

# Despite High Unemployment, Temp Agency Delivers

BY SEAN P. NELSON  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

What advice can the head of a well known temporary agency give on finding a good job a year after the World Trade Center bombings last year led to Oregon having the nation's highest unemployment rate?

"Keep on it, all recessions end," said Margaret Brooks, Executive Vice President of Employment Services for Sam Brooks and Associates, Inc. She and her husband Sam founded the full service staffing firm in 1981.

Since then, it has developed an award winning team of professionals who provide Recruitment, Executive Searches, Temporary Services and Consulting for local industries to implement programs in employment and workforce development.

"Be prepared to go to work. Have a resume, have proper identification and treat searching for a job as an 8 to 5 job. Sign up with several Temporary Services and keep in touch with those services. It's not easy in these times, but people do get work," Brooks said.

Margaret's husband and business partner Sam Brooks, the organization's President, spent over 10 years with the State Employment Department being everything from an entry level Aide to a Program Executive. He then used his PERS money to fulfill a lifelong dream of owning his own business and led Sam Brooks and Associates, Inc. for over 19 years. Mr. Brooks is also active in the community as the Founder and Chairman of the Board of the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs, OAME.

Margaret spent 15 years in corporate sales and accounting and over 13 years in general management for their temporary agency. She is also active in the community as the Chair of the North Portland Oregon Employment Council, an advisory body to the Oregon Employment Department.

Despite outside activities, both Margaret and Sam strive to make their staffing service beneficial for employers and employees alike.

"We strive to be the friendliest temporary service or staffing company. We treat all employees and customers with great respect," Brooks said.

Interested readers may call the agency at 1-800-540-7930 to pre-screen to determine their work history and skills. If not qualified for the agency, they are referred to other community agencies and organizations it partners with.

"If we know where there's part-time jobs or where there's training they could get if they don't have skills that we need, we refer them to the Community Colleges and other resources," Brooks said.

One recent success involved placing an accounting person with PCRI, the Portland Com-



Margaret Brooks (right) of Sam Brooks and Associates, Inc. in northeast Portland works to successfully place many job seekers in various industries. PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

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—Margaret Brooks, Executive Vice President of Employment Services for Sam Brooks and Associates, Inc.

munity Reinvestment Initiative, a local community housing organization in northeast Portland. The agency also placed the Housing Director for the Portland Development Commission. Other large companies the agency has placed employees with include NIKE, Pacificorp, Xerox, Northwest Natural Gas, and the City of Portland. The organization also works as an 8(a) Contractor with the Federal Government for minority businesses.

In the current economic climate, most of the jobs the agency now have are entry level to high level clerical. Light industrial manufacturing and assembly jobs are currently being had by some, but for the most part are few and far between, Brooks said.

While she doesn't have any statistics to show

what percentage of applicants there are getting jobs, her gut feeling is that those who follow her

advice are successful.

"People who are coming in on a regular basis, following up and doing what they need to do are getting work," Brooks said. Additional advice she gives prospective job seekers is not to burn any bridges behind you.

"If you find something better, then you can leave, but otherwise don't just quit." For more information, call or visit the agency's website at [www.sbrooks.com](http://www.sbrooks.com). or send an email to [sbrooks@sbrooks.com](mailto:sbrooks@sbrooks.com).

## Steppin' Out in Style

Retailer offers high fashion for men and women

BY JOY RAMOS/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Right along the new Interstate MAX light rail line is a one of a kind clothing store for men and women. Owned by Bryan Grant, Steppin' Out Menswear specializes in high fashion that's more N.Y. to L.A. in style.

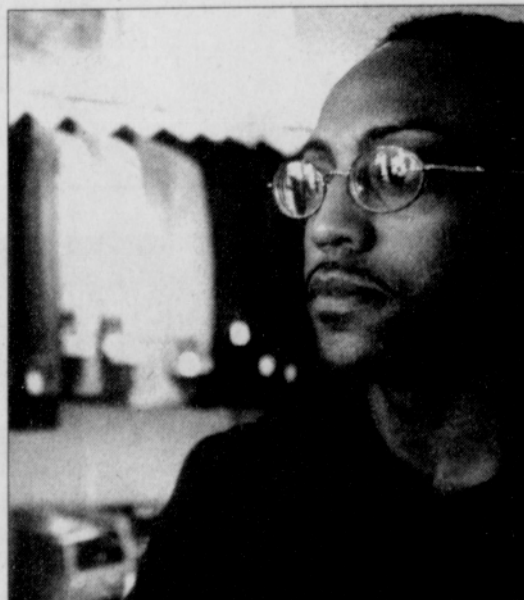
Grant wanted to be his own boss after serving four years as a Sales Consultant for Qwest. Unsure about what to venture into, he received his answer through much prayer. His higher calling, according to him, was to sell suits. More specifically, to offer a unique line of clothing for men and women that's not easily found in Vancouver or the Portland area.

Having little business experience, Grant followed the learn as you go approach. A lesson learned that he likes to impart to budding entrepreneurs is to "have capital and a good sense of direction of what you're to do. From there, put it in action."

Since opening his retail store two years ago at 7618 N. Interstate, Steppin' Out Menswear has attracted a wide clientele who really want to make a good fashion statement.

"It's the average working-class man or woman that wants to look and feel good in a nice quality suit without paying the price of a high end retail or specialty store like Mario's or Saks Fifth Avenue," Grant explained. The majority of his customers are African Americans and those between the ages of 28 to 38-years-old.

The clothes sold to men are characteristically



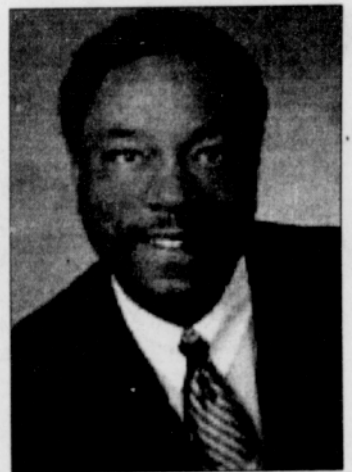
Bryan Grant sells a variety of high styled men's suits that are unique to the area.

flashier, 3-piece or 2-piece, long dress suits with fashion buttons - all kinds that can be worn year round. Also offered is the popular Stacy Adams line of shoes and accessories.

New to his business is a line of women's wear. They are mostly 3-piece and 4-piece outfits with lots of embellishments. The brands offered are by Donna Vinci, Benmark and Lisa Renee. Acting as a fashion consultant for this new line of women's clothing is Grant's wife Nai.

Since the MAX line construction began, business has slowed down. This hasn't gotten Grant down because after its completion, he expects more walk-in traffic to his store.

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