

OPINION

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Closing Humboldt School is a Bad Idea

Community has investment in facility

BY SHERRI "GG" WARREN

Since it's reorganization under Principal Judy Bryant in the 1990s, Humboldt Elementary students have consistently improved. We have stability within the faculty, and many more returning students each year.

One of the school district's criteria for closing schools is the condition of the facility and use or underuse of the facility. Humboldt is in excellent condition and has many after school programs that are housed in the building. These include Self Enhancement Inc.,

where children are helped with their homework by Mr. Foster who is on the premises during the school day.

We have the Chargettes who were recently showcased during half time at the Blazer game. Not to mention their performance at the Celebrate Schools function held at the convention center.

There is Ethos, the music education program that has space in our building. We also house a Touchstone coordinator who helps families with resources; a WORKS after-school tutoring program has a room, also.

At least 80 percent of our children are involved in some type of academic after school activity. Humboldt has partners with the Jefferson Caring Community, Humboldt Neighborhood

Association, Neil Kelly, The Trail Blazers, University of Portland and Portland State University.

Because of all this, I find it hard to believe that our building isn't being used efficiently.

By closing Humboldt Elementary, the school district is creating a hardship on many families in the neighborhood. Most of the children walk to school. Closing their school and forcing them to attend schools farther away, when they don't have adequate transportation, makes no sense.

In addition to that, the district is planning to have our children attend Ockley Green where, the students are performing significantly lower academically. Why would you send chil-

dren from a school that's reaching benchmarks, to a school where over half of the students are not? And did I mention the porno shop on the corner, right across the street from the Ockley Green playground. My child is not going there.

It's been said that the school board wants to make Portland a place for families. What family is going to want to come here when we're closing all of the neighborhood schools, and farming our children out of the area? On that same note, it's also been said that the Humboldt area doesn't have as many children and many people moving in are single. What about when these single people start having children? You'll eventually end up reopening Humboldt

because you miscalculated the number of families, and ongoing growth in our community. Many of my friends have young children and are looking at Humboldt for their school. Apparently these young families fall under the radar. And maybe you've forgotten Humboldt Gardens. Construction is set to begin soon, and when finished, it will house single people, and families.

I haven't hit on all of the reasons why closing Humboldt is a bad idea, but this is a good start. If these were your children who were about to be uprooted, I'm sure you'd take more time, and be mindful of how you make your decision.

Sherrri "GG" Warren is a Humboldt parent and PTA vice president.

Letter to the Editor Exploited Labor

The opinion piece "Do Illegal Immigrants Really Take Our Jobs?" (Earl Ofari Hutchinson, Apr. 5) seems to answer that question with a big "yes!" I beg to disagree.

It is corporate America and our weak civil rights laws that have shunted blacks, especially young men, out of the low-wage job market.

If an entire category of jobs (agriculture, janitorial, hotel and restaurant, food processing, residential construction, and others) are now declining in wages and for "Latinos only," that is because our anti-discrimination laws and affirmative action laws have no teeth, because our labor unions don't have enough clout and because our local and national governments are not enforcing labor protections nor investing in job creation programs.

Mexicans and other Latinos did not want to leave their homeland to "take our jobs" any more than blacks wanted to leave the South for Oregon. But huge economic changes - for example, the Great Depression for African Americans, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA, 1994) for Mexicans - forced workers off the land and into northern migration.

Many Latinos have to take sub-minimum wage, dangerous, dirty, drudgery jobs because of fear of deportation. Legalization and a path to citizenship would help prevent this exploitation.

American-born and immigrant workers have two choices: join together to enforce and extend labor and civil rights or together suffer the downward spiral of wages and working conditions, unemployment, crime, and incarceration.

Jamie Partridge, Northeast Portland

Why Mess with Success?

Humboldt closure fails to net benefits

BY STEPHANIE GAIDOSH

Based on the information supplied by Portland Public Schools, I've been unable to find clear evidence that closing the doors of Humboldt would save the district any money or offer a better education to our students. The opposite seems to be true.

Did you know that PPS rates Humboldt's building as 1 on a scale of 1-5, the best condition? Ockley Green, the building they would like to move Humboldt kids is rated a 4. The district is planning to move portables to that campus. Why take kids out of a healthy and safe building and put them into a trailer?

Humboldt is totally accessible under the Americans with Disabili-

ties Act; Ockley Green is not. The PTA was able to provide new play equipment to the Humboldt schoolyard and Ockley Green does not have play equipment.

