

METRO *Life*

The Portland Observer

Community Calendar

Hot Summer Jobs

The Downtown Oregon Employment Department is having a Job Fair on Wednesday, May 19 from 12:30 PM - 3 PM, at the Days Inn City Center, Willamette Room, located across from the Downtown Oregon Employment Department, on SW 6th & Columbia. Call 503/731-3035.

Cascade Symphony

The Cascade Symphony is looking to build its already healthy orchestra membership by announcing a call for additional string players (violin, viola, cello and bass). Please call Maestro Aszemar Glenn at 286-5032 if interested. The Cascade Symphony meets once a week for about 2 hours to rehearse and perform their concerts at the historic Hollywood Theatre in Portland.

A Season For Nonviolence

A Season for Nonviolence, an international grassroots peace initiative active in over 100 US cities and 10 countries, is sponsoring a Peace march on Saturday, May 15. Registration begins at 10 AM, speakers and music begin at 11 AM and the walk itself begins at NOON. The course is an easy 4 mile route of city street surfaces and begins and ends at Grant Park, located 2 blocks north of NE Broadway between NE 33rd and NE 36th. Call Anna DeMers at 503/244-7957.

Yugoslavia Bombing

Local feminists will speak about what is behind the U.S.-led NATO military aggression against Yugoslavia and how to pressure the American warmongers to stop the bombing on Thursday, May 13, at 7 PM. An Eastern European buffet will be available at 6:30 PM for a \$6 donation. The event will be at the NW Neighborhood Cultural Center, Community Room, 1819 NW Everett, Portland. Call 503/228-3090. Wheelchair accessible.

Book Drive

The Friends of the Multnomah County Library is in need of thousands of used books in good shape for the annual county-wide Book Drive on May 8-22 at the Central Library (522 SW Fifth). Please no old textbooks, Reader's Digest Condensed Books or magazines. And especially no torn, ragged or moldy books. We also appreciate CDs, audio and video tapes, LPs and sheet music. Call 503/224-9176.

Artist Workshops

The Regional Arts & Culture Council presents Survival and Growth: Tools and Strategies for Artists and Arts Organizations. The next workshop is on Saturday, May 15, 9 AM - 2:30 PM. There will be information for individual artists on presenting and documenting their work, and strategies for career development. Sessions will focus on writing skills (resumes, artist statements, proposals); documenting art work on video, slides, and other media; resume/video/portfolio review sessions; and a panel discussion on career development strategies featuring prominent local artists from a variety of artistic disciplines. Call 503/823-5417 or 823-2927.

Gathering & Potluck

The Institute for Sustainable Culture presents: Sustainable Community Gathering & Potluck on Wednesday, May 12, from 6:30 - 9:30 PM in the basement of the Augustana Lutheran Church at 2710 NE 14th (on the corner of NE 15th & Knott). Call 503/525-5406.

Women In Trades Fair

Women, is a desk job not for you? Do you like changing work environments, lots of variety, something new all the time? Come to the Women in Trades Fair, where women of all ages can learn about high-paying, exciting demonstrations, and enjoy a fashion show of women's workclothes. The 1999 Women in Trades Fair will be held on Saturday, May 15 at the Metro Electrical Training Center (16021 NE Airport Way). Free admission, free childcare, free parking and free shuttle. Call 503/943-2250.

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

The Community Congratulates the 1999 Graduates of Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI)

Commitment to a program that works and dedication from a caring staff has made all the difference for SEI's 1999 graduating class. SEI's 1999 class has the distinction of being the first class to have students who have been in the SEI program since 2nd grade. SEI's Coordinator for the senior class, Mr. Troy Hollis, cites the students' dedication as the winning factor. "Most of my kids have been in our program since 2nd grade. You can see the growth that has taken place in their lives. It says a lot about these kids that they're willing to stick with their goals all the way through to graduation. This quarter my kids have an average GPA of 3.3!" But it's relationships that make the difference. "What makes SEI so successful is the one-on-one relationships we build with our kids", said Tony Hopson, President of SEI. "Our staff is willing to be parent, mentor, friend - whatever they need to be successful. They know we'll always be there for them. It truly lets our kids know that life does indeed have options. We're very proud of them."

How do the students feel about SEI? Jolanda Mills, a senior on her way to Norfolk State University, said "(SEI) has given me the opportunity to do things that I know I will have never had the chance to do. It's like a second family". Andre Lawrence, a 3.0 student and Captain of the Jefferson Varsity Basketball team, says "If I did not have SEI, I might not be going to college." Andre is planning on attending Western Oregon State College. And Aisha Campbell, a 3.8 GPA student, and recipient of a 4-year Univer-

