

Portland **Business**
Observer

CONTRIBUTED STORY
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A Portland-based human resources consulting firm celebrated the holiday season earlier this month by hosting a work party to benefit the Oregon Food Bank.

More than 70 Portland area business leaders turned out for the lunchtime work party sponsored by the MBL Group, Inc. The party was held on Dec. 7 at the Oregon Food Bank's statewide distribution center in Northeast Portland.

In addition to packing 8,000 pounds of onions for distribution to the needy families, participants donated \$3,500 in cash to the Oregon Food Bank.

In less than an hour, the volunteers were able to pack nearly four tons of onions into 5-pound sacks.

"After searching for the perfect gift for our clients, we realized the best gift of all would be to provide an



MBL Group's clients and friends show their holiday spirit after packing nearly four tons of onion at the Oregon Food Bank's Northeast Distribution Center earlier this month.

opportunity to help the community," said Jim Morris, founding principal of MBL Group. "And when the RSVPs began pouring in, we knew we did the

right thing." The MBL Group, founded in 1992, is a full-service supplier of human resource management services

Kwanzaa from page 1

we thought that for a lot of people that would be perceived as a barrier," said Juzang. "If it was too hard to celebrate then you are missing an opportunity to celebrate. Which was another reason for the guide and we wanted to be easy to pack up as an heirloom and celebrate the next year." Marketing the kit and Kwanzaa to a generation of inner city youth presented another set of challenges. While Kwanzaa is gaining popularity, it is celebrated mostly by the nationalist community and older African Americans. MEE wanted to change that to include more youth participation.

"It creates a lot of challenges because Kwanzaa has been seen as not contemporary so therefore the youth haven't been driven to it. It's not in the youth culture," he said. "So we have to find a way to make it appealing to youth, find ways to make youth want to participate in Kwanzaa, and try to reach out to adults who help make decisions for youth to get them to see the benefits of Kwanzaa and use them in marketing the beliefs of Kwanzaa and the MEE Complete Kwanzaa Kit."

Having secured the components, warehousing space, assembled the kits, and shipping procedures the next challenge was gaining access to the market, getting exposure for the product. They created their own radio ads and a website specifically for the Kwanzaa Kit. The Website allows for E-commerce, the direct ordering of the product over the Internet. MEE has also linked with the other popular African-American websites such as Net Noir, Everything Black and MSBET.com.

We don't want to look at it as something you only focus on during the holiday season. We want it to be a focus and mindset that people can use throughout the whole course of the year," said Juzang. "It will be a 12-month process every year looking at it as a five-ten year plan. We want to focus on America first, then South America, the Caribbean, then Africa then the world."

MEE Productions is a one-of-a-kind organization that focuses on studying, motivating and positively impacting urban trend setters meaning inner city African-American, Latino and low income youth.

Founded in 1990, the company has conducted communications research, created media campaigns on a variety of issues for both private and public sector clients, and won local and national awards for their educational videos on topics such as teen dating violence, HIV-AIDS awareness and prevention, teen marijuana use/prevention, and understanding and communicating with the Hip Hop culture.

For more information on the MEE Kwanzaa Kit, call 1-877-MEE-PROD or visit the website: www.MEEKwanzaaKit.com.

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The Joyce Washington Memorial Scholarship Fund Presents

Les Schwab/Blazer Alumni vs. The Portland Observer's Cory Cougar's Charity Basketball Game

January 23, 2000 at 4 p.m.

Join the celebration and see the Portland Observer family and friends take on the Portland Trailblazer's Alumni Team. This benefit will create scholarship funds for those less fortunate and will create a monument to what Joyce Washington stood for...equal opportunity and an education for everyone.

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