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PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/PORTLAND OBSERVER
L'Dawn Guymon, 8, smiles big as Freddy Jones takes a moment to autograph a picture for the young fan.

Super Star Shares Love and Basketball

continued from Metro

reational, cultural and educational activities to youth from families that may be experiencing a variety of issues such as lack of a consistent adult role model, problems at school, poor self esteem, lack of friends, or family difficulties. Big Brothers Big Sisters is based on the premise that children can improve self-esteem and learn to be friend to themselves and to others through a positive relationship with an adult friend.

Jones involvement with the program and his support for it stands as a reminder that kids do matter.

To learn more or become involved with the organization visit online at www.bbbsportland.org.

MLB fights to rebuild baseball as city game

Percentage of blacks in sport has dropped drastically



Members of the Finnegan team from the Grays Ferry Rookie League celebrate a win over Stinger Square earlier this year in Philadelphia. (AP photo)

2004 Fabulous 50th Birthday Extravaganza

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Available: June 28, 2004
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This event is given in Acknowledgement of all classmates & friends who have returned or will turn 50 this year.

"Keeping it real in the Community, lest we forget"

Presented by: Fab 50 Associates
*proceeds donated to: Albina Ministerial Alliance

(AP) — The little neighborhood diamond is unlined and overgrown. The infield grass nibbles at the edges of the base paths. A large dirt pile looms dangerously down the third base line.

Nestled between dilapidated homes and windowless warehouses, this Philadelphia field is a world away from the baseball palaces that now dot the major league landscape but are at the very heart of the game's effort to rebuild its image among blacks and other urban minorities.

Jerry Boligitz, 36, director of the fledgling Grays Ferry Rookie League, sits on a splintered bench watching a game between teams of 8-to-12-year-olds, most of them black. Their stances are awkward, their swings flailing.

"These kids, they've never picked up a bat," he sighed.

His league, its history measured in games, not seasons, is one program fostered by Major League Baseball to boost the game's popularity in cities. And without it and others like it, there is concern blacks could largely disappear from the game.

"African-American players seem to be dwindling in numbers," said Phillies center fielder Doug Glatville, one of two black players on the Phillies' active roster. "You hate to see any segment that was such a prevalent force previously, I won't say disappear, but headed that direction."

Ten percent of major league players in 2001-02 were black, down from 17 percent in 1989, according to the 2003 Racial and Gender Report Card from the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, well below the peak figure of 24 percent about 25 years ago.

For this reason, Major League Baseball and its teams have poured millions of dollars into programs like Rookie League; a \$3 million Youth Baseball Academy under construction in Compton, Calif.; and Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI), the league's flagship urban baseball program.

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