

We've seen students get reinvested in their education. We spark learning in them. —Yvonne Mery, director of LISTOS

Advancing Hispanic Youth

continued ▲ from Front

center recently received accreditation with the Northwest Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities.

Yvonne Mery, director of LISTOS, said the program began in the basement of Benson High School as a tutoring session. There are currently 68 students enrolled — the maximum amount possible is 80.

As a GED preparation program, Mery said the school usually serves students who have had a series of unsuccessful attempts with education because of cultural barriers, being expelled, or not having enough credits to graduate. Others are simply students who have not been in the Portland Public School system at all because of immigrant status.

In addition to their education, students get assistance with lunch programs, transportation, counseling and teen parenting. The program is entirely free. While some students are told about LISTOS through social service programs, most know about it through word of mouth.

"We've seen students get reinvested in their education," Mery said. "We spark learning in them. I've seen students on the borderline of abandoning their education who decide to move on to college. I've seen students gain independence in their lives and the skills to make decisions on their own."

Language can be one of the largest barriers in learning for a Hispanic youth.

Octaviana Cruz, 16, came from Oaxaca, Mexico three years ago to live with her mother. She's been with the course for a year now.

Cruz said that before her involvement, she had never used a computer and now she can check

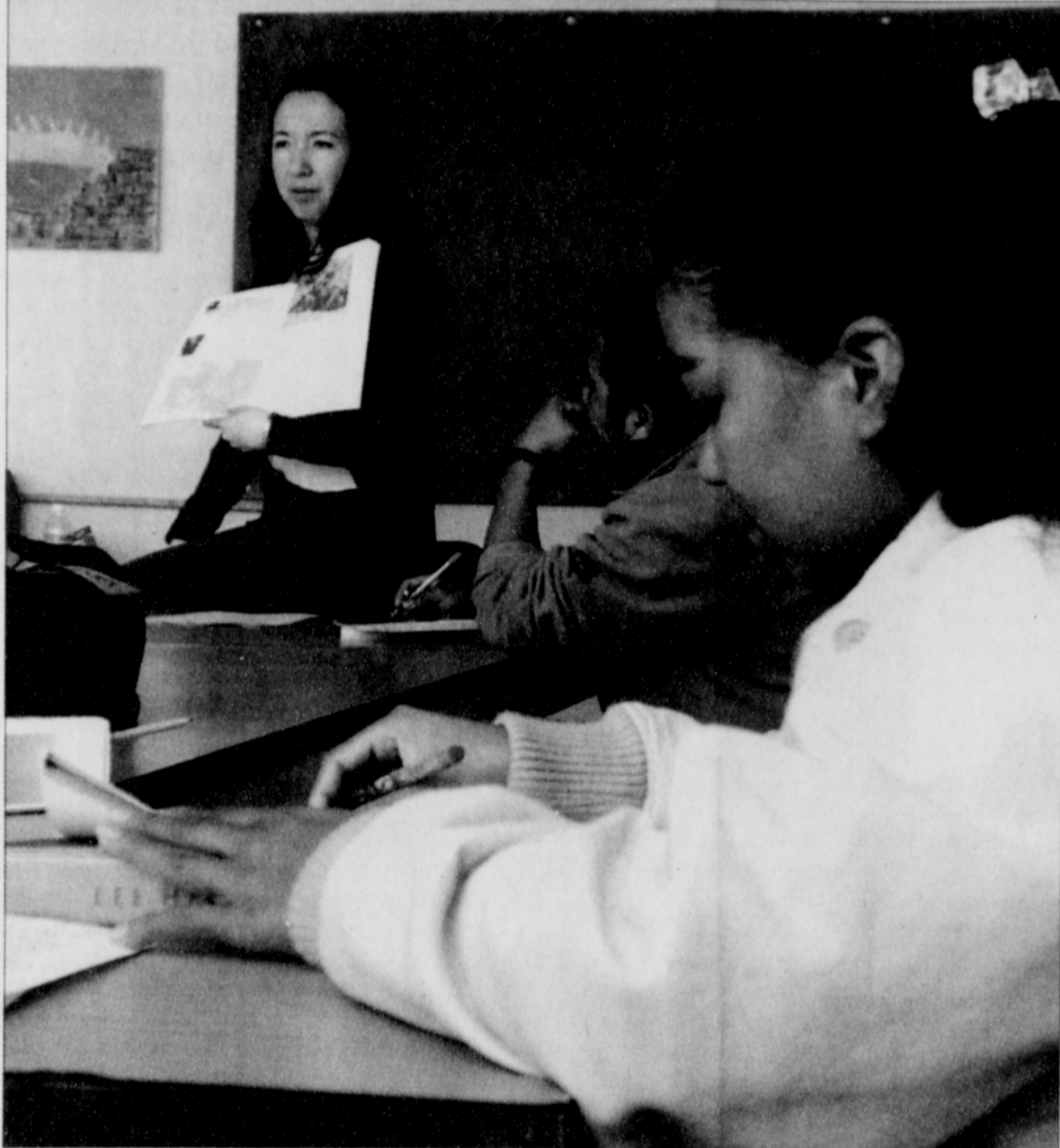


PHOTO BY KATHERINE KOVACICH/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Students participate in a LISTOS class at the Oregon Council for Hispanic Advancement in northwest Portland.

her e-mail on her own. She also said that math and literature were never her best strengths, but she's doing well in those subjects now. She'll be graduating the program this year and wants to continue on with her higher education.

Luzy Flores, 17, has been with the program for 1½ years. In that time she's made a complete 180

with her life, how she values education, and her self-worth.

"I was into gang life. I was never at school — I had straight F's," she said. "There was a lot of bad influence around me. I had dreams but I wasn't finding the right way to go."

Flores has plans to attend college when she's done with her studies, hoping to go on to law.

"I would love to be a lawyer," she said. "I'd work with youth that have been through a lot of things."

On a broader level, Mendoza Gray sees the investment in Latino youth as a moral imperative and an economic necessity.

"We should capitalize and use Latino youth as an investment for this country," she said.

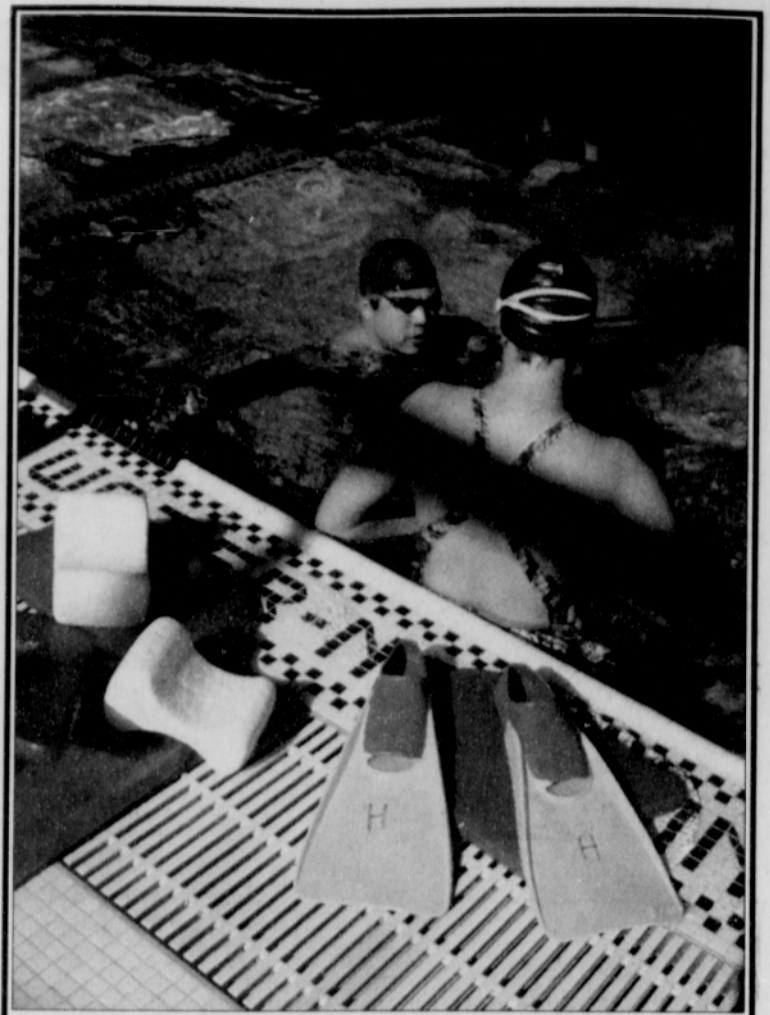


PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Area residents use the Matt Dishman Community Center, a Portland Parks facility in northeast Portland, for exercise and better health.

