

METRO *Life*

The Portland Observer

SECTION B

Community Calendar

Learn to Meditate

Discover how meditation can simplify your life and deepen your sense of happiness. A meditation workshop will be offered by the Sri Chinmoy Centre for free. The event will be held on Sunday, March 4 at the Portland Downtown library, from 1:30-3:30 p.m. Call 503/450-9915 to register.

Pioneer Activities for Kids

The End of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center will feature a variety of living activities for spring break, March 24 - April 1. Weather permitting, visitors can enjoy playing pioneer games such as bean bag toss, races, horseshoes, ante ante over and croquet on the lawn of the Center. Please call 503/657-9336 for specific activity days and times.

Oregon's Medical Marijuana Law

The African American Community Forum will be giving a talk on Oregon's Medical Marijuana Law. Come out and learn about the law and your rights. The event will be held at the Main Conference Room of the Urban League of Portland, located at 10 N. Russell St. on Wednesday, Feb. 21, from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Revitalizing Interstate Avenue

Join the Portland Development Commission in an all day hands-on session for community members. Community members will be working on design alternatives for all five stations areas: Lombard, Portland Blvd., Killingsworth, Prescott and Overlook. You will have professional architects, designers and planners there for you. This is an all day event on Saturday, Feb. 24 at Ockley Green Middle School, located at 6031 N. Montana Ave., from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Call Art Pearce at 503/823-7791. Childcare provided.

Dr. Seuss Birthday Party

On Thursday, March 1, McMenamins Kennedy School throws a Birthday Party for Dr. Seuss. Stop by Kennedy School from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. for birthday cake and performances by the Phoenix Theater group, whose actors will invite all family members to join in honoring the author with interactive, descriptive readings of your favorite Seuss tales. A free celebration. Call 503/249-3983.

Protect the Salmon in Your Yard

A free "Naturescaping for Clean Rivers" workshop will be held on Saturday, March 10 at the Albina Youth Opportunity School. The workshop focuses on natural landscapes and water-friendly gardening practices. Each participant receives a workbook and a native plant to start his or her own natural garden. The free workshop will be held at the Albina Youth Opportunity School, located at 3710 N. Mississippi, from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Call 503/797-1842.

Community Energy Project

Drip, drip, drip. Is your leaky faucet dripping money down the drain each month? Come to a free Water Conservation workshop and learn how to detect leaks around your home, repair leaky faucets and toilets, save money on your water-sewer bill, learn ways to reduce your water usage, and more. All Portland residents will receive a FREE kit of water conservation materials that can help save up to \$100 a year on water and sewer bills. The next workshop will be held at the Alameda Community School, located at 2732 NE. Fremont on Feb. 21, from 6:30-8 p.m. Call 503/284-6872 to register.

Kayak/Canoe Tualatin River Tour

Portland Parks and Recreation's Outdoor Recreation Program, in collaboration with The Audubon Society of Portland and Tualatin Riverkeepers, will host a leisurely kayak or canoe paddle along the Tualatin River. This is a great trip for the novice paddler to explore the riparian forests along the river, as the water is calm and the distances are short. Participants provide their own boats. Call 503/823-5132 for more information and to register.

Saving the Beech Alley Garden

Volunteers relocate a garden from path of I-5 soundwall project

Mention a north Portland alley and the image that comes to mind may not be a pretty site. But it doesn't have to be that way, as a woman who lives adjacent to the Interstate 5 freeway has proven.

Portland resident Alice Turowski has continued a tradition started by her mother, who transformed the alleyway behind their home into a beautiful flower garden.

Although she welcomes the sound walls the Oregon Department of Transportation plans to install along the freeway next summer as part of a major pavement preservation project now underway, she was concerned about what the work might do to her plants.

Last year on a reconnaissance trip to the area ODOT Region 1's Community Affairs Staff discovered the lavish garden of flowering shrubs and plants along both sides of the alleyway.

The problem was that the garden happened to be directly in the path of the planned sound walls.

While years of hard work has made the alleyway an inviting and pleasant place rather than an eyesore, moving this volume of plants would be a daunting task for any one person, according to Christie Holmgren, ODOT senior community affairs specialist.

"At that point, we made a commitment to help Alice save her flowers from the construction bulldozers, and



Alice Turowski gets help in saving her beautiful north Portland flower garden along Interstate 5.

PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON (THE PORTLAND OBSERVER)

invited several local garden clubs to help her out," Holmgren said. Volunteers from the Hardy Plant Society of Oregon helped move the garden on Sunday.

