



# Health/Education

## Doctors Help Underserved Patients In Need

A group of emergency room doctors at Providence Portland Medical are part of the Oregon Emergency Physicians group that will donate \$16,000 this year to organizations that support the underserved.

Initiated in 2000, the chari-

table donations project has been contributed to the Bradley Angle House, Portland Rescue Mission and Central City Concern, the operator of the Hooper Center.

Vicki Sands, M.D., one of the project organizers, says the phy-

sicians decided to make the annual donations because of a strong need in the community. "These organizations serve the same population as we do, without getting a lot of financial reimbursement," Dr. Sands said. "We're concerned about con-

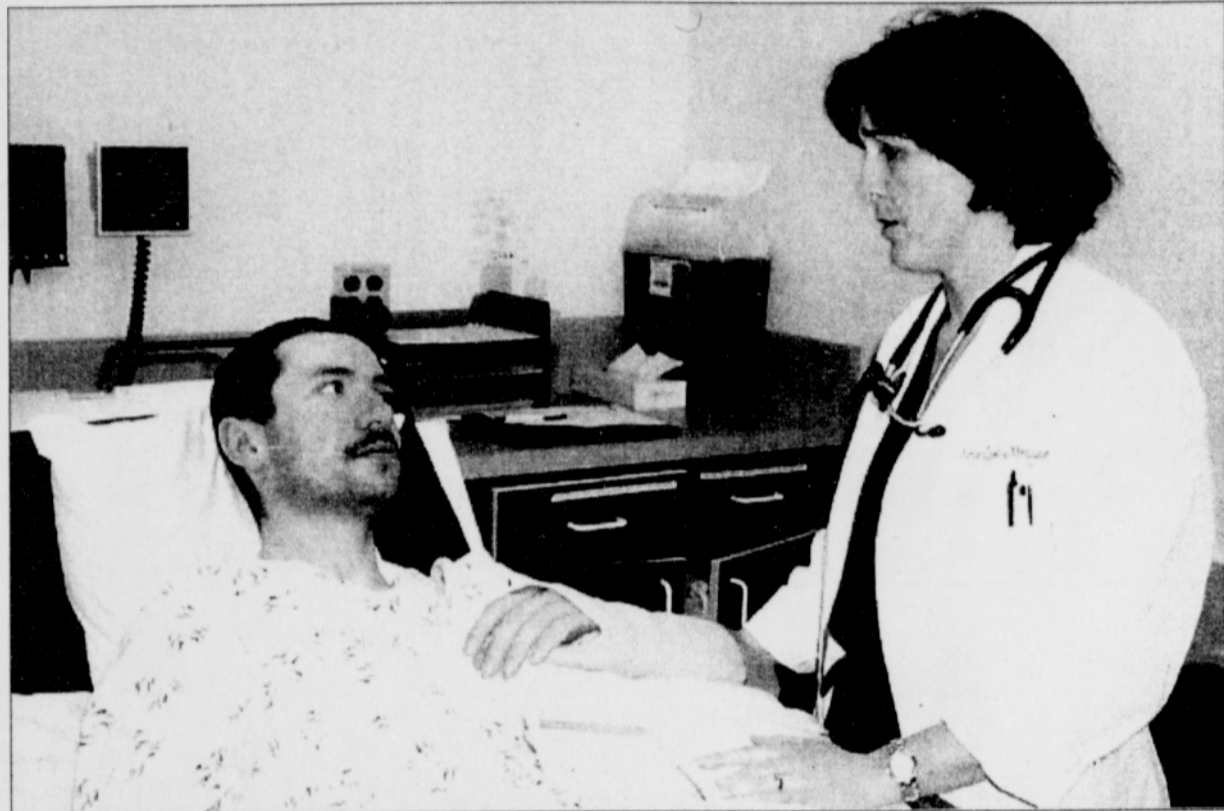
tinuing care." The physician group sets charitable giving goals every year. This year the goal is to support organizations that help with domestic abuse, safe housing and mental health. "We see a lot of people in crisis in the E.R., especially from drug and alcohol abuse and with psychi-

atric problems," said Sands. "We want to give an amount large enough to make a difference to the organization that help these people."

Susan Steiner, manager of the Hooper Center, an alcohol detox program that also operates the CHIERS outreach van, says the

donation will be used to provide mental health training for the staff.

Like the Hooper Center, the PPMC emergency room does not turn anyone away. "That's why we want to help," said Sands. "Our mission is to help people."



Vicki Sands, M.D., treat patient with a sprained arm in the Providence Portland Medical Center emergency room. Dr. Sands and other physicians contribute to non-profit organizations that help Providence patients.

