Woodlawn Park Hosts Earth Day

Saturday celebration a first for inner Northeast neighborhood

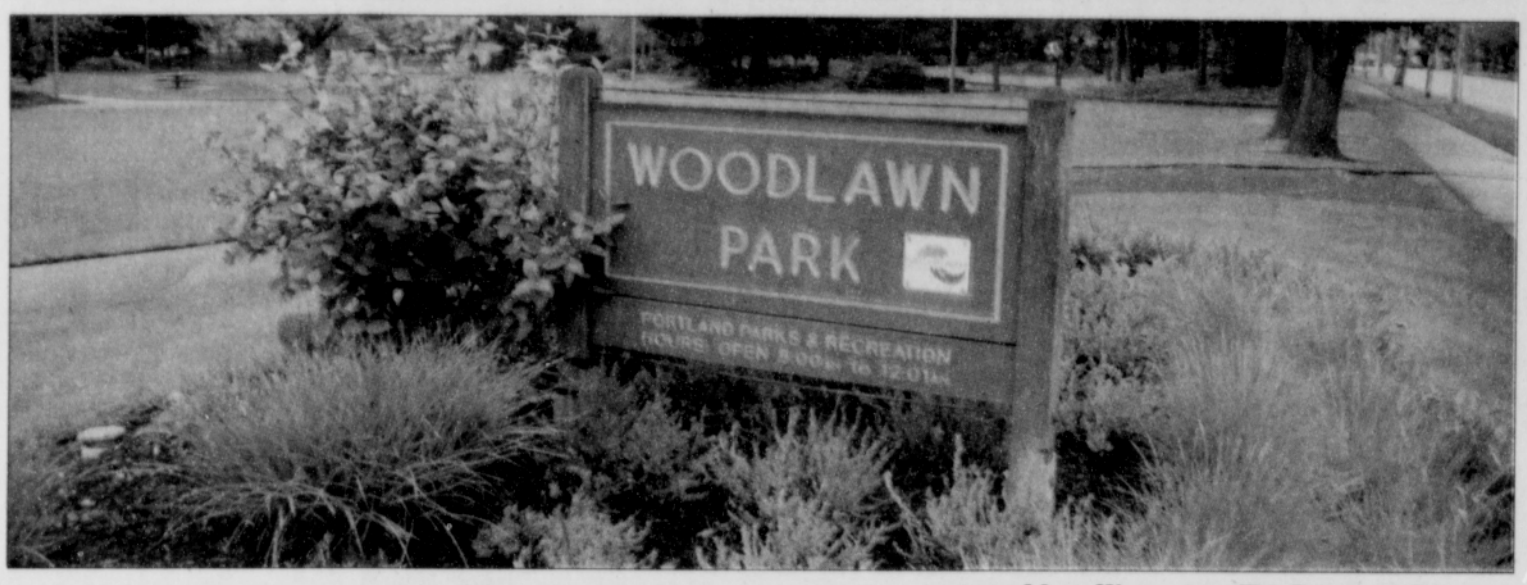


PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Woodlawn Park in northeast Portland will host a citywide Earth Day celebration on Saturday, April 21 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

BY LEE PERLMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A citywide Earth Day 2007 celebration will take place Saturday at Woodlawn Park in northeast Portland, a triumph for a neighborhood that has long fought to keep the park safe.

Between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. there will be information, giveaways and activities at some 80 booths provided by city organizations and agencies; a full schedule of entertainment at two concert stages; free health and wellness classes, entertainment and activities for kids sponsored by the I Have A Dream Foundation; gardening-related activities and a Better Transportation Fair featuring classes in bicycle usage.

For those who want to ride their green talk, there will be bike caravans to the festival from 16 different locations in the city. Celebrants will also see artwork created from refuse picked up in the surrounding Woodlawn neighborhood in a Kids Village Trash or Treasure exhibit.

In the days leading up to the celebration, the Woodlawn Association has been busy. Earlier this month they held an Easter Egg Hunt in the park, a graffiti cleanup in the neighborhood and a fundraising dance at the Village Ballroom, across the street from the park at 700 N.E. Dekum St.

Earth Day celebrations began nationwide in 1970. This is the eighth consecutive year that City Repair, a non-profit that works to create public gathering spaces, has helped sponsor the Portland event. This also is the first time the celebration has been held north of I-84 in northeast Portland.

According to festival organizer Bob New of City Repair, the decision was prompted largely by a letter from Woodlawn resident Julie Mickalson. She described the community as "a multi-ethnic dog walking neighborhood," with "six schools within walking distance, interesting homes and gardens, and a faith community that provides a stable, Unitarian atmosphere."

