

Diversity in the Workplace

The Portland Observer

SECTION B

Portland Welcomes New Professionals

Say Hey NW!
builds community
connections

BY NICOLE RONAL HOOPER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Relocating to work can be a hard experience for many. The unfamiliar territory of a new city and making new friends is all part of the experience.

But for people moving from big metropolitan city like Atlanta, Chicago or New York, coming to Portland, could prove just as strange. But luckily there's a welcome wagon sort of event called Say Hey NW! for professionals who have recently relocated to Portland.

As local employers sought to recruit people from around the country to fill difficult jobs, the investment for employees to connect was evident, not only in their careers but also in their community.

"There were a number of people in the community and new professionals of color relocating to Oregon that had a hard time getting connected," said Vicki Nakashima, a key player in the get-togethers for the past five years.

"For people here who are not used to seeing such diverse groups together, I would guess a lot of people would think it's very diverse. It's all about perception," said Nakashima, who leads the sessions as executive director of Partners in Diversity.

Say Hey NW! started as a small event but has turned into a quarterly affair that can attract up to 300 people, with more than half being professionals of color.

Partners in Diversity isn't the only organization with a multi-cultural networking event but its focus is on keeping the talent in Oregon.

Nakashima says Say Hey is often a sigh of relief for newcomers.



PHOTO BY NICOLE RONAL HOOPER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Vicki Nakashima helps new residents, especially people of color, make community connections through her organization Say Hey NW!

"When people attend Say Hey they can say 'Ahh, I didn't know this existed,'" she said. "In order to keep professionals of color in Portland, it's good to meet people of color." Before her work with Partners in

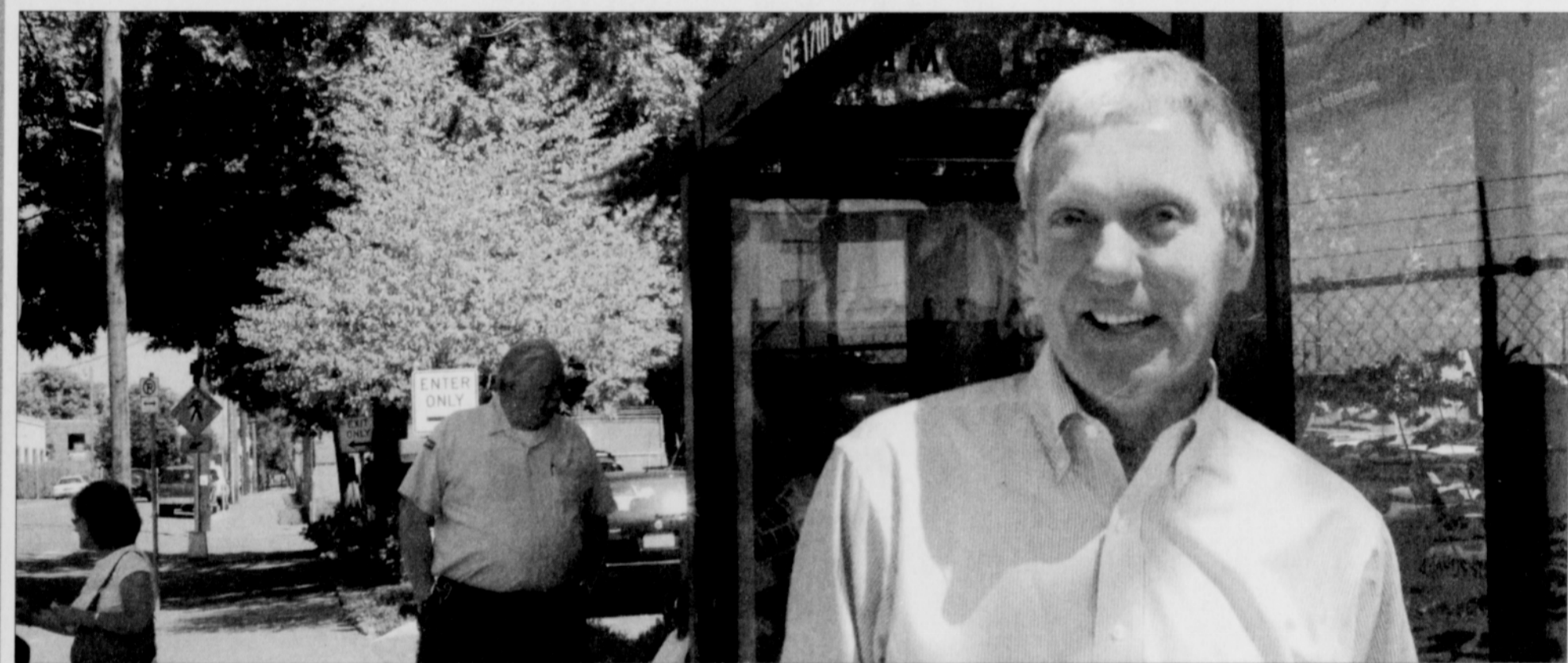
Diversity, Nakashima worked as a recruiter for the State of Oregon. It was part of her job to conduct searches to fill positions with in Oregon State government. She found that it was necessary to recruit professionals of

color from other regions, but she also found that a lot of these newcomers were unhappy upon moving here. Often they would move back to their hometown.

"The feeling was that maybe we

weren't doing a good job to ensure that people get connected with their community," said Nakashima. "There is a

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TriMet General Manager Fred Hansen is a daily commuter on the agency's fleet of buses and light rail trains. Hansen joined TriMet in 1998, shortly before the development and future expansion of MAX on North Interstate Avenue.



Teresa Boyle, Portland Office of Transportation project manager and Coral Egnew, TriMet community affairs representative work well together on the Portland Mall MAX Light Rail Project. Boyle oversees the project and ensures it complies with city regulations, while Egnew keeps businesses and residents up-to-date on construction progress.

Fred Hansen Tracks Changes at TriMet

Talks of expansion now and later

BY SARAH BLOUNT
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

TriMet General Manager Fred Hansen joined the transportation agency in 1998 at a challenging time when the community was poised to vote on a south-north light rail line from Milwaukie to north Portland.

The bond measure failed region-wide, but drew approval in north Portland neighborhoods adjacent to the proposed line. Six years later the Yellow Line is a successful north Portland link to the region's MAX system.

Plans for Milwaukie prevail as well, with construction underway along I-205 to Clackamas and another link to Milwaukie to be implemented as phase two of the current South Corridor Project.

As if that weren't enough, the heart of downtown Portland sits gutted to make way for a new transit mall, and those on both sides of the Columbia may soon take light rail across state lines in an effort to solve congestion and increase mass transit use on the I-5 bridge.

Also in the distant future, think 2015, the Willamette River will get a new bridge, the first since Fremont graced the waters in 1973. This connection will bring light rail access to the South Waterfront and will be nestled somewhere between the Marquam and Ross Island bridges, south to Milwaukie.

Hansen talked with the Portland Ob-

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