



Volunteer responders and staff from the Portland Police Bureau Crisis Response Team include (from left) John Sedra, Ron Macias, April Murchinson, William Warren, Sean Cruz, Victor Leo, Officer Marci Jackson-Johnson, Robin Wisner, Mary Rhodes, Marcus Branch, Barry Diggs, Pam Monnette, Margaret Bain, Dan Rosen, Rita Jamison, Deborah Monk and Renee Blakely-Ward.

Portland Police Crisis Team Volunteers Give Back

Take survivor care to next level

When Margaret Bain received the news 17 years ago that her son was gunned down on a street corner in northeast Portland, there was little compassion.

"It was very business-like," said Bain, 60, who was approached by a Portland Police officer and a Multnomah County medical examiner about her son Mujib's death in 1990. "They had time to put their arms around me. But at the time, I didn't know what to do or what to ask," Bain said.

Showing up at the scene of a loved one's death creates the feeling of numbness, denial and shock, which can overwhelm the system. Questions are many, but answers are few as officers go about investigating the crime.

It was because of survivors like Bain that the Portland Police Bureau in 1994 created the Crisis Response Team.

The volunteers and staff that make up the group provide immediate on-scene crisis intervention and short-term support to victims and co-victims of traumatic events, such as accidental deaths, homicides and aggravated assaults.

"This is an unexpected service of the Police Bureau to walk through a situation with the victim or their families," said CRT Officer Marci Jackson-Johnson, who has been with the team since 2005. "When the officer or detective is busy investigating, we inform the family of the investigative process, how long it takes, what comes next. We offer direction that the family doesn't expect from us.

"One thing we never stop hearing is, 'I didn't know police would help us like this.'"

The team consists of one officer, a senior administrative support specialist and volunteer responders. There are currently 47 active responders, who are community members that provide an important aspect to the team because they show up at crime scenes to provide support to the survivors. What is more important is that responders are from various diverse cultures and speak various languages. Typically, a responder goes through a minimum of 40 hours training, but some have actually experienced traumatic events themselves.

The team also partners with busi-

nesses, such as victim's assistance organizations, funeral homes and local restaurants. The services include completing Crime Victim's Assistance forms and offering referrals for crisis intervention and funeral services.

In its first year, CRT – then based primarily in north and northeast Portland – responded to about 28 calls, which included homicides, suicides and a case of sudden-infant-death syndrome. Soon after, more culturally specific teams were formed with Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic and Sexual Minority groups. There are hopes to develop Russian and African teams.

"Although we can't cover every culture, the responders come with a willingness to do whatever it takes to help the person in need," Jackson-Johnson said.

In 2006, CRT responded to 25 calls, and already 33 calls were requested in 2007 as of October.

Jackson-Johnson said that with members of the community making up CRT's volunteer corps of responders, and with local businesses pitching in to help, this cooperative effort truly meets the definition of community policing.

"What better way to be a partner with the community than to walk through a tragic incident with the family," said Jackson-Johnson, who has been with the Police Bureau since 1993. "Usually, officers do their immediate job and are done. We take it to the next level and become a resource and support team."

For Margaret Bain, that level of support was not there in 1990.

"CRT wasn't born yet," she said. "It was only in the eyes of the officers who could not carry out their jobs and cry at the same time."

Bain is now a responder, and has already seen enough. But the death of her son, she said, has given her a mission.

"I am the mother of a murdered child. I have been sleepless, had to be the glue that kept my family together as we walked this cold

road. So I know what it's like for these families as they journey from the crime scenes to the funeral homes. I've served food and held hands, and cried with them.

"The community really needs these special crisis response teams."

For more information about the Crisis Response Team or to become a CRT volunteer responder, call 503-823-2095.

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Multnomah County Health Department

Bethel AME Reunion Concert

The community is invited to enjoy some of the best traditional gospel music in the area, when the Inspirational Choir of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, 5824 N. Eighth Ave., presents its

second reunion concert, Sunday, Dec. 2 at 4 p.m.

Under the direction of the renowned Mrs. Lorene Wider, the concert will feature guest soloists from around the city. An offering

will be taken to help raise money to purchase a lifesaving Automatic External Defibrillator for the church.

For more information, call Kal Robertson at 503-810-4958.

Choral Christmas Concert

Warner Pacific College's Concerts in the Chapel Series presents its 33rd annual Choral Christmas Concert on Sunday, Dec. 2 at 3 p.m. in McGuire Auditorium on the school campus at 2219 S.E. 68th Ave. near Division Street.

The concert will feature the Warner Pacific Concert Choir, Warner Chorale, and a special Alumni Choir performing seasonal music of

Burt, Brooks, Britten, Haydn and Mozart, as well as the Christmas portion of Handel's Messiah.

Members of the Metropolitan Youth Symphony will accompany the choirs, and Warner Pacific Choral Director Dr. Thomas A. Miller will conduct.

Admission is free, but donations will be accepted. For more information, call 503-517-1207.

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