

METRO

The Portland Observer



Sportsmanship Grows Riverdale Program

Newcomers compete in a tough league
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SECTION B

Community Calendar

Annual Chocolate Fest

Just in time for Valentine's Day, the World Forestry Center holds its first annual Chocolate Fest on Saturday, Feb. 11 and Sunday, Feb. 12 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day. For more information visit www.worldforestry.org.

Valentine-A-Grams

Loaves & Fishes Centers will host Valentine-A-Grams for Valentine's Day. The Meals-On-Wheels people will deliver two delicious Cinnabons, a packet of fresh ground Seattle's Best Coffee, orange juice from Sun Orchard, a jar of Cinnabon's famous Makarra cinnamon and more. Call 503-736-6325 or visit www.loavesandfishesonline.com by Friday, Feb. 10.

Bike Riding Celebrated

Put on your yellow slicker and join the Community Cycling Center on Saturday, Feb. 12 for its fifth annual Worst Day of the Year Ride. The bike ride covers 18 urban miles and is perfect for all skill levels. The ride starts at the Lucky Lab Brew Pub on 915 S.E. Hawthorne and finishes in the same spot. Registration starts at 9 a.m. and the ride starts at 10 a.m. For more information visit www.WorstDayRide.com.

Business Meeting

The North/Northeast Business Association meets on the first Monday of each month from 6 to 8 p.m. at Albina Community Bank, 2002 N.E. Martin Luther King Blvd. The general membership and liaison meeting is held the last Wednesday of every month from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Williams Business Suites on the northeast corner of Fremont and Williams. Call and RSVP at 503-284-9013.

Stay Healthy Naturally

Providence Portland Medical Center is hosting Staying Healthy Naturally, Women and Integrative Medicine, a forum where experts will explain the use of complementary and alternative medicine to keep women healthy. This will take place on Thursday, Feb. 9 for free from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., at Providence Portland Medical Center located on 4805 N.E. Glisan.

Work Against Abuse

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.

Honor Others with Trees

Friends of Trees' annual Commemorative Trees planting will be held on Sunday, Feb. 12 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., along the Rock Creek Trail at 20085 N.W. Tanasbourne Drive in Hillsboro. For more information call 503-282-8846, extension 17.

Kindergarten Round Up

Vernon Elementary School, 1044 N.E. Killingsworth St., holds its Kindergarten Round Up on Friday, Feb. 10 at 8:45 a.m. This event is set up to learn more about Vernon School and register your child for kindergarten starting in September. Children must be 5 years old by Sept. 1.

Creative Space For Dance

Aurora Dance Studio, 5433 N.E. 30th, offers classes for children, teens and adults at all levels of ability. Call 503-249-0201.

Empowering KIDS for Generations

Youth advocate gets Black History honor

The Portland Trail Blazers in partnership with the Bridge Builders youth organization, tipped-off a month-long celebration of Black History by honoring Phil Walden, a legendary local teacher, coach and youth advocate.

Walden is credited for empowering and developing generations of students and athletes in Portland. He has coordinated and self-funded countless after-school and summer programs over the past five decades. His programs have kept inner-city youth active while cultivating their life-skills and job-readiness.

At 75 years of age, Walden still works full-time as a popular substitute teacher in the Parkrose and Centennial schools while also donating his time to the Benson High School Track & Field program as a sprint coach.

Notable athletes that Walden has mentored include: Olympic Gold Medalist & Basketball star Cindy Brown, State Track & Field Champion Robin

Marks, Former NBA players Mark Radford and Damon Stoudamire, NBA All-Star Terrell Brandon, former UW Cornerback Walter Bailey, Grant High School Football star Richard Hollis and many more.

Walden is one of eight local African-Americans that will be honored at

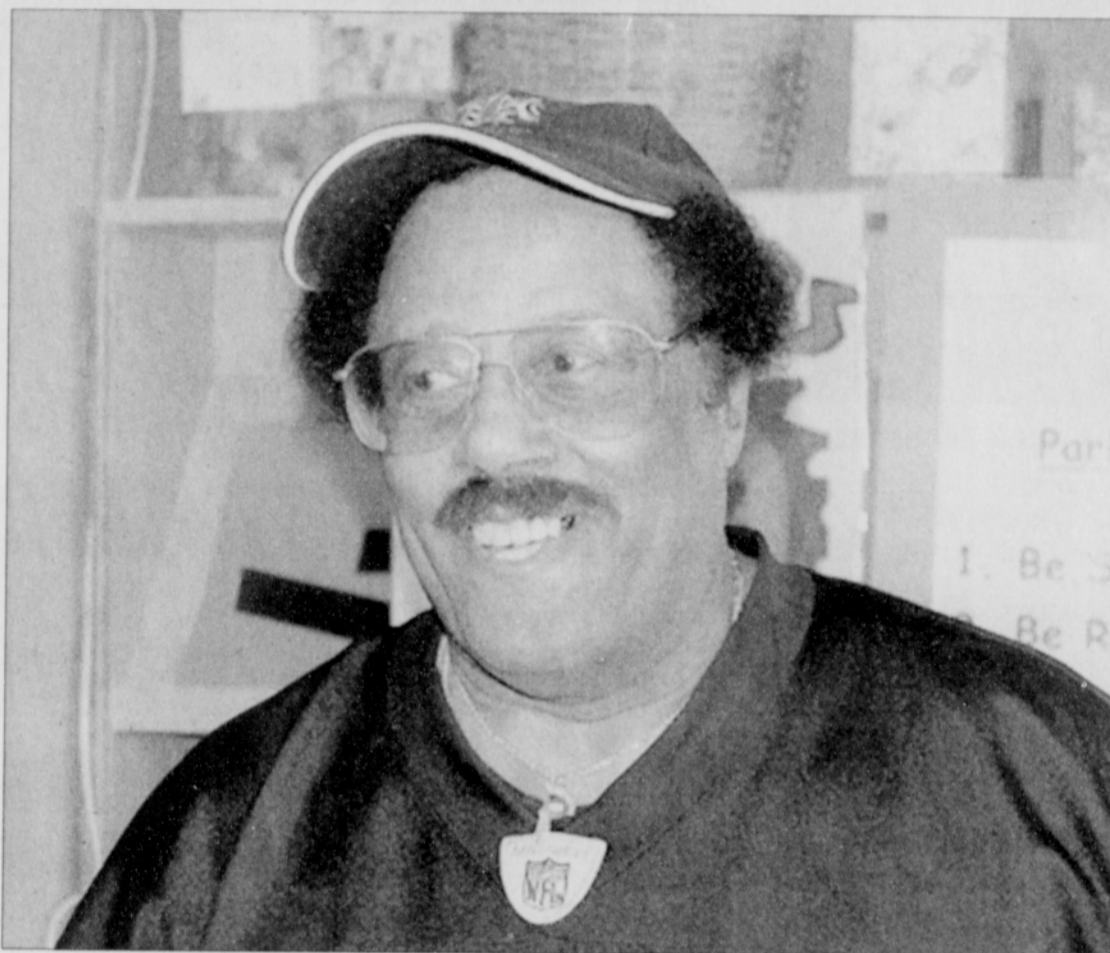
a home game during the month of February. Honorees are selected based upon their outstanding achievement and ongoing contribution to the Portland community. Walden received a \$500 stipend during the Feb. 1 Trial Blazer contest with San Antonio, to be donated to Benson High School

