

METRO

The Portland Observer

Committed to
Cultural Diversity

Community Calendar

Salvation Army Hair Cuts

The Salvation Army Moore Street Worship and Community Center, 5335 N. Williams Ave. offers free professional haircuts for children in need, on a first come first serve basis, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 19. For more information call 503-493-3927.

Portland Jazz History

Bob Dietsche, author of *Jumptown*, a history of Jazz in Portland and the African American community, will hold a book signing and reading event Saturday, Dec. 17 at 3 p.m. at Talking Drum Bookstore and Reflections Coffeehouse, 446 N.E. Killingsworth. He will be joined by Portland Observer writer Ron Weber who worked with Dietsche on the book.

Red Cross Teaches Safety

The American Red Cross offers a range of safety classes for crisis situations, from learning how to baby sit to performing CPR. The courses are intended for children aged 8 through adult. For more information visit www.redcross-pdx.org.

Winter Solstice Blood Drive

The 3rd annual Winter Solstice Blood Drive at the American Red Cross on North Vancouver, Dec. 19-23, features free gift-wrapping for participants. To make a blood donation call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE.

African Drumming, Dance

The North Star Ballroom, 635 N. Killingsworth Ct., hosts beginning drumming and Ghanaian rhythm classes on Tuesdays at 6 p.m. On Wednesdays, intermediate drumming is offered in addition to an African aerobics and dance. Chata Addy teaches all classes. For more information call 503-632-0411.

Al-Anon Meetings

Al-Anon meetings are held Monday evenings from 7:15 to 8:30 p.m. at Miracles Club on the corner of Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Mason Street. Al-Anon is for friends and loved ones of alcoholics and addicts.

Bradley-Angle House

The Bradley-Angle House needs volunteers to help its outreach against domestic violence. Women of color and bilingual women are encouraged to call. For more information, call 503-282-9940.

Work For Change

Community Advocates invites those interested in protecting children from abuse to become an event volunteer, event outreach, technology expert, graphic artists or office support team member. For more information, call 503-280-1388.

Women in Community Service

Volunteer mentors are being sought by Women in Community Service to work with incarcerated women at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. Mentors provide support and encouragement for women transitioning from prison back into the community. Volunteers must be females, age 24 and up. For more information, call 503-570-6614.

35
years of
community service



PHOTOS BY ISAIAH BOUIE/
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The University of Portland Pilots' latest national women's soccer championship is sweet for Pilot fans who braced the cold to rejoice with the team at Pioneer Courthouse Square Friday. The fans were thanked for being supportive all season.



Soccer Heroes Meet Fans

The Pilots, University of Portland's Soccer Champions, braced the cold, signing autographs for faithful fans Friday at Pioneer Courthouse Square.

Bar Codes to Bar Member

BPA attorney got start with Saturday Academy

BY ANDREA DYAL

FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

When Melanie Spraggins attended Reynolds High School her skills in math and science were clear. Her career plan, however, was not.

But soon an apprenticeship through Saturday Academy played a springboard role, shaping the young woman she would become.

Spraggins' talent and hard work in the high school program captured the attention of a Saturday Academy instructor, who encouraged her to apply for an apprenticeship. In 1994, the pursuit was successful and she was working and learning about science and engineering with the Bonneville Power Administration.

At BPA, she solved complex, real-world problems, learning resourcefulness and engineering skills. One of her accomplishments was the development of a system of

bar codes for power substations that are still in use today.

The experience gave Spraggins a glimpse of her future.

She completed a second summer with BPA as an advanced apprentice, teaching new interns. Afterwards, Saturday Academy connected her to an internship at Oregon Health and Sciences University, which helped clarify her career goals.

At Oregon State University, she was elected vice-president of the student body and later president on the first African-American ticket for student body president and vice-president.

Spraggins' felt the experience from her apprenticeships set her apart and gave her distinct advantages in pursuing her career. She better understood the value of taking a more comprehensive approach to her performance. Daily distractions carried less importance.

Heartbreaking report measures impact

Oregon's homeless student population from the most recent school year was 11,294 kids between 5 and 18 years old, a staggering figure, according to state Schools Superintendent Susan Castillo.

"This is a heartbreaking report that shows thousands of children in Oregon attend school despite lack of safe and stable living situations," Castillo said. "Homeless youths face huge challenges before they even get to the school door, and schools work hard to provide

these students with what they need to ensure they can access the same educational opportunities available to every other student."

The Census Bureau estimates that 1-2 million youth are homeless nationwide, about 2 percent of all 5-18 year olds. The same percentage was found in Oregon.

Out of the state's 552,320 students from kindergarten through high school, 5,052 were homeless in grades K-5, 2,464 were homeless in grades 6-8, and 3,778 were homeless in grades 9-12



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Melanie Spraggins is a successful attorney with the Bonneville Power Administration in Portland. Her springboard into the professional world began as a Portland area student in Saturday Academy.

She had a clear picture of how excellence in learning could lead to excellence in her professional life.

Before she graduated from college, the BPA hired Spraggins as an environmental scientist. When she

decided to enter law school, BPA helped her out.

Fast-forward to 2005. Spraggins is now a lawyer for the BPA. With nearly 12 years experience at the federal agency, she has a firm grasp on the technical aspects of high

voltage electrical transmission systems and enjoys a unique niche at the organization.

In retrospect, Spraggins says that her Saturday Academy appren-

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No Homes for Thousands of Oregon Kids

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Susan Castillo

Homeless children are defined as minors who lack fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residences. A homeless family could live in an emergency shelter or share housing with others due to loss of housing or economic hardship, stay at motels or live in cars, parks, public places, tents, trailers, or other similar settings.

In Oregon, 56 percent of homeless students reported sharing housing with relatives or friends due to economic hardship or similar reason; 17 percent reported living in

a homeless shelter; 9 percent reported being unsheltered; 5 percent reported living in motels; 13 percent were unknown

Federal law requires that homeless children have equal access to the same education provided to other children. Each school district is required to have a Homeless Liaison to coordinate outreach efforts and services for homeless students in their area.

Castillo credited the work of school officials for compiling the data and for providing services to homeless students that include school enrollment, extra tutoring, referrals for shelter, housing, health care and counseling services.