

Survivors Heal from Silence after Loss

continued ▲ from Metro

dressed pain in the African American community led her into a lifetime serving others and helped shape her non-profit Senseless Violence Leads to Silence.

Operating out of a welcoming, split-level building on Columbia Boulevard, Bell typically serves six to a dozen families each week through group counseling services.

Clients meet in a room encircled by chairs with stuffed animals for comfort, overlooked by a photograph of Bell's late daughter, Asia. Dozens of smaller photographs fill the shelves and walls throughout the building—pictures of family and friends living and past. Newspaper clippings fill an office wall, documenting Bell's tireless advocacy for justice in Asia's murder in 2002 and her subsequent work against community violence.

It is here she encourages adults to deal with grief through a special blend of familiarity and even gospel music and potlucks. Another cheerful space behind the meeting room allows kids to write, paint and play as they deal with grief in their own way.

And in a unique spin, grievers are encouraged to follow suit in Bell's pursuit of social change, by making t-shirts to memorialize their loved ones.

For Bell this is a very personal way of healing; she continues to make and wear customized t-shirts with Asia's picture.

"For them, the t-shirt brings that person back to life for one moment," she explained.



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Perlia Bell stands outside her Senseless Violence Leads to Silence Grief Services offices at 1232A N.E. Columbia Blvd.

And when it comes to the counseling, Bell has created an environment where there is no shame in how clients share their grief.

"This is a place where people can identify," Bell said. "It's not a struggle to tell your story here and you can feel ok opening up, even if your child died of AIDS or drugs."

"It's not about what they did in life," she added, "it's about that you loved them."

It isn't always about the office space, either; Bell has counseled people on the sidewalk, in the grocery store, during narcotics anonymous and at church.

"People don't always like to open up, so you have got to meet them where they're at," she pointed out.

Sometimes clients will call Bell at odd hours, especially if they are facing the initial shock of a lost loved one.

It's during these times Bell will stop by and sit quietly with them.

"This gives me time to see how the grief process is really needed in this community," she said.

Bell has plans to expand her services and was recently awarded a \$5,000 grant from McKenzie River Gathering Foundation, an organization that funds grass-roots groups. She is also seeking volunteers to facilitate counseling groups. There will be several volunteering opportunities this summer, including preparation for the annual Senseless Violence Leads to Silence community march in September. For services or more information call 503-421-0078.



Tony Hopson

Distinguished Service Recognized

Tony Hopson, president and CEO of the Portland youth services organization Self Enhancement Inc., is one of three Oregonians to receive a Distinguished Service award from the University of Oregon.

Hopson, a former teacher, counselor and coach in Portland Public Schools, founded SEI in 1981 as an organization that has gained national recognition for its success in providing opportunities to Portland's inner-city youth.

The organization serves more than 2,000 young people each year. Its Center for Self Enhancement, with a variety of activities and services for youth and families, is rapidly becoming a hub of its north and northeast Portland community.

The University of Oregon faculty uses the award to honor those who have used their skills and knowledge to make great contributions to the cultural development of Oregon and society as a whole.

Ruth Bascom, longtime local politician and Eugene's first woman mayor, and Stuart Allan, dubbed Oregon's "Michelangelo of mapmakers" by an Oregonian columnist, were the other Distinguished Service award winners to be honored during spring commencement Saturday, June 16 at McArthur Court in Eugene.

Authentic Eatery

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lure is a \$3 hotdog, fries and soda deal, with chili, fish sticks or chicken wings for a little extra.

John Neal fired up a barbecue aroma on a recent Thursday evening that lured in a couple sushi chefs from down the street. They enjoyed their meal, but even food experts have been surprised by Odessa's authentic flavor.

Tea, yams and baked beans tickle the sweet-sensitive part of the tongue like nowhere else in town. Robyn

Lewis serves astonishingly sweet, spicy and saucy barbeque, unless the customer specifies otherwise.

Odessa's uniqueness requires the staff to take any sort of requests.

In a town crawling with vegetarians, a barbecue place like Odessa's always offers stir-fried veggies with rice and side dishes to offset the turkey-infused greens.

The inclusiveness extends to artists, many of whom show in the café, and neighbors like Gem Wine Cellar, which provides fermented refreshments.

Legendary Label Celebrates 50 years

Stax Records has plenty of soul

(AP) -- The sound was never exactly polished, but it had plenty of soul, and the Memphis sound created at Stax Records has found its own special place in the history of American music.

Some of pop's most cherished recordings came out of the Stax studio, including Sam & Dave's "Soul Man," Otis Redding's "(Sitting On) The Dock of the Bay," and Isaac Hayes' Oscar-winning "Theme from Shaft."

Now, 50 years after a white country-fiddle



A display of 45 rpm records at the Stax Records museum in Memphis, Tenn. (AP photo)

player started down the road that led him to open a recording studio in a predominantly black, inner-city neighborhood, the Stax la-

bel is trying to make a comeback.

"Stax was a great confluence of music and culture. It was a bi-racial, creative home for artists in the South at a very critical time in history," said Roger Smith of the Concord Music Group, the label's current owner.

"That sound was very much of a period, but the spirit behind that and the soul music that it created continues today."

Blossoming in the 1960s and '70s, Stax owed its success as much to serendipity as to design, with artists like Redding, Sam & Dave, Eddie Floyd, Carla Thomas, the Staple Singers and dozens of others creating music on the fly.

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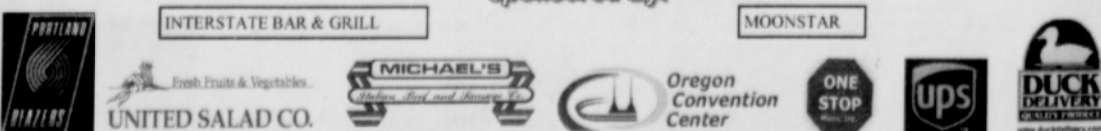
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