



**Jimmy Smith, 76.** Jazz organist whose scintillating music, called "soul jazz," combined jazz, R&B, and bebop. Feb. 8.

# Contributions Remembered

continued ▲ from A7



**Renaldo "Obie" Benson, 69.** Member of Motown's Four Tops ("I Can't Help Myself"). July 1.



**Vivian Malone Jones, 63.** One of two blacks whose enrollment at the University of Alabama led to George Wallace's infamous "stand in the schoolhouse door." Oct. 13.



**Richard Pryor, 65.** Actor-comedian whose profanely personal insights into race relations made him one of Hollywood's biggest stars. Dec. 10.

**C. DeLores Tucker, 78.** Longtime civil rights activist. Oct. 12.



**Shirley Chisholm, 80.** First black congresswoman, presidential candidate, educator and author. Jan. 1



**Jimmy "Bang Bang" Walker, 73.** One of Oregon's boxing legends (shown center) who became a community activist and newspaper editor.

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## Portland's United Nations

continued ▲ from Front

transferable," McDonald said. "A doctor may have to work as a nursing assistant, at least temporarily. The same with an attorney or an engineer - it's talent that's not used

may be working outside the home for the first time and may need to learn to drive or use mass transit. Negotiating urban traffic that can be intimidating to a rural newcomer. McDonald said immigrant women tend to retain traditional

are symbolized by the flags of many nations that anchor a quilt on a wall in the IRCO reception hall that spells out "welcome" in several languages. Some refugees see these flags, such as one for the Republic of Vietnam, as symbols of the regimes that mistreated them. Some have felt strongly enough about the matter to rip the offending flags off the wall. Worse, some ethnic groups, such as the Oromo and

Amhara of Ethiopia, may carry there past conflicts to this country.

"We can't tell people what to think, but it is our business to help people get along and put past problems behind them," McDonald says. "Perpetuating those conflicts isn't in anyone's best interest. We tell our clients they don't have to throw all their customs away, but they need to learn the basics of how to live in this country."

*We tell our clients they don't have to throw all their customs away, but they need to learn the basics of how to live in this country.*

- Jeff McDonald of Portland's Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO)

well. It's often easier to be certified as a carpenter or welder."

Even after finding a job, IRCO has job coaches to help both the new arrival and their employer for 90 days to work through any problems.

Next to jobs, perhaps the biggest issue for immigrants is schooling for children.

"You have to enroll your children in a school system you don't understand," McDonald said. "Most refugees have a very high regard for education and teachers, but they don't understand how the system works. They don't know how to be involved in their children's education or how to support them."

For example, there's confusion about SATs and when to take them or what is a parent-teacher conference?

"Kids tend to adapt to new cultures more quickly," McDonald says. "Everyone wants to fit in and the kids may want to do things or adopt fashions that their parents find unacceptable. Discipline may be affected - the kids may tell their parents, 'You can't hit me, it's against the law here,' and the parents are misinformed about that is acceptable and what is not. Sometimes they're coming from very tribal societies where you aren't careful about who is minding your children because everyone knows everyone - that doesn't work well here."

There are other family-related issues. Women from some cultures

clothing longer than men and sometimes that's a problem in the job market.

Nonetheless, women sometimes find paying work before their husbands, even better paying jobs, McDonald said. In some cultures, this can lead to tension between the husband and wife. To deal with the emotional issues, IRCO provides counseling, holds seminars on domestic violence and refers refugees to other mental health providers.

IRCO has its origins as the Indo-Chinese Cultural and Service Center, begun in 1976 and located on Northeast 42nd Avenue in the Hollywood area. In 1984, it merged with the Southeast Asian

Refugee Federation. In 2001, the organization moved to their current site at 10301 N.E. Glisan St.

The agency has branched out to provide services for the David Douglas School District and Multnomah County senior services. Two years ago they added a gym for weddings and other gatherings as well as athletic activities.

The IRCO staff is nearly all bilingual with one employee speaking nine languages. Most are themselves former immigrants.

"They're sensitive to the needs of the people we serve and they're good role models," McDonald said. "By their presence they're saying, 'See, I made it here, and so can you.'"

Still, challenges remain for IRCO and its clients. Conflicts

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