Improvments at Woodlawn Park include a new basketball court by Nike, a children's water feature where a poorly maintained wading pool used to be, and better drainage at the baseball field.

"We've made it a place for regular families," says Woodlawn historian Anjala Ehelebe. "It's well-used and well-loved."

Community plans for the Albina and Woodlawn communities have given the neighborhood some guidance in making improvements to the area, with issues of speeding traffic and unsafe pedestrian crossings still unresolved.

Still, Woodlawn today is an improving neighborhood with people who care enough about it to be volunteering to make it better, making it a fitting host for Earth Day.

"We're excited about bringing this up north and letting people in this part of town enjoy the celebration," said New.

Free Conference on Aging

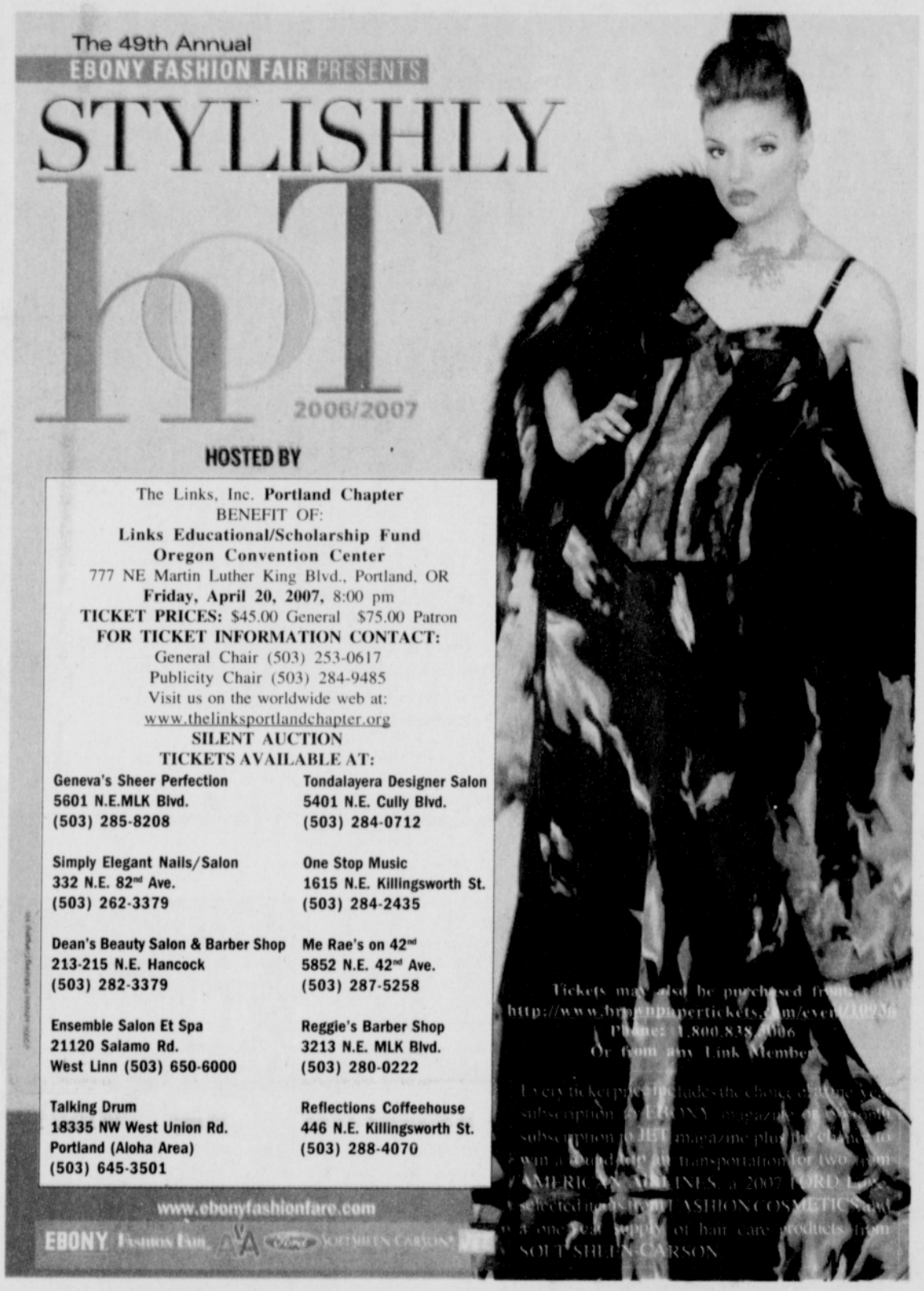
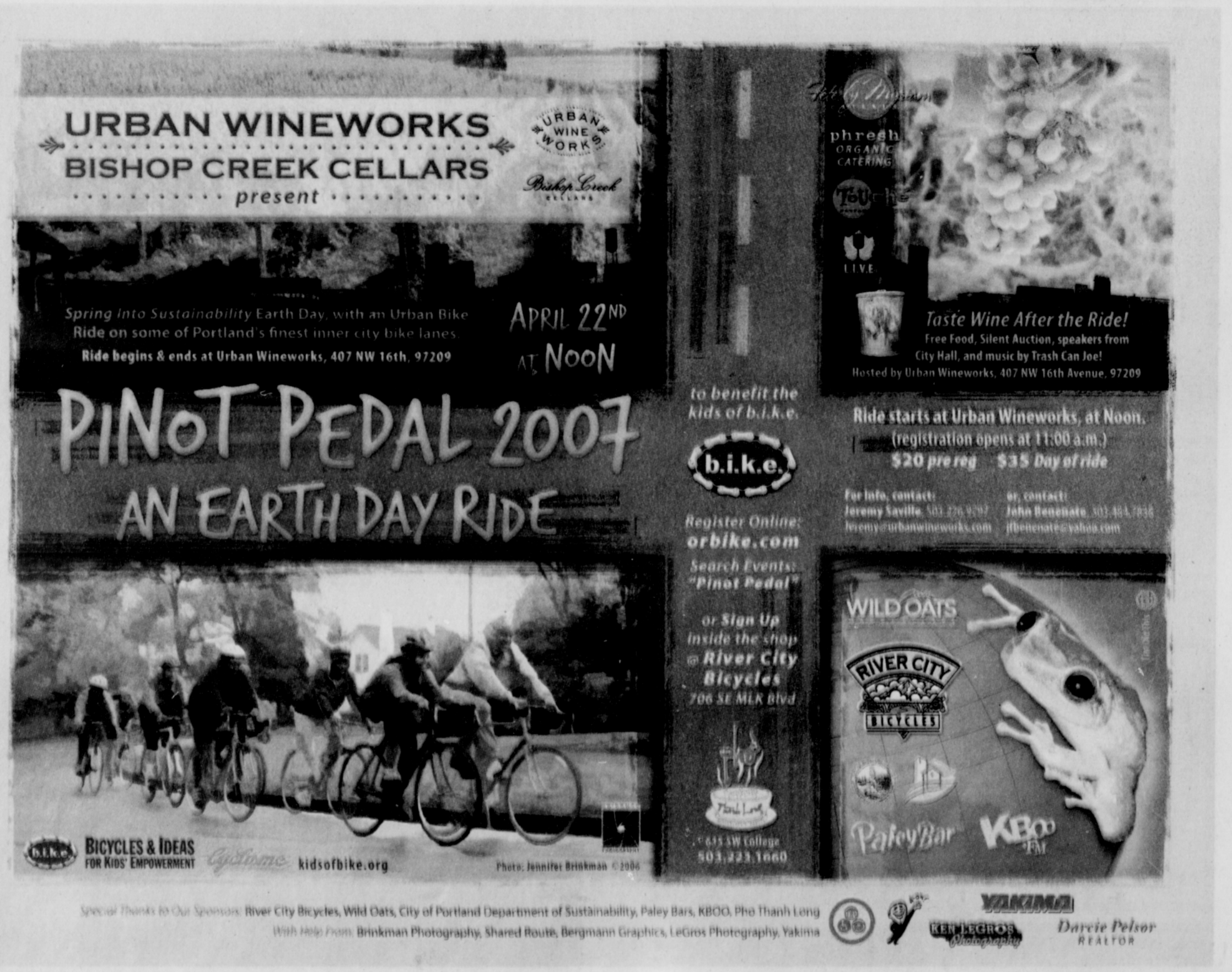
Are African Americans at higher risk of Alzheimer's than the general population?

The issue will be explored during a free conference "Hold On to Your Memory: Aging and Memory in the African American Community" on Saturday, April 21 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Portland Community College's Cascade Campus, 705 N. Killingsworth St.

The Urban League of Portland event will be open to families, care providers and anyone else with concerns about memory loss, managing the care of their loved ones and prevention.

Jennifer Manly

Attendees can learn ways to protect memory through health screenings, enjoy a nutritious soul food lunch, participate in workshops and receive free respite care for caregivers.

There also will be a screening of a Marie Smith Center oral history documentary, plus a panel discussion about aging in the African American community.

Jennifer Manly, associate professor of Neuropsychology at Columbia University Medical Center, will be the keynote speaker. For more details, visit www.ulpdx.org or call 503-381-0285.