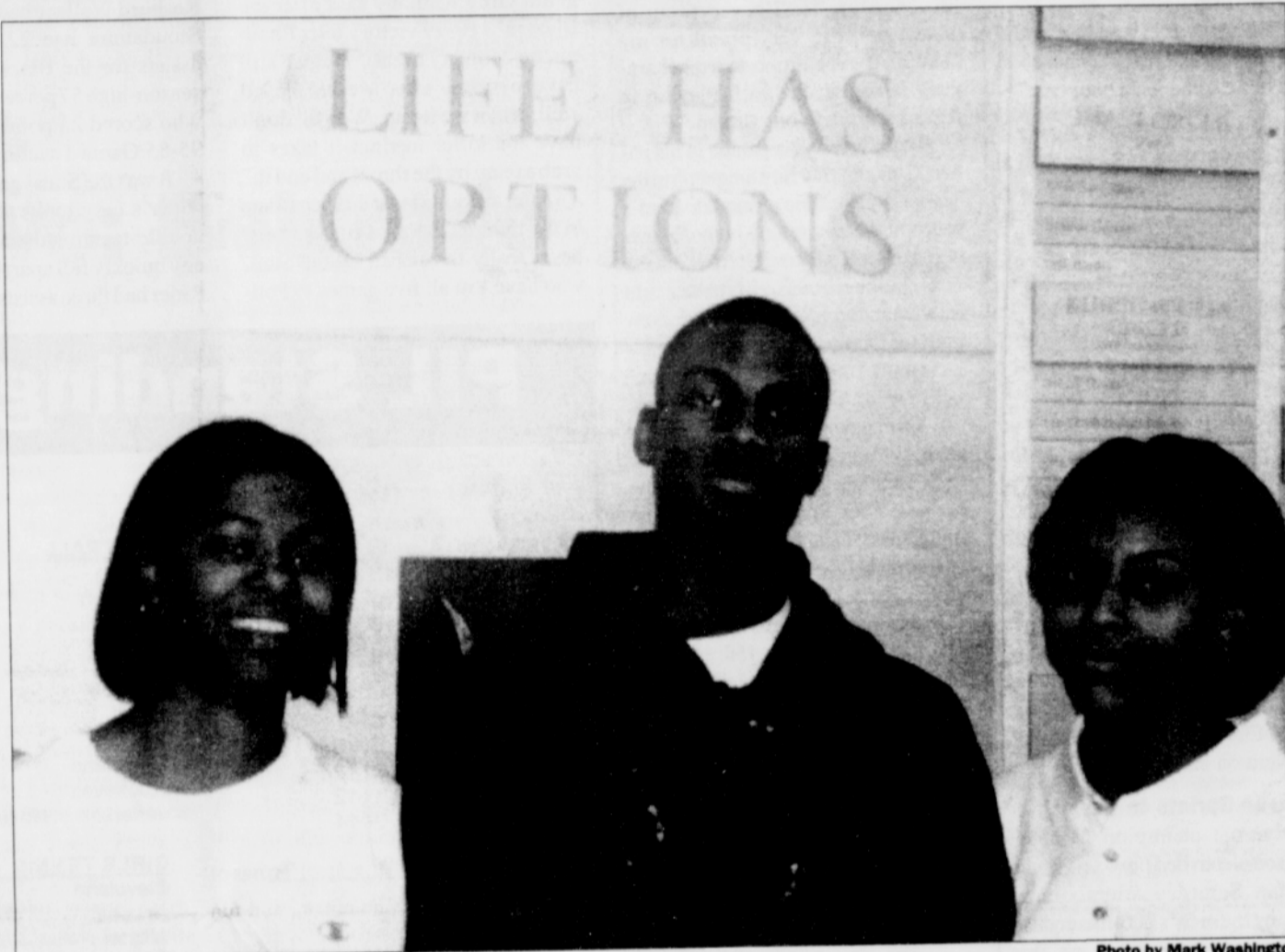


Photo by Mark Washington

Upcoming graduates of Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI). From left to right: Aisha Campbell, Andre Lawrence and Jolanda Mills.

sity of Portland scholarship credits SEI with helping her "deal with problems and succeed in school". "Because of them, I'm on my way to University of Portland!"

The '99 class also includes: Angela Benson, Brandon Tellis, Rashida

Peterson, Shara Brazzle, Brandy Offord, Kenisha Wilson, Danita Flint, Terese Brazzle, Crescentia Dixon, Charles Shambry, Kenita Mason, Yolanda Cason, and Neomi Carrillo.

Founded in 1981 by Tony Hopson, SEI

is a non-profit organization committed to helping Portland's inner city youth make positive choices to achieve their full potential. Today, SEI serves 1,200 school-age youth with services in 11 Portland high public schools.

An Evening With Family & Friends

Continued from Front Page

designed to attract businesses to economically depressed areas. She pushed legislation to retrain workers and upgrade the skills of the Oregon workforce.

Although Carter has worked hard to ensure a better Oregon, she said her biggest accomplishment is gaining a masters degree while running a household with a husband and nine children.

Eventually, Carter married again in 1970, and added four more children to her five. Maintaining a household with nine children while studying for a masters degree was not easy. "It was the greatest challenge to prepare a four-course meal each night, keep up with all the kids' activities and at the same time prepare for academic success," Carter said. "But it is a challenge I hold dear. I know that anyone who can manage a house with nine kids and a husband, can run a corporation."