Track & Field club, and his honorary ticket section hosted members of the Blazers Boys & Girls club.

A special center court presentation of all the 2006 honorees will take place at the Trail Blazers vs. Celtics game on Friday, Feb. 24. Teenagers from the Bridge Builders' Prospective Gents program, a local rites of passage program for African-American youth, will present handmade tapestries to each recipient. The Gents crafted the wall hangings out of authentic Kente cloth. It is customary for rites of passage participants to present elders with handmade gifts to signify reverence and respect.

In 1926, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the second black to ever receive a Ph.D from Harvard University, inaugurated Negro History Week, which later evolved into Black History Month in 1976.

The month-long celebration is a time for Americans to reflect on the history and teachings of African-Americans whose contributions are still too little known. It is the month in which we bear witness to the progress, richness and diversity of African-American achievement.



Phil Walden has created and led after-school and summer programs for kids for more than 50 years.

Meek Vocational Students Learn Citizenship

Setting up shop at former northeast elementary

BY LEE PERLMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Meek Vocational High School has come a long way down since a year ago when Vocational Village moved from Glenhaven School on Northeast 82nd Avenue to the former Meek Elementary School at 4056 N.E. Alberta Court.

The new location is a smaller building with less access to mass transit. It has no gym.

In the words of teacher Maggie McSwiggen, its recreational facilities consist of "a covered area open to the wind and rain, full of pigeon droppings and puddles whenever it rains."

Yet faculty and students see the new home as a triumph.

Meek works with young people age 16 years old and up, typically students who have dropped out or been expelled from more traditional high school programs. They learn at their own pace, regardless of age or formal grade.

The old Glenhaven school had long been eyed as surplus school district property. When the Banfield Pet Hospital chain offered to purchase it in 2003, the district sold, saying it couldn't justify the estimated \$1.5 million in needed to upgrade the site.

McSwiggen said her co-workers and students were shocked.

"100 percent questioned the need to move," she said.

Students launched their own campaign to save the school. The effort was led by a Project Citizen class in the school's Center for Civic Education, which encourages students to apply their skills to real life issues.

The classmates wrote to individual members of the school board and invited them to tour the school, developed a power presentation, and when several board members came, the students who had issued



Meek Vocational High School Principal A.J. Morrison (from left) with Project Citizen students Hildamar Flores, Justin Lloyd, Jenny Martinez, Justice Brown and Sharita Smith, and project teacher Maggie McSwiggen.



PHOTO BY ISAAH BOUIE/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Shop teacher Paul Reets instructs Dustin Casey in the art of welding at Meek Vocational High School, the former elementary school at 4056 N.E. Alberta Court.

the invitations personally escorted board members around.

In the end, the board agreed to save the vocational school and move it to Meek, a school that was closed just months earlier because of budget cuts.

Board member Bobbie Regan said the Vocational Village students were "a treasure of the district."

"They're at risk and disenfranchised," she said. "This is an incredibly valuable program that we can and must continue."

Project Citizen students were successful in opposing initial ideas of placing the vocational school in some unused part of another high school like Benson, Jefferson, Madison or Marshall.

"We'd be sending these kids back into the same environment where they'd demonstrated they couldn't succeed," school princi-

pal A.J. Morrison said. "Further, one of the things that makes this school work is its unique identity.

It's not easy to maintain that in part of a larger building. The culture of the larger school would predominate."

McSwiggen said being part of another high school would make her kids "second-class citizens," a stigma they already fight.

The students took tours of the empty Meek property. They concluded that although it was inferior to their current quarters in several ways - it lacked Glenhaven's proximity to light rail, it was smaller and it lacked several amenities - it would do with some modifications.

The chief of the concerns were the addition of facilities for the school's prized auto shop and in-

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years of
community service