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Miracles Club Celebrates



PHOTO BY SARAH BLOUNT/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
 Joyce Menefee joins Miracles Club co-chair Harry Winston and Valerie Richards outside the Miracles Club at 4069 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

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have Miracles in order to socialize with drug free people. We had to go to predominantly white communities."

For many, like Junior Gibson, Miracles offers a therapeutic community. Gibson used drugs and alcohol for nearly 40 years before attending NA meetings when the club first opened in his community. He has since moved to a home in northwest Portland, but never considered another place to aid in his recovery.

Miracles is where Gibson, and others like him, go in the face of adversity.

Without the club, he knows how easy it would be to simply get high or start drinking instead.

"We're all addicted and when we talk to one another we're really talking to ourselves," he said, "constantly reminding ourselves that we can't drink and use."

Saturday's 12th Anniversary Celebration will include a number of organizations in support of Miracles and video presentations of past events, plus snacks, dancing and a performance by the Gospel group Light. Tickets for are \$5. For more information, contact the club at 503-249-8559.

On Leadership's Path

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"He was always good at opening his door," she said.

Watkins studied law at Lewis and Clark and passed the bar exam in 1996. She met Freeman while serving as a certified law clerk at Juvenile Rights Project, a public family law firm representing children and their parents.

The young lawyer said she wasn't always thrilled by Freeman's persistent advice, but knew he had good intentions.

Watkins' earliest inspiration to succeed in life came at home, through the grandmother who raised her, Ruth Watkins.

The elder Watkins brought up her granddaughter in their northeast Woodlawn neighborhood home while working as a

maid for Evelyn Margaret Collins, the north Portland childcare provider known by an entire community as Miss Collins.

"She was no joke on the homework and the studies," Watkins said.

As a young woman, Watkins attended her debutant ball and became the first on both sides of her family to receive a college degree.

Her grandmother died of cancer during Watkins' freshman year at OSU, but Watkins' goal is to give back to others in her honor.

"How flattering to grow up, go to school, practice law here, and shape what happens in this community by being a public servant," she said.

For more information about Watkins' campaign, call 503-735-9182.

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Prostate Cancer Awareness

Knowledge is Power

BY LARRY LUCAS

Sometimes, ignorance is bliss – like when it comes to your mother-in-law's "secret recipe." But not when we're talking about your health. As a nine-year survivor of prostate cancer, I'm here to tell you that when it comes to the health of your prostate, ignorance can be life threatening.

September is Prostate Cancer Awareness month and according to the National Cancer Institute, prostate cancer is the second most common type of cancer among men in this country. Only skin cancer is more common. Out of every three men who are diagnosed with cancer each year, one is diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Prostate health is particularly important for African-American men. Death rates for this cancer are nearly two-and-a-half times higher in African-American men than white men, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), making this disease the most common cancer and the second leading cause of cancer death in black men.

Why is this? One reason suggested by the American Cancer Society is African-Americans are more likely to be diagnosed later, with more advanced cancer, which is harder to treat and is often more lethal. That's why it is so important to get tested regularly – through regular visits to your doctor. These screening tests can find cancer early when it's most treatable.

Lots of people – especially us men – would rather take comfort in the fact that they "feel fine" than subject themselves to an annual physical. But it's that annual physical that saved my life; I had no symptoms and was enjoying activities like golf with no problem. Through prostate screening tests that are a part of my regular physicals, I was fortunate enough to catch the cancer in the early stages, before it had spread



to lymph nodes or other vital organs.

There are two main screening tests doctors use to detect prostate cancer: digital rectal examination (DRE) and a blood test called the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test. Now, I know these screening tests don't sound like a day at the park. But your doctor is there to help make them as quick, painless and worry-free as possible. In fact, the DRE exam takes less time than you'll spend reading this sentence.

The American Cancer Society recommends that both the PSA and DRE should be offered annually, beginning at age 50, to men who have at least a 10-year life expectancy. Men at high risk, such as African Americans and those with a strong family history of prostate cancer, should begin testing at age 45.

In a recent interview with ABC News, Dr. Isamettin Aral of Staten Island University Hospital said, "I think it is important to share with the patient what you're finding in the examination. And also important is just because there is a lump or a swelling, it doesn't mean...[that] there is a tumor in the prostate. It just means we are going to have to do a little more specific testing, probably a biopsy."

What happens if a biopsy reveals that you have prostate cancer? In general, the earlier the cancer is detected, the more likely it is that you'll remain disease-free. Because approximately 90 percent of all prostate cancers are detected in the early stages, the cure rate is very high – nearly 100 percent of men diagnosed at this stage will be disease-free after five years, according to the Prostate Cancer Foundation. This is particularly remarkable when you consider that in the 1970s only 67 percent of men diagnosed with local or regional prostate cancer were disease-free after five years.

Larry Lucas is the deputy vice president for Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America.