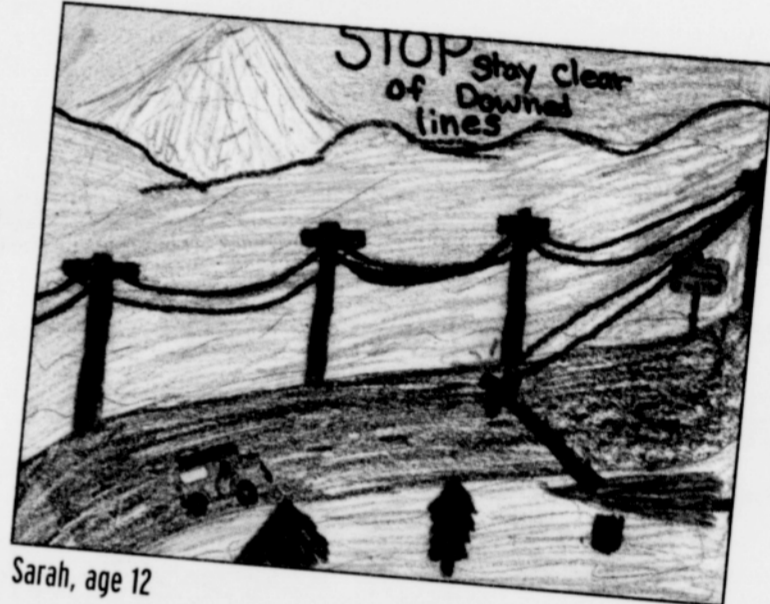


Keep clear of trees or structures close to power lines



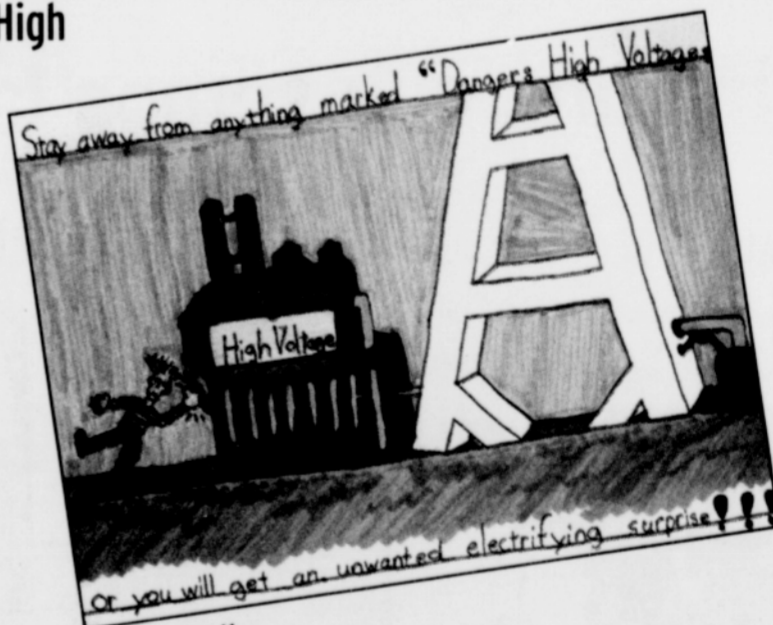
Mahala, age 7

Treat all lines on the ground or overhead as energized



Sarah, age 12

Stay away from substations or anything marked Danger: High Voltage



Dustin, age 11

Outdoor electric safety is important to all of us — especially this time of year when we're outside more. With the help of some of last year's winners in Pacific Power's Electric Safety Contest, we want to make you aware of some of the potentially hazardous situations you and your kids can get into while working or playing outdoors.



For a free color-your-own fun poster & glow-in-the-dark magnet for kids, call 1-888-221-7070.

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