## Study: Americans' Bodies Full of Toxins

By ERIN McCLAM  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Americans' bodies harbor surprisingly high amounts of mercury and a questionable chemical used in soap and cosmetics, federal health officials reported in a landmark study on environmental toxins in the body.

The study is the first nationwide to measure levels of 24 environmental toxins in people's blood and urine, providing crucial information that could be used to pinpoint pollutants that cause disease.

Animal studies have suggested that large amounts of the chemical, diethyl phthalate, may disrupt normal hormone function and cause birth defects. Its effect on humans hasn't been determined.

The report found that phthalates - additives found in products from perfume to nail polish

- appeared in humans at levels "considerably higher than one would have predicted," said Dr. Richard Jackson, director of the National Center for Environmental Health. Previous studies of environmental toxins had only tested air, soil and water.

"Seeing chemicals in people's bodies elevates their importance," said Lynn Goldman, a former Environmental Protection Agency regulator.

The cosmetics industry contends phthalates are perfectly safe. "We haven't seen any documented health effects in humans from this," said Marian Stanley, manager of the American Chemistry Council's phthalate panel.

The study also found higher than expected levels of mercury, which is believed to cause fetal brain damage.

While the study found low levels

of mercury in children 1 to 5 years old, women of childbearing age reflected higher levels than previously estimated by the EPA, Goldman said.

"That would mean we haven't been taking the problem seriously enough," she said.

The numbers, based on a 1999 study of 3,800 people across the country, may affect government regulation of toxins such as lead, mercury and pesticides. In many cases, there are no previous numbers available for comparison.

The government plans to conduct the study annually, expanding it to more than 100 chemicals. The reports will be broken down by demographic categories such as race, age, education and geographic region.

"It could be revolutionary in terms of environmental health in the United States," Jackson said.

## Free Workshops Help You Compost at Home

Why throw vegetable scraps or yard trimmings away when you could use them to make rich compost for your yard and garden?

Metro's free home composting workshops will show you how. All you need is a little space for a compost bin and a few minutes a week. Workshops cover the basics of composting, different types of composting bin designs, worm bins and troubleshooting. All workshops meet from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at Metro's home composting demonstration centers around the tri-

county region. No appointment is necessary.

Instructor John Foseid explains the fundamentals of getting a compost pile started. He also answers questions about how to create a good mix of materials in your bin and how to remedy any problems you might have with your compost. These free home composting workshops are offered on the following Saturdays at the following locations:

May 19 - Fulton Community Gardens, Portland.

June 30 - Mt. Hood Com-

munity College, Gresham.

April 21 and June 2 - Clackamas Community College, Oregon City.

April 28 and June 9 - Leach Botanical Garden, Portland.

May 5 and June 16 - Mary Woodward Elementary School, Tigard.

May 12 and June 23 - Kennedy Community Gardens, Beaverton.

For more information about these workshops or any of Metro's free seminars on natural gardening, call Metro Recycling Information at 503-234-3000.

## Census Finds 1 in 5 Americans Disabled

Nearly one in five Americans has some level of disability, according to the latest information from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Among the 53 million with a disability, 9.7 million cannot work and another 7.2 million are limited in the type of work they can do, according to the data.

Although the number of people with disabilities has remained unchanged from the last report issued in 1995, the number of people with severe disabilities increased from one in 10 people to one in eight in 1997.

The Census Bureau defines a person with a disability as some-

one who has difficulty performing daily living activities or has a learning or developmental disability.

People are considered to have a severe disability if they are completely unable to perform one or more of daily living activities or need personal assistance.

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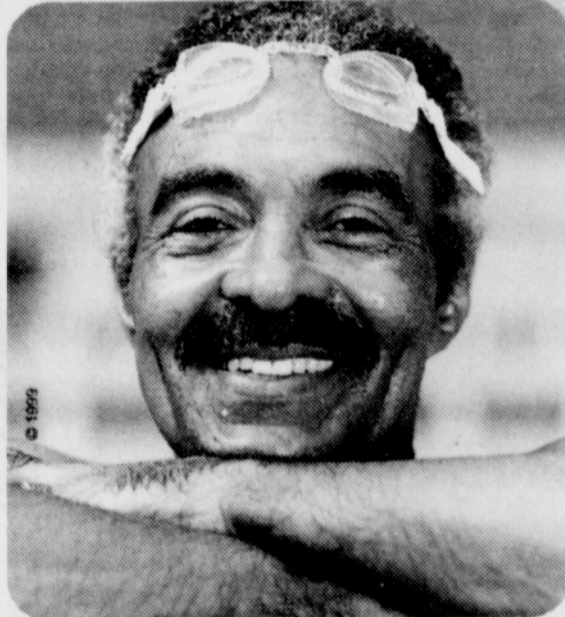
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