

EL OBSERVADOR

Minority Business Fills High-Tech Void

Batteries Plus sells 'juice' that keeps modern gadgets running

BY JAYMEE R. CUTI
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A Portland business owner was really put out after a series of digital deaths. The batteries for his cell phone, lap top computer and camcorder all died at the same time. Instead of resorting to the pre-digital era, the setback sparked an idea for entrepreneur Jose Perez.

"There should be a business that devotes itself to several types of batteries," he said.

He answered an ad for Batteries Plus, a national franchise selling the juice that keep modern gadgets going. Batteries Plus has 211 stores in 39 states.

Perez started the family battery business in Salem 1993 and opened another Batteries Plus in Eugene in 1998. His newest store opened at 4812 S.E. 82nd Ave. in Portland in July.

"I've never thought of myself as a minority business owner," said Perez, who immigrated from Cuba to Chicago in 1961. "This country has received me with open arms with plenty of opportunities in front of me if I worked for them."

Perez runs his business with the help of his sons and partners, Miguel and Tony.

According to Perez, his businesses are booming, and he plans to open new stores in northeast Portland's Hollywood District and in Vancouver.



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Miguel Perez manages the new Batteries Plus store at 4812 S.E. 82nd Ave.

While more than half of Perez's customers are corporate clients, he likes working with the novice digerati that come to his shop with a heap of gadgets that haven't worked in years because of their unusual battery needs.

"People sometimes walk in with a box full of different gadgets that they have not been able to find a battery pack for and we quickly send them on their way with their gadgets working. That's a lot of fun."

One of the unique products Perez supplies is a battery pack to soup up remote control cars. He also installs watch batteries, carries security system batteries and replaces batteries for glucose monitors. The store carries literally thousands of batteries, Perez said.

With a business blending the fun and functional, Perez measures his success by his return customers, who demand to be unplugged.



State School Superintendent Susan Castillo

School Spending Plan Called Disgraceful

State education chief addresses achievement gap

(AP)—In what was billed as her first major policy speech since taking office, state School Superintendent Susan Castillo last week asked lawmakers not to shortchange education.

Speaking to a roomful of Oregon school administrators, Castillo criticized lawmakers in the Republican-controlled House who support a \$5.05 billion education spending package she described as a "disgrace."

At the state level, she said, schools need a minimum of \$5.3 billion to avoid drastic cuts.

"Legislators...should stand up and acknowledge that they aren't really committed to ensuring that every child will meet our standards; that they are prepared to leave lots of children behind."

But she cautioned that educators must not sit back and wait until the money rolls in. Instead, they must spend what they do have as effectively as possible while trying to win public support.

"I think that to a certain extent we've mishandled the situation by spending a huge percentage of our time complaining about funding and not enough time talking about our successes," she said. "People are more willing to invest in something that is already good and getting better than in something they think is falling apart."

Castillo also touched on the federal No Child Left Behind act, which imposes higher standards for teachers and progressively harsher sanctions for schools whose students fail to show proficiency on state tests.

"I know that people feel that it is, at best, an under-funded mandate," Castillo said of the federal legislation, which became law in January 2002. "But the fact is, one of the major premises of No Child Left Behind—the need to close the achievement gap—is our premise, too."

As for the next four years, Castillo said her top priority was closing the achievement gap—the disparity in academic performance between whites and most minorities, the English speaking and the non-English speaking, the affluent and the poor.

Castillo said she wants districts to have tough achievement standards, recruit and train a more diverse workforce and implement full-day kindergarten.

Brazilian Prison Break

(AP)—Eighty-four inmates from a maximum security prison in northeastern Brazil escaped through a tunnel Saturday, authorities said.

The inmates escaped from the Silvio Porto prison in Joao Pessoa, the capital of Paraiba state, an officer at the state's Public Security Office said.

Police recaptured one of the fugitives at a nearby beach several hours later.

Political Leader Resigns Under Pressure

(AP)—The head of Mexico's largest leftist political party resigned Saturday, blaming an internal campaign to discredit her.

Democratic Revolution President Rosario Robles had been dogged by media reports that said the party's debt was spiraling out of control under her direction.

"With willful misrepresentation and bad faith it was leaked to the press that our party owes more than 600 million pesos (\$55 million)," Robles said at a meeting here of the party's national council. "Nothing but falsehoods."

Robles estimated the party's current debt at closer to \$24 million. The Democratic Revolution Party is Mexico's third largest party.

Robles was appointed president in a chaotic internal election



Democratic Revolution President Rosario Robles waves as she leaves a hotel after a meeting of the party's national council, Saturday in Mexico City, where she announced her resignation. (AP photo)

marred by low turnout and widespread allegations of fraud. She had promised to reunite squabbling factions.

The PRD nearly doubled its

representation in Congress during July 6 midterm elections, winning 95 spots out of 500, and consolidated its hold on the capital's local legislature.

The party has governed Mexico City since 1997, when it won the city's first election for mayor. Before that, the president chose who would serve as mayor.

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December 15: 3930 SE Division St.—OHSU Richmond Clinic

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Westover Heights Clinic

2330 NW Flanders Suite 207
Portland, OR 97210
www.westoverheights.com

AAHC African American Health Coalition, Inc.

1st Annual

Wellness Within REACH Walk

September 6, 2003

What

Join us for the 1st Annual Wellness Within REACH Walk Sat. September 6, 2003! Walk the 1.5 or 4-mile course.

When

The walk begins at 9:00 a.m. Other event activities begin at 8:00 a.m.

For more information

For more information about participation or to volunteer contact the African American Health Coalition, Inc. at 503-413-1850, wbeamor@aahc-portland.org or mield@aahc-portland.org

Where

Start and finish at Dawson Park, located at N. Vancouver and Stanton in Portland, OR.

Why

The purpose of the walk is to celebrate our community's health and sustain ongoing free physical activity classes for African Americans in the Portland metro area.

Entry

Entry fee is \$15 per person.

REACH

Racial & Ethnic Approaches to Community Health
A program of the African American Health Coalition, Inc.
Sponsored by the CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Affordable Apartments Planned

New housing slated for Cully

Seventy-one new apartment units on both sides of Northeast Killingsworth Street in the Cully Neighborhood will open to families next July with household incomes between 30 and 60 percent below the area median income.

Homestead Capital, a nonprofit organization that raises equity financing for affordable housing throughout the West, is behind the nearly \$10 million venture, called the Villa de Mariposas Apartments, scheduled to be built at Northeast 50th and Killingsworth.

"With Northeast Portland's average market vacancy rate of 2.5 percent versus what's considered to be a healthy vacancy rate of 5 percent, the Villa de Mariposas Apartments are filling a critical need, particularly for large families," said Deborah Saweyer-Parks, president and CEO of Homestead Capital. "This project will provide safe, family-oriented, quality housing near jobs and transportation."

Residents will be able choose from on-site support services coordinated by Multnomah County family resource center staff and basic medical and dental care will be available from La Clinica de Buena Salud mobile clinic.