

Local Grads Honored

Bridge Builders Celebrate

The community is invited to join the Bridge Builders as the mentoring group celebrates its African ancestors and local high school graduates.

The Bridge Builders Maafa Commemoration and Announcement takes place Saturday, June 16 at 8 p.m. at the University of Portland - Buckley Center Auditorium, 5000 N. Willamette Blvd.

Maafa is a Swahili word meaning, "great catastrophe." So this special event marks the great catastrophe of centuries ago when 50 million Africans died as they were transported during the middle passage from Africa to slave-trading countries including America.

The Bridge Builders will first recognize its senior graduates who are participating in the organization's African-centered rights of passage program through the Prospective Gents and Imminent Ladies of Virtue clubs at the Announcement program.

More than 15 passage candidates from schools, including Benson, Central Catholic, Grant, Aloha, David Douglas, Roosevelt, and Jesuit, will take part in the ceremony and give awe-inspiring speeches that they have spent months preparing.

After the Announcement the students, their families and guests will gather at the knoll on the campus, where the Ben York statue honoring the black member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition is located. White helium-filled balloons will be released to commemorate the millions of lives in the Maafa. Negro spirituals will also be sung.

Because this is a special ceremony all attendees are asked to where white in accordance, and bring several of their own white helium balloons.

For more information, visit www.thebridbuilders.org.

Interim Superintendent Selected

Ed Schmitt, retiring superintendent of the Multnomah Education Service District, will take the helm of Portland Public Schools as interim superintendent after Vicki Phillips leaves June 30.

Phillip is leaving PPS to join the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The school board has launched a recruitment and hiring effort. Monday it hired Schmitt to lead the district on a temporary basis.

A former English teacher, Schmitt worked for Portland Public Schools from 1980 to 1996, and served as PPS Director of Personnel before he became Superintendent of the Multnomah ESD.



PHOTOS BY PAUL NEUFELDT/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Twin Protests on Martin Luther King

Opponents to a Planned Parenthood clinic rally on one side of Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard where it crosses Beech Street (left) while proponents express their support on the opposite side (above). The duo protests were held Thursday at the proposed site of the family planning center, which is controversial because of abortion services. The Portland Development Commission approved the plans earlier this year after hearing from both sides in the issue.

Finding a Voice with Poetry and Songs

Inspirations from a local author

BY NICOLE RONAL HOOPER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

When Darlene Solomon-Rodgers read a poem by the famous African American author Nikki Giovanni she found her calling.

As a little girl, she hadn't heard Giovanni's story about Santa Claus being a black man, especially since she was bused to a school where the majority of the students were white. Some two decades later, Solomon-Rodgers, also known as Blaque Butterfly, is now a poet, singer and motivational speaker. She's a Jill of all creative trades in addition to her job as Health Access Coordinator at the Portland teen homeless shelter Outside In.

Butterfly took her name from a Sounds of Blackness song, "Black Butterfly." She believes it was divine intervention brought about after two friends in the same three-way phone conversation talked of butterflies in their car and on top of a flag pole.

"From that point on, I was Blaque Butterfly," she said.

In 2005, she became an author with the self-published "Black Girl



Blaque Butterfly

Can I Comb Your Hair," a collection of 30 pages of poetry. She made 250 copies and managed to sell them.

"I was opening for (local singer) Liv Warfield and wanted a product to sell and there's nothing more satisfying than publishing it yourself," she said.

Butterfly's entrepreneur spirit didn't stop there.

In 2006, she came out with Collide-A-Scope, a spoken word CD set to music and with other local artists, including her best friend, activist Rochell "Ro Deezy" Hart.

Butterfly can understand as a fellow artist and Oregonian, the disappointment Ro felt when she was rejected for a reading at

Powell's Books earlier this year.

Because of the book seller's fallout with her home girl she said she will never shop there again. She says she committed to shopping only at black-owned businesses to help rejuvenate the community.

Another thing Butterfly will never do is watch certain television shows, like "Flavor of Love" or the spin-off "Charm School."

"I think its television or hellivision that is doing a disservice and showing us what we're supposed to be doing by watching TV," she says. "If we spent more time with our kids then things would be better."

Butterfly watches Vh1 Soul, but true to form, the once neo-soul channel is piggy backing on the same tried and true rap videos chock full of booties, booze and bling.

"I was so mad at Nelly for his song "Tip Drill," said Butterfly. The video is more famous than the song, in which rapper Nelly is shown sliding a credit card in between a woman's buttocks.

"The rap game is run by media moguls," said Butterfly. "That goes back to people thinking there is no integrity in our art."

Technology, she feels, is partly to blame, with people more connected to iPods than each other. She recalls days when blacks in Portland were segregated and how

bad as gentrification," she said.

"We learned to lean on each other because we didn't have a choice. It was more community and social based," said Butterfly.

She grows frustrated when the black community acts negatively towards each other, especially children. Butterfly, who is the mother of one adult son, made an effort to instill him with respect towards elders.

"When you see someone on the street who looks like you and you don't speak to them, that is just as

In the winter, Butterfly plans to move to Atlanta, a city she says is more conducive to her creativity.

"It's been hard but it's time for me to go. If it would have been up to me I would have left five years ago," said Butterfly. "But, it wasn't the right time."

You can catch Blaque Butterfly on June 15 at 9 p.m. at New Born Tribe, 3525 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. For more information about upcoming shows visit myspace.com/blaquebutterflypdx.com.


MHCC President Takes Job in California

Following six years of service to Mt. Hood Community College, Dr. Robert Silverman has decided to leave the college to be closer to his family in Southern California.

Silverman has accepted the presidency at Victor Valley College in Victorville, Calif., beginning early July, to be within rea-

sonable driving distance to both of his sons and grandchildren.

Silverman leaves a legacy of growing the college's Nursing program, building a new allied health facility and guiding the college through a difficult period of budget cuts due to insufficient state funding.



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A: According to a recent issue of Computer Medicine, low back surgery is one of the least effective procedures. In fact, 75

to 99% are unsuccessful. Before you make any decision, heed the advice of the "father" of low back surgery: "exhaust all methods of conservative care before considering surgery to the lumbar (low back) spine." To find out how Chiropractic can help you avoid back surgery, or for answers to any questions you might have about your health, please call us at the phone number displayed below.

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