

Self Enhancement, Inc. Builds Futures

continued from Front

and 80 people are employed. The program also has the capacity to help 1,000 more children via after school programs.

Through tutoring, extracurricular activities and counseling during school, after school and over the summer, 8-year-old children grow into 25-year-old successes. This is quite a feat, considering 50 percent of the students come from single-parent family homes that live below the poverty line. But it was never a question to Hopson as to why or how inner-city children should be helped along the way.

"I'm a product of the civil rights movement, of the '60s," Hopson said. "It's hard not to be passionate. You'd have to have your head in the sand. It was always about community, about being the best you could be. We wanted to preserve this community and have it be a safe place for generations after us."

Last year, 98 percent of SEI youth graduated from high school and 85 percent went on to college, many with scholarships in hand.

Part of the success lies in working with The Relationship Model, proposing that the role of an SEI coordinator be not just that of a teacher, but a mentor and parent as well. They stand by the child for as many years as possible, allowing for a consistent, positive role model in the child's life.

"Every kid has a gift and opportunity to be successful. We have to expose them to find out what that gift is," Hopson said. "In an urban setting, kids live in a little box. The job of adults is to show kids their full potential."

While more than 85 percent of the student population is African American, Hopson said that the program works with any environment. He hopes that the prototype created in north Portland will be extended to other areas.

25 years and growing

SEI is looking toward its 25th anniversary next year, with much jubilation. It will also be hosting its biggest fund-raiser of the year, the Art and Soul Gala, on Oct. 8. Last year, the organization broke the record of raising more funds than any other in the state, gathering \$2 million for its work.



"We're proud that we've been able to stay the course," Hopson said. "We've stayed very focused. We've been able to survive all the ups and downs and keeping kids in school and getting them graduated."

In March 1997, the program opened the Center for Self Enhancement, a 62,000 square foot building at 3920 N. Kerby Ave. This meant having the ability to house an auditorium, library, dance studio, gym, computer lab, recording studio, cafeteria and most importantly, classrooms.

Last fall, Hopson opened up the SEI Academy Charter Middle School with 50 new students. Hopes are that the school will reach 150 youth over the next few years, with sixth, seventh and eighth grade classes being added as students progress.

"In public schools, many teachers are just teachers. Here, with every kid, you treat them like they're your son or daughter," Hopson said. "There are a large percentage of kids who haven't been parented the way they need to be. We're, in many ways, replacing that."

Each student is provided with uniforms and a backpack full of school supplies to start the year well-equipped. Beyond the core subjects, the students are held to the same standards prevalent throughout the rest of the program.

On their first day of school last September, according to an SEI newsletter, Hopson told his incoming students, "One thing that will be different about your educational experience here is when you don't show up, you'll have someone who will come and find you. When you step out of line, they will be there to help you get back in line. When you fall, there will be someone there to pick you up. And most importantly, when you feel that you can't, there will always be someone there to tell you that you can."

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- Tony Hopson Sr., SEI president and chief executive officer

TriMet Bans Smoking at Stations

As of Monday, TriMet has decided to ban smoking at bus shelters and MAX stations across the Portland-metro area.

Crews will install no-smoking signs at 1,090 shelters and stations in an effort to lessen secondhand smoke, an issue numerous people have complained about. Many riders,

especially babies, children, seniors and those with health issues, are vulnerable to secondhand smoke, which contains at least 43 chemicals known to cause cancer.

Those caught smoking at marked areas will be subject to a fine or exclusion from riding TriMet. For more information, visit www.trimet.org.

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'Jumptown' Chronicles Classic Portland Jazz

Book collects local stories, reviews

Back in the day between 1942 and 1957, jazz music thrived in Portland's nightclubs. Oregon jazz historian Robert Dietsche leads a guided tour of the main jazz spots, from supper club to dance hall, capturing the emotion, excitement and energy of an evening on the town in his upcoming book, "Jumptown."

His work collects hundreds of pieces of local jazz history including photographs, personal recollections, reviews, maps and handbills to create "an anatomy of a jazz village."

For a golden decade following World War II, jazz talent and musical activity flourished in Portland. A thriving African American neighborhood - soon to be bulldozed for "urban renewal" - spawned a jazz heyday rarely rivaled on the West Coast. Legends like Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Oscar Peterson, Dave Brubeck and Wardell Gray headlined Portland clubs and played with the local talent.

"Action central was Williams Avenue, an entertainment strip lined with hot spots where you could find jazz 24-hours a day," Dietsche writes. "You could stand in the middle of the Avenue (where



the Blazers play basketball today) and look up Williams past the chili parlors, past the barbecue joints, the beauty salons, all the way to Broadway, and see hundreds of people dressed up as if they were going to a fashion show. It could be four in the morning. It didn't matter; this was one of those 'streets that never slept.'"

The stories and moments in "Jumptown" bring to life the citizens of this jazz village - the musicians and dancers, the disc jockeys and promoters, the critics and the music teachers, the club owners and patrons.

The book is set for release in late October by Oregon State University Press.

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