Kay Toran

Loaded down with dreams, determination and a sense of adventure, Benjamin and Mary Rose Dean arrived in Portland from Alabama.

The Deans, after working in the shipyards among other things, eventually opened a successful beauty/barbershop in 1952, that operates still today as Portland's oldest black-owned business.

"They believed in setting your goals," said their daughter, Kay Toran. "They believed obstacles are there for you to figure out to remove them or get around them."

During her journey through management positions within state government, Toran held to her parents' belief, never allowing an obstacle to become a permanent fixture.

Toran, the former director of the state office for services to children and families lauded for turning the agency around, retired from her position in February though she still works for the agency as a consultant until her replacement is hired. In the meantime, Toran has ventured into another career as an author.

Toran, the mother of two adult children, is currently writing a book about her journey

through senior management in state government. The title has not been decided, she said. But the subtitle is, "Lessons Lived, Lessons Learned, Lessons to be Learned: An African-American Woman's Perspective."

Toran, who jokes that her age is somewhere between Margaret Carter and Jaki Walker, said she has spent more than 30 years in state government and has valuable insight. "In each of those positions, I had very unique experiences and I want to talk about where my challenges were and where my support has been, and why I was able to be successful," Toran said.

Part of being successful is learning from the challenges, she said.

Toran was hired to the position in May of 1994. Seven months later, a major challenge came her way. In 1995, the state took six children from the home of Diana L. Whitehead of Beaverton. Whitehead went to the media and immediately people against the state agency used the case as an example of the state agency abusing parental rights.

Toran said the biggest mistake she made during that ordeal was to delegate communication duties to someone else. "I learned how important it is not to delegate to anyone when there is a crisis," she said. "You have to let the people hear directly from you."

She considered it a lesson. "Every disappointment is an opportunity to grow and to learn," she said.

After the Whitehead incident, Toran connected with her staff and helped them articulate the needs of children to the Legislature, which had criticized the agency and its leadership during the Whitehead scandal.

The result?

In 1997, Toran campaigned for more funding from the Legislature. Her effort, combined with the effort of her staff, resulted in the agency raising its budget to \$454.8 million and adding 160 new workers.

Toran also got legislative endorsement for what the agency calls "Best Interest of the Child." The approach requires the agency and the courts to make a permanent decision

about where children will live within a year of the time they are taken into care.

To be able to change the image and inner-workings of the state agency with the help of "a magnificent staff" is Toran's biggest accomplishment, she said. "Even the experiences that have been painful, I would not change them," she said. "Those are reasons to self-reflect and to learn."

Jaki Walker

Never tell Jaki Walker it can't be done.

The word can't is a motivator for her.

Just ask Portland residents and powerbrokers who didn't believe a small minority-run community development agency could transform inner North and Northeast Portland neighborhoods from crime-plagued, abandoned, neglected places.

Under Walker's eight years of leadership, that's exactly what happened. Now, as Walker plans to resign her position as executive director of the Northeast Community Development Corp. to start her own company to help other cities nationwide make community development a success, all of her own successes point to four words: "It can be done."

Her work is about helping people, it is a trait Walker inherited from her mother.

"My mother embraced everything and everybody," Walker said. "People could show up because of any issue ... she took everybody in. She always cooked enough for anyone who stopped by."

Walker, the mother of one son, arrived in Portland in 1991, under a hail of criticism and speculation about whether the Northeast Community Development Foundation could implement the U.S. Department Housing and Urban Development's Nehemiah Housing Opportunity Program. The program provided a grant to build and renovate 250 homes for low-to-moderate income home buyers.

Front-page articles in local newspapers and television broadcast said Walker and her agency could not do it, Walker said. "They went on and on and on, saying they can't do

it, they shouldn't do it, don't do," she said.

But in May of 1993, a home that was part of the Nehemiah project was selected as one of the nation's best by Better Homes and Garden magazine. "That's it. That's us in Better Homes and Gardens," she said pointing to the framed cover from the magazine.

Since the Nehemiah project, the Northeast Community Development Corp. has created beautiful houses and apartments in North and Northeast Portland. The projects include McCoy Village, which is a complex built last year that contains 55 apartments with commercial space. It is located along Northeast Martin Luther King Boulevard.

As Walker toured her corporation's creations throughout North and Northeast Portland recently, she easily remembered the history behind each one. She remembers choosing the paint for the outside of the home and making sure each home was well made. "I always say we won't create anything we wouldn't live in," she said.

In addition to choosing the paint, Walker remembers how building or renovating a home in a crime-ridden and neglected neighborhood prompted neighbors to repair their property or to host neighborhood cleanups and participate.

In addition to housing, the agency also helps meet the needs of the community in other ways. For example, the organization has sponsored a tour of historically black colleges for six years. "Whenever there is a need in the community, we find a way to make it happen," Walker said. "That is our trademark."

That trademark has been recognized and applauded throughout the nation as Walker is called on to give workshops and seminars in cities whose leadership is interested in bringing home ownership to their inner-city neighborhoods. "My interest is taking a very complex, but successful strategy and starting it in other communities around the country," Walker said.

Helping other people. Her mother would be proud.