Promoting Better Health Coalition Hosts Nutrition Forum

Everyone knows that fruits and vegetables are the cornerstone of a healthy diet. But if your body craves chips and not carrot sticks, it's sometimes hard to get in the recommended servings of five a day.

It's especially important for African Americans to eat iron-rich greens and potassium-packed bananas, as well as a variety of fruits and veggies, to fight off diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, strokes and some cancers that affect people of color disproportionately.

"A lot of those chronic diseases can be treated or prevented by behavioral modifications, meaning eating more servings of fruits and vegetables on a daily

basis and increasing our levels of physical activity," said Bill Beamer, special projects director for the African American Health Coalition.

A Nutrition Forum, produced by the AAHC, is scheduled Thursday from 6 to 7 p.m. at Emanuel Hospital's Lorenzen Center. The free event features a talk by Ileana Lee, a registered dietitian, who has expertise in nutritional needs for diabetics.

The AAHC also has a full schedule of physical activities classes designed to help you get started and reach your fitness goals.

To register for the nutrition forum, call 503-413-180 or visit www.aahc-portland.org.



Let's Make Read Across America An Every Day Event

By
Reg Weaver,
President,
National
Education
Association

Kids who read — and kids who are read to — do better in school and better in life. It's a fact supported by research and the common sense wisdom of parents everywhere.

This week, more than 45 million students, parents, grandparents, teachers, education support professionals, and others are taking part in the National Education Association's Read Across America day.

But reading can't be just a one day event. Kids need to experience the joy of reading every day. It's more than a way of helping students in school. Family reading helps strengthen families. Strong families help build strong communities. Reading and lifelong learning are at the core of our founding generation's highest aspirations for the United States of America.

NEA's Read Across America is one example of NEA's work to make sure every child has a public school as great as America's best public schools. NEA's Read Across America events bring others into the school community who might not otherwise get involved. School-based and community-based Read Across America events draw community leaders, politicians, athletes, musicians and actors into contact with students and with schools. Some of those connections between community leaders and schools evolve into ongoing efforts to be engaged with the school year-round.

In the same way, it provides an opportunity to highlight what NEA knows works in the classroom — the same ingredients that are supported by research by parents and by teachers and education support professionals: strong parental involvement, qualified and certified teachers, small class sizes that allow for individual attention, and books and materials aligned with high standards — and high expectations — for every child.

So on March 2 — and every day — take a moment and read with a child. Visit NEA.org to find out more about how you can get involved in activities in your area.

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Great Public Schools
for Every Child

NEA's 2.7 million members are the nation's leading advocates for children and public education

You're never too old, too wacky, too wild to pick up a book and read with a child.

Cultural Center Merger Possible Interstate Firehouse and Ethos talk

The multicultural Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center and Ethos, Inc., two programs focused on the arts in north and northeast Portland, are discussing plans to merge. A decision is expected by March 23.

Proponents of the merger see how the two programs would feed

off of each other, both youth oriented.

"They have a wonderful music program and we have a wonderful theatre arts program," said John Levers, president of the IFCC board of directors. "It would be an opportunity to expand their arts and it gives us outreach and contacts to many schools."

Ethos, a music education program for local kids with a strong staff and management team, would have access to space at the cultural center on North Interstate Avenue.

"We have a full theatre and

they'd be able to tap into our performing and visual arts," Levers said.

Charles Lewis, Ethos' founder and executive director, said there are a lot of details to be worked out.

"We are entering negotiations in good faith with the hope that the missions of both organizations can grow and expand."

Ethos, now located at 27 N.E. Killingsworth Ave., is midway in a campaign to raise money to remodel the former Masonic Lodge across from Jefferson High School for a future home.

Columbia Villa Film Premieres

"Imagining Home: Stories of Columbia Villa" is a documentary based on the lives of those relocated during the reconstruction of New Columbia, a housing project in north Portland's Portsmouth Neighborhood.

The film seeks to "define the soul

of a historic, maligned and cherished neighborhood" in asking what the neighborhood meant to the residents, how they coped with displacement and feelings about returning to the revamped area.

Screenings will be held on Wednesday, March 3 at 7 p.m. at

Portsmouth Middle School and Friday, March 4 and Saturday, March 5 at 7 p.m. at 5th Avenue Cinema at Southwest Fifth Avenue and Hall Streets. Admission is free, but seating is limited for all events. For more information, call 503-331-3960.



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