

Combining Family, Business and Community



Heading the 45-year old family business is the founder father and CEO Floyd Booker Sr. with his sons Michael, the Operations Mgr. and Ronald as President of Courtesy Janitorial Services, Inc. Of primary importance among family firm wealth holders is transferring not only their financial wealth, but also their values surrounding their wealth to subsequent generations.

PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

BY RON WEBER AND MARNELLA BINGHAM-MOSLEY
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

In 1956, award winning author Alice Childress published a book about the life of a black domestic worker. Unlike the black domestic worker in the novel, Floyd and Mary Julia Booker of Courtesy Janitorial Services, Inc. would put a wonderful twist to the words "domestic work." Instead of cleaning one house, this unbeatable husband-wife team would take on many cleaning jobs throughout Portland.

Floyd Booker Sr. desired as a youth to become an architect. He possessed dreams of building

empires using brick and mortar as his primary material—however 45 years later, his dreams became reality as the architect of a progressive family business. Today, Courtesy Janitorial Services, Inc. uses honesty and hard work as the primary building materials.

In 1943, the City of Portland needed a large number of workers for its major shipyard to perform wartime jobs. However, opportunities for African Americans were limited. Many job announcements specified "White Only."

Booker Sr. and his wife Mary Julia in 1956 started their janitorial service part-time from the rear end of the family station wagon.

Childcare was not an option for them. With their young children at their heels, they cleaned small offices, medical facilities, schools and other sites. Mrs. Booker managed housekeeping, while raising 6 children and working alongside her husband.

The example they created of working together for their children created a family harmony and a business culture that remains true in their business today—"work hard and work together."

Today Booker Sr. is retired, but works 2-4 hours every day. Two of his five sons manage the day-to-

continued ▼ on page C11

Saluting Minority Enterprise Development



"Providing Affordable housing For The Community"

NOW TAKING APPLICATIONS!!

Now available: 1, 2, & 3 Bedroom Houses
And Apartments

Income Restrictions Apply.

Maximum Annual Income ranges
from \$31,300 for one person
to \$59,050 for eight people

Apply Monday-Friday 9:00 AM- 4:00 P.M.

Portland Community
Reinvestment Initiatives
4829 NE MLK Blvd./ Wygant
Portland, Oregon 97211
(503) 288-2923

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

Opportunities, Barriers Exist for Minority Retailers

continued ▲ from C6

laundromats that would compete with each other."

"The question is almost impossible to answer," consultant Jeana Woolley says. "Is there a long list of people waiting to move in? No, but if the opportunity arose people would come forward. Many of us do business out of our homes. We rise to the occasion."

Woolley says, "Right now there's not a lot of space available in Northeast." Moreover, "People want to be someplace that looks successful, that's aesthetically pleasing, looks good from the street, alive, a place people want to be." In contrast, some of the mixed-use projects on the boulevard "treat their retail space as an afterthought," she says.

Gary Brown of the Portland State University Business Outreach Program disagrees with Woolley. He steered Anita Smith to a site on Northeast Shaver Street on MLK as a site for her soon-to-open Hannah Bea's Pound Cake. "There definitely is good, suitable space available on that street, and it's affordable right now. M.L.K. is really coming along. But it is a highway. Parking is an issue, and it isn't as conducive to foot traffic as Alberta or Hawthorne. You definitely have to be visible from the street," explained Brown.

Domonic Boswell says that many retailers "can't afford the rents on MLK," which he described as "not available, too small, or not proper space." He agrees that many mixed-use projects were poorly designed. "If the space isn't visible, unless you have a product people are breaking down doors to get, they won't come." However, he calls the Alberta Simmons building "awesome. They set back the residential part from the street, and made the retail prominent."

Boswell is himself a new retailer. Having worked for PDC, the Urban League and the Brownfields Project, he took over the Walnut Park Blimpie's franchise when it became available. Why? "I wanted to make some money," he says cheerfully. Sometimes I say to myself, 'I'm having the time of my life, I wish I had done this years ago' - but I wasn't ready then." He helped prepare himself by taking a class at PSU's School of Extended Studies.

Even so, he is still learning. "I haven't made any \$1,000 mistakes here, but I've made a few \$200 and \$300 mistakes."

For those interviewed, they were virtually unanimous in saying that training and financial support are essential to small business success. "You need to understand how to manage and grow your business, and how to get access to capital," Brooks says. "You need a business strategy, who you're selling to and how to reach them. If business was easy, everyone would be in it. It isn't easy."

Together with Brooks, Woolley says, "We need a more focussed effort to get minority people into business." To allow them to succeed, she says, "It's about money. We don't have the support networks. We can't keep going long enough to develop a market, and have expertise in running a business. You don't just need the tools, you need to be walked through how to use the tools."

Help is available, from PDC and elsewhere, to provide both financial support and advice. However, Boswell says, "There are a ton of resources out there, but there isn't a good road map to it."

Some of this is provided by Brown's PSU Business Outreach Program. He begins by sitting down with the business owner to determine what his or her needs are. The most common kind of assistance rendered is "getting financial statements in order, creating a marketing strategy, and creating an overall business plan, in that order," he says. The catch is that the program works only with people who are already in business.

Boswell says his experience "has made me a firm believer in franchising. 'When you take over a franchise, your chances of success are 95 percent,' he says. 'When you start your own business, your chances of failure are 95 percent.'"

Woolley says, "I talk to people every day who are working for someone else and would love to have a business of their own. They say, 'I don't want to be Starbucks, I just want to have a small, thriving business.' But it's not as simple as it looks. Small business people are slaves to their businesses, and they don't realize it until they're there."

Seaside Motel 6 #4062



2369 S. Holladay Drive

Seaside, OR 97138

Office: 503-738-6269 Fax: 503-738-4276

For Reservations Call 1-800-4-MOTEL-6

A Licensee of Motel 6 Operating L.P.



NW Natural isn't just your gas company, we're also your neighbor. That helps us understand you and your needs a little better. It has for over 135 years. So whenever you need us, from a fussy furnace to a softball game, we're always here at (503) 220-2360



NW Natural
www.nwnatural.com
We grew up here.