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# Confronting Mental Health Issues



PHOTO BY WYNDE DYER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Ebony Sloan-Clarke (right), watches over a group therapy session for adolescent boys at the Leo Ni Leo clinic in northeast Portland. Networking with various community groups and social service agencies helps Tualatin Valley Centers better serve the mental health needs of African Americans who may never seek help otherwise.

*continued* ▲ from Front problems you're told that you're not coping and you get, 'Be strong and make it.'

Wary of the predominately white mental health care world, most African Americans turn to their families or their church for guidance before consulting a trained professional.

"Lots of people think, 'Hey, I'll just pray about it,'" Sloan-Clarke said. "People think faith will bring them out."

Even when African Americans do take the step towards treatment they are often confronted with traditionally European strategies and approaches to wellness. Sloan-Clarke said cultural sensitivity and competency as well as a general awareness of African American history and tradition is necessary to earn the trust of black clients.

"Therapists need to be aware of their own personal biases - they can't just take one class for counseling minorities and think that's enough," she said. "If we can connect with people and teach them to cope then we'll be able to break this cycle."

TVC works to get the word out to the community through wellness fairs and networking with local agencies like the Juvenile Justice Department and the Department of Corrections.

Word of mouth is probably the most powerful way to let people know help is out there, Sloan-Clarke said.

"One person tells another person that we're culturally competent and the word spreads," she said. "People come in and say, 'Oh, I heard this place is somewhere I can be open without being judged.'" It's important that they know there is someone that under-

stands." Also important are a variety of treatment options to meet the needs of a population with a diverse list of mental health issues.

At TVC's center on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Beech Street, Clinical Supervisor John Oda, hosts a full day treatment program in addition to outpatient counseling and case management.

"I feel like we have a one stop shop," Oda said. "Our clients can pick and choose what fits their needs."

During day treatment, clients can attend motivational exercises, take art or fitness therapy, classes in anger management, coping skills and money management. They can enroll in Duals Group, for people with drug and alcohol problems and a mental illness like depression, bi-polar disorder or schizophrenia.

Case managers help clients with food and housing needs, paying bills and enrolling for Social Security. Counselors help people move towards whatever desired outcome they would like to see with their therapy.

"We teach people how to break through and empower themselves," Oda said. "We let them know that they don't have to face things by themselves."

But the decision to get treatment in the first place is a decision that has to be made alone and Oda hopes it is a choice more African Americans will make.

"I tell people that knowledge is only potential power and action is real power," he said. "People have to take action and seek help."

Those interested in receiving mental health or addiction services from Tualatin Valley Centers may call the intake line at 503-645-9010.

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### Oriental Medicine Seminar

The Oregon College of Oriental Medicine, 10525 SE Cherry Blossom Dr., is offering a free seminar Saturday, June 7 at 10 a.m. The seminar's focus is health and wellness through traditional Chinese medicine. Space is limited, to reserve a place call, 503-253-3443 ext.550.

## CARCORNER

BY DAVID REEDER

### Bad Credit Loan Basics

**What is a bad credit auto loan?**  
 A bad credit auto loan (also called a "subprime auto loan") is a loan with a higher-than-normal interest rate offered to buyers with poor credit histories or past bankruptcies. They usually involve more restrictions and requirements.

**What should I look for in a subprime lender?**

Reputation is key. Unfortunately, the world of subprime loans has not always involved the most ethical elements of the lending world. Beware of small time lenders with offers that seem too good to be true.

**Can I get an auto loan if I've had credit problems?**

Probably, but you'll face some restrictions and higher rates. Lenders won't usually offer person-to-person or motorcycle loans to poor credit borrowers so there is no escaping the higher interest. Any

lender who says otherwise is not telling the whole truth.

**Can I get an auto loan if I've had a bankruptcy?**

Probably, but there will be loan restrictions and a higher interest rate.

**How high of an interest rate will I have to pay?**

That depends on how bad your credit is. Fair credit borrowers may only have to pay a point or two over the best rate, while borrowers with very bad histories may face rates of between 15 to 29 percent.

**What about special "bad credit" auto financing programs?**

Tread carefully here. Unscrupulous lenders are notorious for baiting poor credit borrowers with promises of special financing programs, and then sticking them with outrageous fees or high prepayment penalties. It's probably safer to go with a normal "bad credit" auto loan from a reputable lender.

You can reach David Reeder by e-mail at reederdavid@yahoo.com.

## Harvey's BBQ Celebrates

After a short hiatus, Harvey's 1 Bite BBQ is back in business and celebrating seven years of Southern barbecue. He's hosting a barbecue buffet at 7 p.m., Friday, June 13 at Vancouver's Barberton Hall, 9400 N.E. 72<sup>nd</sup> Ave. Tickets are \$25 and diners should expect homemade cakes, Harvey's famous homemade barbecue sauce and some of the healthiest and leanest meat to ever cross their pallets.

It takes hours for Harvey to clean his lightly seasoned meat because he uses all-natural methods and ingredients. Harvey continues to cater weddings, parties and corporate events and hopes to open a Florida-style barbecue restaurant in the Portland or Vancouver area in the near future. For more information, call 360-885-4546.

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### African Film Festival

Throughout the month of June, The Film Center presents films from the African Film Festival. "100 Days" and "Mangwana" comprise the second day of films Thursday, June 12 beginning 7 p.m. at the Whitsell Auditorium, 1219 SW Park. General admission tickets cost \$6.50. Member, student and senior tickets cost \$5.50.

The first film, "100 Days" centers on a young-Tutsi girl's family struggle to survive the Rwandan genocide. The film uses a church for the story's main setting - a church, which witnessed a genocide massacre. The evening's second film "Mangwa" is a film about a car crash and a chance encounter. The filming took place in Zimbabwe and the UK.