A volunteer from the American Rhododendron Society recently rototilled a neighbor's back yard, where the plants will be stored until after the sound walls have been installed.

The Portland Nursery donated stakes to label the plants. The volunteers plan to help put the plants back in place this summer or fall after the construction is finished.

Better People Program Fights Crime

At a time when prison costs are skyrocketing and legislators are looking for ways to reduce crime without breaking the bank, a Portland non-profit organization has found a cost-effective way to stop the revolving door or recidivism.

Better People, a Portland-based counseling program that assists former offenders in finding and keeping living-wage jobs, released a report Thursday showing that former Oregon inmates and probationers who participated in a new cognitive behavioral therapy program were significantly less likely to wind up back in jail than former offenders from a comparison group.

Among the study's key findings: Just three percent of people in the program were convicted of new crimes, compared to 12 percent of offenders who sought out Better People, but decided not to enter the program.

"Our goal is to reduce crime by reducing recidivism," says Chip Shields, director of Better People. "It's not enough to just lock people up if they're going to commit new crimes as soon as they're released. This report is timely and encouraging, because the Legislature is grappling with ways to fund so many prisons. In the long run, reducing recidivism may be the Legislature's only option for controlling costs." "By itself, reducing recidivism is a laudable goal," says Clariner M. Boston, the study's author. "More praiseworthy, however, is changing people's lives so they become more responsible, respectful and productive. That's the kind of action that makes our communities safer."

The program works to change the way former offenders think and act, while also helping them land and keep meaningful jobs.

Under the Better People program, former inmates and probationers attend group counseling sessions and are taken through a series of "steps" aimed at identifying and changing the decision-making processes that led them to commit crimes. After completing the preliminary steps, ex-offenders are eligible for temporary jobs placement through Better People. Successful completion of intermediate steps puts them in position for permanent, full-time employment. Released of the Better People success story comes at a time when the Oregon Legislature is considering a bill to evaluate the effectiveness of crime-related programs in the state.

The Institute would help legislators create more effective policies by evaluating programs funded directly or indirectly by the State of Oregon that are intended to reduce criminal and juvenile behavior.



Clariner M. Boston authors a report finding Better People, a northeast Portland-based counseling program, successful in helping former inmates stop a life of crime.

Urban Plaza Finds Room for YWCA and Safeway



An artist rendering shows the proposed Museum Place downtown, the future home for a remodeled YWCA, Safeway and residential housing.

A rehabilitated YWCA, a Safeway store and up to 560 housing units for a wide range of incomes are part of a proposed five building complex, poised to take shape in downtown Portland's West End.

The Portland Development Commission has authorized staff to enter into a Master

Predevelopment Agreement with other public and private partners for the "Museum Place" project located between SW Columbia and Main Streets and SW 10th and 11th Avenues.

"This project will serve as a catalyst for the revitalization of Portland's West End District," said Mayor Vera Katz. "In addition, it will help

achieve my goal of increasing homeownership opportunity, while also improving neighborhood services to people in the central city."

The three-block area includes the YWCA and the St. Francis Apartments on the northern block, a Safeway grocery store on the middle block, three vacant structures, the 1099 Office Building and a parking lot.

The existing YWCA will be completely renovated and expanded to include a senior and community center, Loaves and Fishes meal site, gymnasium, swimming pool, health and fitness center and 33 units of transitional housing. The existing St. Francis apartment building will be replaced with a new seven-story, 131-unit apartment building to be developed by Sockeye Development and owned by Housing Authority of Portland. The apartment building tentatively called Museum Place North, will include 100 units for extremely low-income tenants and 30 units for moderate-income tenants. Northwest Pilot Project will relocate the current St. Francis tenants to suitable housing

in the downtown area during construction. Former tenants will have the option to move back into the new building upon completion.

The stand-alone mixed-use building called "Madison Place" is slated for the 6,500-square foot parcel south of the St. Francis. It will include ground floor retail with office and/or residential above.

The middle block will entail the demolition of the current Safeway store and the development of a new 18-story, mixed-use building with up to 250 market-rate condominium units for middle and high incomes, 17,000 square feet retail; space on the ground level and 300 to 325 parking spaces. The condominium project will also include development of a new urban plaza, which will provide pedestrian access through the site. This project will be built prior to the former Safeway store's demolition so that there will be no interruption in service at the store. The development also includes 225 parking spaces for residents and shoppers in two levels of underground parking.