Did you know that Humboldt has a federally funded pre-kindergarten program and the children attend full day school at the age of 4? Did you know that 91 percent of the 3rd graders are meeting or exceeding state standards in reading? This is a 35 percent increase over the 2003/04 year. This is amazing data considering that 96.1 percent of the students qualify for free/reduced lunch and 13.8 percent have English as a second language.

Humboldt has the highest number of Talented and Gifted students compared to King and Ockley Green at 7.1 percent. Sixty-five percent of the children are African American, 21.9 percent Hispanic and the remaining

12 percent white, Native American and Asian.

Did you know: that between the 2003/04 school year to the 2004/05 school year there was only a drop in two students as far as enrollment numbers. The school district turned away more than 50 percent of transfer requests to Humboldt this year.

Did you know that every morning the children at Humboldt have an assembly to say the Pledge of Allegiance in both English and Spanish? Parents are invited into the school regularly and a welcome part of the morning assembly. Every Friday there is a coffee chat (family welcome center) for parents to network, use computers, etc.; and every child regardless of family income is guaranteed breakfast and lunch.

Did you know if the children were required to attend Ockley Green they would be crossing over

the Interstate 5 freeway without safety fences. The school is located over a mile from Humboldt. Although the district may bus children, who's going to bus the families so that they can be involved in their child's school? And at what cost to the public? Ockley Green is located right next to an adult porn shop that our kindergarteners will walk past daily.

Ten years ago the district fired the principal and staff of Humboldt starting new due to low performance. Now that the children are achieving the benchmarks, now is not the time to dismantle? Who builds a new home, gets it perfect then tears it down?

Please don't mess with success and instead use our school as a model for other schools within our community.

Stephanie Gaidosh is a resident of inner north Portland.

Executives, America's Wealthy Few

Salaries unfair to workers



There are similar stories at corporations across the country: while worker pensions are frozen and many are asked to do without raises, CEOs manage to earn their multi-million dollar bonuses.

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

Despite slower-than-anticipated growth and lower-than-expected profits, many corporations have generously rewarded their leaders, while simultaneously reducing lower-level staff salaries and benefits. This disturbing practice only serves to further widen the gap between America's wealthy few and its working class and clearly demonstrates just how little this country values its workforce.

At a time when most American workers are struggling to make basic ends meet and worrying how they'll manage to save enough for retirement, many of this country's corporate chief executives are stuffing their pockets with larger-than-life compensation packages that include high base salaries, stock option and ample pension plans.

In 2004, the average chief executive's salary at a large com-

pany was more than 170 times that of the average worker's pay. Last year, executive salaries grew 25-percent, while that of the average American worker grew only 3.1-percent.

Even when a company struggles, their CEOs are still rewarded. For example, the current CEO of a global manufacturing firm received over \$11 million in compensation last year, despite the company's \$3.4 billion revenue loss, an 11-percent drop in stock value and a staff reduction of 17,000 workers. There are similar stories at corporations across the country: while worker pensions are frozen and many are asked to do without raises, CEOs manage to earn their multi-million dollar bonuses.

While it is understood that executive salaries would greatly exceed that of the average worker's, there is no logical argument to explain why the growth rate between

the two is so dramatically different.

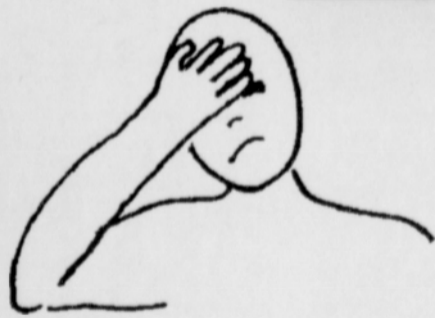
To protect its workforce, corporate America must ensure worker's salaries grow at rates that keep pace with the cost of living, while slowing the rate of growth of CEO salaries. Corporate boards must stop rewarding CEOs with multi-million dollar bonuses; it is unacceptable for a company to lay off thousands of workers and then turn around and pay an executive for 'a job well done.'

As a country, we often ask our government to think about the needs of the 'average American,' and rightly so. However, if America is to truly prosper, the corporations that feed our local economy must also consider and respect the well-being of average worker.

Judge Greg Mathis is national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, PUBLISHER: Charles H. Washington

EDITOR: Michael Leighton

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER: Mark Washington

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