

# METRO

The Portland Observer



## Portland Jazz History

Fan base explodes during North Williams Avenue golden years

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SECTION B

### Community Calendar

#### Ockley Green School Night

Ockley Green School will host an Information Night Thursday, Feb. 23 at 6:30 p.m. Learn about opportunities for students and how to register for 2006-07 school year. School tours take place Feb. 23 at 1:30 p.m. and March 6 at 10 a.m. For more information, call the school at 503-916-5660.

#### O'Jays Bring Soul Music

Tickets are now on sale for the O'Jays with the original Manhattan, featuring Gerald Alston and Winfred "Blue" Lovett coming March 23 to the Rose Quarter's Theater of the Clouds. Tickets are \$34.50 - \$47.50 plus service charge. For more information, call 203-224-4400

#### Tour de France on OMNIMAX

Wired To Win: Surviving the Tour de France opens March 3 at Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI), 1945 S.E. Water Ave. For more information, call 503-797-4640.

#### 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.

#### Creative Space For Dance

Aurora Dance Studio, 5433 N.E. 30th, offers an array of classes for children, teens and adults at all levels of ability. Call 503-249-0201 or visit online at www.hevanet.com/auroradance for more information.

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### Aquatic Fitness

Providence has a full schedule of fitness classes including water exercising at the Providence Aquatic Center, 4805 N.E. Glisan. For schedule, call 503-215-6301.

#### 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.

#### Birth Ready

Whether you need childbirth preparation classes, or just a refresher, Providence Health Systems has a workshop for you. Prepare for pain, take a weekend seminar or prepare big sisters and brothers-to-be throughout the summer by visiting www.providence.org/classes or call 503-574-6595.

## Reaching for the Stars

### Local talent signs record deal

Ralesha Boswell, a young hip-hop star from Portland, has signed a record contract with a company backed by entertainment giant Sean 'P Diddy' Combs.

Boswell, 17, will join her first cousins and their group Myxx in Atlanta, Ga. to record under the First Lucky Label, an enterprise backed by Combs, rap star Ludacris and Bad Boy Records, family members said.

The Gresham High School student and daughter of Rose and Charles Lott has long dreamed of being a Hollywood performer. She started singing as a little girl when her father put a microphone in front of her.



Ralesha Boswell

Her repertoire includes song, dance, rapping and mime. She and her mother are well known

for performing together in Portland over the past few years.

Combs is one of the biggest record producers and rappers in the entertainment industry. He is also known for his talent in nurturing young hip-hop stars and recently started a talent search show "Making of the Band" via his Bad Boy Entertainment Co.

Hip-hop sensation Ralesha Boswell's entertainment repertoire includes performances in mime during local church services. The 17-year-old has signed a deal with a record company backed by entertainment mogul Sean 'P Diddy' Combs.



## Expressions from Young Katrina Survivors



'Family'



'Dreams'

### Celebrating black history in the making

Artistic expressions from children who moved to Portland from the hurricane and flood ravaged Gulf Coast will

be on display during the monthly event known as Last Thursday on Alberta Street.

The Black United Fund of Oregon, 2828 N.E. Alberta St., invites area residents to stop by their offices Thursday, Feb. 23 between 5:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. to see the paintings from the young victims of the storm.

Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast in late August. Thousands of people

lost everything they had and evacuees spread out across the country in search of relief. More than 800 hurricane survivors eventually found their way to Portland, one way or another.

In October, about 200 of the survivors gathered at Matt Dishman Community Center in northeast Portland for a private evening of relaxation and support. The event included music, dancing, swimming, basket-

ball, food, crafts and community resource representatives.

There was also a mural project organized by artist and art therapist Illa Gutman. All ages of survivors embraced the idea and several huge canvases came alive with inspiration and paint.

Four murals representing "Family",

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## Amalia Alarcón Tackles Community Issues

### Leads neighborhood agency in transition

BY SARAH BLOUNT  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Portland's natives and newcomers are becoming increasingly familiar with density and diversity, so it was fitting for Amalia Alarcón, a Puerto Rican native and community development veteran, to join the Office of Neighborhood Involvement as the bureau's interim director.

Alarcón brings 20 years of relevant experience in community mobilization. She was appointed temporary director last month by Mayor Tom Potter as the city searches for a permanent director they hope to have in place by July. Alarcón is one of several candidates currently under consideration.

ONI, the liaison between Portland's 95 neighborhoods and city government, runs a number of programs that tackle issues of land-use, transportation, crime prevention and livability.

Alarcón has been with the City of Portland since 1999, as former program manager of ONI's Metropolitan Human Rights and Neighborhood Resource Centers. She has lived in Oregon for 14 years, focusing on prevention and advocacy issues within the state's communities of color. Prior to moving to the state, Alarcón ran a program in New York for children with HIV, an experience she described as a crisis operation.



Amalia Alarcón (second from left) leads the Office of Neighborhood Involvement with John Canda (far left) of the Northeast Coalition, Alison Stoll (far right) of Central Northeast, and Michael Kersting (second from right), ONI financial analyst.

Alarcón's new position comes at a turning point for ONI. The agency is an important factor within Mayor Potter's visioning process, as he is charging the city bureau to place more emphasis on community input and involvement. Alarcón said her longstanding relationship with activists has

helped her grasp Potter's plans to restructure ONI.

Established in 1974, ONI's initial role was to provide oversight and disperse money to Portland neighborhoods. Now ONI oversees seven district coalitions, who in turn oversee about a dozen neigh-

borhoods each.

ONI has added programs over the years, including crime prevention, neighborhood inspections and neighborhood mediation. Now they are examining what programs to keep and what their future role will be.

"In the next year the bureau stands to change dramatically," Alarcón said. "ONI has the potential to model a 'ground-up' approach. We're trying to redesign the system to make it a more welcome part for folks who aren't normally engaged."

Alarcón said their approach must be tailored to suit the needs of race, class and ethnicity while identifying differences between renters and homeowners. She cited herself as an example.

"I'm a Latina single mom with two kids and a full-time job," she said.

About 60 people make up the ONI staff, but volunteers make up the program's core.

Tom Griffin-Valade is the director of North Portland Neighborhood Services Office, one of the city's volunteer coalitions. Over the

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36  
years  
of  
community service