

# Long-Standing Northeast LIFE Center to Close

## Support runs out for food and clothing program

The LIFE Center on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard will close on June 17 after almost 40 years of assisting many local residents that couldn't get assistance elsewhere.

The small grass roots organization founded by the local African American community has provided emergency access to food, clothing, household items, furniture, and appliances for indigent families and individuals.

"The LIFE Center will close due to the lack of stable funding. This could not have happened at a worse time when we are seeing an increase in requests for our services," said Leslie Garth-Clark, LIFE Center executive director.

In the past, the center relied on donations from the United Way of the Columbia-Willamette, other community organizations, churches and individuals.

Unfortunately, donations to the LIFE Center have been declining for the last three years creating budget deficits and forcing the center to reduce staff and restrict its hours of operation. Currently, the center operates with an executive director and several committed volunteers — some of which have volunteered for over 20 years.

Many volunteers as well as clients feel their safety net will be taken away and wonder where they will go for resources or to dedicate their time in the future. It has been through the volunteers' efforts and despite funding reductions that the



LIFE Center Executive Director Leslie Garth-Clark. Center has been able to serve 200 families a month.

The LIFE Center was unique over the years because it had no requirement for clients to have a case-worker or to be on welfare to receive assistance. It served working class people who lived paycheck to paycheck. But recently, because of limited resources, the center restricted its service to only those who have gone through the "system."

With the center's closure, a huge void will be created in Portland's inner city for those seeking emergency help with basic needs.

For three years, the center has been operating at a deficit of \$30,000 or more, so its board has elected to sell the center's building. The proceeds will go towards opening a foundation to assist non-profits within the community who provide basic needs emergency services. A "LIFE Center Fund" will be estab-



A lack of financial support is cited in the future closing of the LIFE Center, a food and clothing assistance program serving local residents on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard for nearly 40 years.

PHOTO BY NICOLE HOOPER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

lished and managed by the Oregon Community Foundation for this purpose.

The closing of the center was a difficult and painful decision, but the board believes that the estab-

lishment of the "LIFE Center Fund" will prevent other small nonprofits from closing their doors and continue LIFE Center's legacy of assisting poor families for years to come, LIFE Center officials said.

On Saturday, May 7, the LIFE Center Board of Directors has invited all volunteers, past employees, community leaders, partner agencies and supporters to a farewell celebration at the center lo-

ated at 2746 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. from noon to 4 p.m.

Kirk Green, pianist will provide entertainment with local leaders present to honor the center's past accomplishments.



## Earth Day Rewards Photographer

Portland photographer Leonard Cogan beautifully captures the vibrant and diverse colors of spring at the Japanese Garden at Washington Park. This picture won first place in a Yahoo! Earth Day photo contest and will be showcased on Yahoo's Earth Day Website.

PHOTO BY LEONARD COGAN

## Alzheimer's and Minorities

Little research has been done on the way African Americans suffer from Alzheimer's Disease, an affliction that affects the minds of many aging minorities.

To shed some light on the subject, the African American Dementia and Aging Project and the Layton Aging and Alzheimer's Disease Center at Oregon Health and Science University are presenting guest lecturer Jennifer Manly, Ph.D., to speak on "Deconstruction of race and education in research on cognitive function."

Topics to be discussed include: the few measures of mental abilities that have been validated for use among ethnic minorities; how ethnic groups are more likely to be misdiagnosed as mentally impaired; how the development of separate norms for people of color is problematic; and an approach to gaining interest among many cross-



Jennifer Manly

cultural neuropsychologists that involves various experiments.

The lecture will take place on Thursday, April 21 at 3 p.m. at 8B60 University Hospital South and Oregon Health and Science University. For more information, call 503-494-3450.

## Cancer Risks Often Ignored

### Study finds illness in whites, blacks

(AP) - Black women with a family history of breast cancer are much less likely than whites to get genetic counseling, in part because of the mistaken notion that the genetic form of the illness is a white woman's disease, researchers say.

While breast cancer generally is more common among white women, some data suggest both races have similar rates of genetic flaws known as BRCA mutations that greatly increase the risk of developing the disease. Also, breast-cancer mortality rates are higher in black women.

In a study published in Wednesday's Journal of the American Medical Association, researchers questioned 408 women with a family history of breast or ovarian cancer. Only 16 of the 71 blacks studied - about 22 percent - got genetic counseling,

compared with 184 of the 310 white women, or about 60 percent.

Counseling to evaluate risks is generally a prerequisite for genetic testing.

Racial disparities are common when it comes to preventive medical care, but "the size of the difference was really surprising," Dr. Katrina Armstrong, a cancer researcher at the University of Pennsylvania who led the study.

Armstrong said the gap might reflect fears of discrimination and a general distrust of the medical establishment, while others said some blacks might be reluctant to talk about cancer.

Dr. Funmi Olopade, a University of Chicago breast cancer researcher who co-wrote an accompanying editorial, said black women tend to underestimate their breast cancer risk and lack awareness about BRCA flaws.

## Senior, Disabled Concerns

### State leaders to meet with community

A special "Town Hall on Senior and Disabled Issues" is scheduled for Saturday, April 23, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Kaiser Town Hall Building, 3704 N. Interstate Ave. The building is on the Interstate Max light rail line, near the Overlook Station.

The state is facing a budget shortfall of approximately \$600 million, and budget cuts may affect seniors, the disabled, and prescription drug services. The Town Hall is to hear citizen concerns and public comment.

Also included on the program will be short presentations on prescription assistance and part-

nership programs, and on proposed new payday lending legislation.

Sen. Margaret Carter, Rep. Gary Hansen and Rep. Steve March, all members of the budgeting writing committee of the Legislature, will participate in the meeting.

The program is a cooperative event with the Advocacy Coalition for Seniors and People With Disabilities, the Oregon Association for Retired Citizens, Save Our Seniors, and United Seniors of Oregon.

For more information, call 503-986-1722.

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