



Northeast Portland's Neighborhood Mediation Center draws support from Bob Boyer (from left), director of the King Facility; Sumner Sharpe, a local resident; Lucinda Tate, a Mediation Center volunteer and representative of the Rainbow Coalition; Elaine Walsh, a mediation center advisory commissioner; Margaret Strachan, a former member of the Portland City Council; and Eddie Collins, acting Mediation Center director. PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Embattled Mediation Center Draws Support

By LEE PERLMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

About 100 people representing a dozen community organizations rallied Saturday at the King Neighborhood Facility in northeast Portland in support of the embattled Neighborhood Mediation Center.

The group is fighting efforts by the Portland Office of Neighborhood Involvement, the parent agency of the mediation program, under the direction of Jim Francesconi, to have the services of the 21-year-old program contracted out to a private agency.

City officials have stated that the Portland center is not cost-effective and does not make good use of volunteers, com-

pared to comparable programs in other cities.

Supporters of the mediation center counter that these assertions have never been proven. They argue that the current system keeps mediation services free to the public, unlike our legal system where people with the most money often get the greatest benefits.

Consultant and mediation supporter Sumner Sharpe accused the city of "comparing apples and oranges and calling them all pears."

Sharpe called the current action "a solution in search of a problem."

Representatives of the Rainbow Coalition, the NAACP and the A. Phillip Randolph Institute, as well as City Council Candidate Nick Fish, spoke to

the value of the current program.

Another supporter, Holly Wells, criticized the city's arguments and procedures for putting mediation services out to bid.

Sharpe and others also accused Francesconi of failing to keep a promise to speak with them again before issuing the bid.

The move to contract out mediation services has already been passed by the Portland City Council as part of the city budget process. But Mayor Vera Katz has said that she has not made up her mind on the contracting proposal.

Commissioner Erik Sten is also studying the issue, according to an aide.

County Alert for West Nile Virus

Multnomah County is participating in a mosquito monitoring system to detect West Nile virus, a disease spreading across America since an outbreak three years ago on the East Coast.

Vector control programs in the Portland area and across the state will use field-captured mosquitoes and chicken blood samples to test for West Nile virus, as well as St. Louis and Western Equine Encephalitis.

West Nile virus, closely related to St. Louis Encephalitis, first appeared in the United States in 1999.

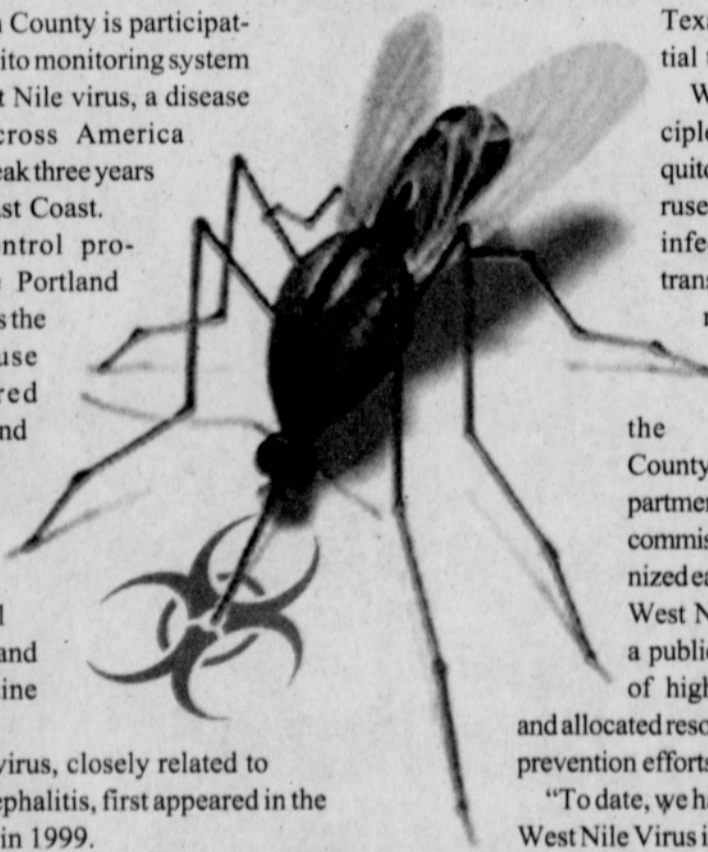
To date, the virus has been detected in 33 states, as far west as North Dakota and

Texas and has the potential to spread west.

Wild birds are the principle reservoirs of mosquito-borne encephalitic viruses. Mosquitoes feed on infected birds and then transmit the virus to humans and animals.

Lillian M. Shirley, director of the Multnomah County Health Department, said county commissioners recognized early on that the West Nile virus was a public health issue of high importance and allocated resources to aid in prevention efforts.

"To date, we have not found West Nile Virus in the region's mosquitoes and will continue our vigilant and coordinated approach," Shirley said.



Private School Requires Laptops

Catlin Gabel, a private school in southwest Portland, announced that beginning this fall, all upper school students will be required to own a laptop computer. The independent school said financial aid payment plans are available to all of its students.

"By requiring all upper school students to own a laptop, Catlin Gabel will level the playing field for students, whether they live in high tech households with

multiple computers or households with little or no computer equipment," said Catlin Gabel's Emily Jones.

The school sees laptops as more than mobile word processors.

Students will use the machines in every classroom, between classes and at home to access the software and the computer platforms used in art, science, language, English and technology classes.

Forum to Address Police Interaction

Public input is wanted for policy recommendations to the Portland Police Bureau for improving services and community partnerships.

Portland's Independent Police Review committee is sponsoring two public forums on "Citizen-Police Interaction after 12 years of Community Policing."

The forums are scheduled on Thursday, Sept. 12 at Kaiser Permanente's Town Hall Education and Conference Center, 3704 N.

Interstate Ave., from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. and on Wednesday, Sept. 18 at the Multnomah Center, 7688 S.W. Capitol Hwy., from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

While the CRC welcomes hearing about the concerns and issues of community members, they would particularly invite the public to consider the following general questions to guide the discussion:

What role do the police have in your community? If there was one change you could make in how the Portland

Police interact with members of your community, what would it be?

All members of the community interested in community policing efforts and citizen-police interaction are invited and encouraged to attend.

For more information, visit the IPR website at: www.ci.portland.or.us/auditor/ipr or contact Citizen Review Committee member T.J. Browning at 503-231-1319.

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