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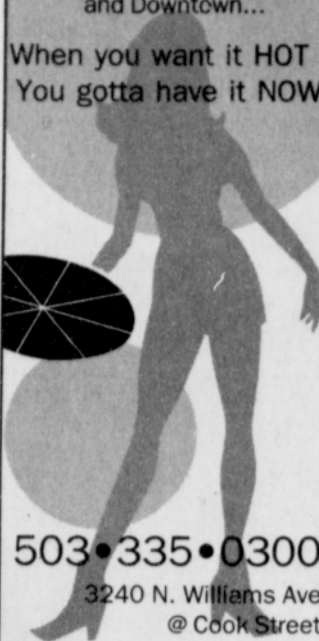
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Silver Service is Good as Gold

A celebration recognizing Eddie Collins for 25 years of neighborhood mediation services with the Portland Office of Neighborhood Involvement was recently held at the King Community Facility in northeast Portland. Pictured during the event are Bob Boyer (from left), Karen Powell, Collins and Elaine Walsh. Earlier this year, the city contracted out its mediation services to private companies.

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Tax Credits Help Working Families

As Oregon families start preparing their tax returns, the Oregon Center for Public Policy is distributing flyers to make sure low-income working taxpayers know about important tax credits and about ways to get their taxes done for free.

Both the federal and state governments offer tax credits for low income working families to help them offset taxes or child care expenses.

In addition, AARP runs "Tax-Aide" sites throughout Oregon where taxpayers can have their taxes done for free by trained volunteers.

The federal Earned Income Credit is the largest tax credit. It provides up to \$4,140 to families with income earned from work. The actual size of the credit depends on family size and income.

Even if a family has no tax liability, the family can get money back from the EIC, as well as from the federal Additional Child Tax Credit.

"Even families who do not earn enough money to have to file taxes, ought to," suggests John Lewis of the public policy group. "These families may still qualify for the federal credits. That could mean significant money to pay the rent or put food on the table."

Lewis said low-income families do not need to pay someone to do their taxes.

Area residents can find Tax Aide sites by calling 1-888-227-7669 or by calling the IRS at 1-800-829-1040.

The Oregon Center for Public Policy also makes a list of sites available on their web site: www.ocppp.org/sites.htm.

Council Approves Contracting Plan

The Portland City Council unanimously approved an ordinance that establishes a new program designed to increase the use of minority-owned, woman-owned and emerging small business firms.

"We've worked hard to increase opportunities for minorities and women on our construction contracts," said Mayor Vera Katz. "Now we are focusing on PTE (professional, technical and expert) contracts."

The ordinance requires all Bureaus to follow consistent procedures, including a central website for advertisement of all contracting opportunities.


"This proposal is really about jobs," said Sue Klobertanz, director of the Bureau of Purchases. "Jobs for minority, women and small businesses who provide professional services. Council has sent an extremely strong message that the issue of diversity in contracting is a high priority. It's our job in the Bureau of Purchases to make that happen."

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