

METRO

The Portland Observer



An Inspiring Start
Jefferson
basketball teams
enjoy victories
See stories, Sports page B5

100% Oregon Duck
Coach Ernie Kent
brings fruition to
U of O hoops
See stories, Sports page B5



SECTION B

Community Calendar

St. Johns Posada

The St. Johns Posada, an annual event celebrating the Christmas story of Mary and Joseph's search for shelter, will begin with a candlelight procession on Saturday, Dec. 15 at 4:30 p.m. at the St. Johns Plaza at North Burlington and Lombard. The community is invited to enjoy live music, dancing, piñata play, flower-making, face painting and traditional Latino and North American food.

Homeownership Help

Thursday, Dec. 13, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., the nonprofit Portland Community Land Trust will provide information on affordable homeownership opportunities. The orientation class will be held at the North Portland Library, 512 N. Killingsworth. For registration information, call 503-493-0293 or visit pclt.org/buy.

Weatherization Workshops

Thursday, Dec. 13, from 6 to 8 p.m., James John Headstart, 7439 N. Charleston Ave., will host the free educational workshops to self-weatherize your home; participants will receive a free weatherizing kit. Free weatherization is available for seniors. Call 503-284-6827 for information on additional workshops and to register.

Television Production Lesson

Saturday, Dec. 15, from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m., the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, 5340 N. Interstate Ave., will host the workshop teaching the basics for producing taped or live studio productions; \$20 fee. For more information, call 503-288-1515.

Ranger Lantern Tours

Saturday, Dec. 15, from 7 to 9 p.m., with lantern in hand and a skilled ranger leading the way, explore the history of Fort Vancouver, 612 E. Reserve St. in Vancouver, Wash. Call 360-816-6243 for more information.

Winter 'ZooVentures'

Dec. 26-Dec. 28, & Jan. 2-Jan. 4, the Oregon Zoo will host winter-break day camps filled with lots of adventures for kids, kindergarten through fourth grade; for more information, visit oregonzoo.org or call 503-220-2781.

Guitar Zero to Guitar Hero

Beginning Wednesday, Jan. 9, Mt. Hood Community College will offer guitar classes for beginners; classes will be held at Morey Middle School, 2801 S.W. Lucas in Troutdale. The fee is \$59; for registration information, call 503-491-7572.

Advocates Needed

Volunteer advocates and investigators are needed to serve as ombudsmen for residents of nursing homes, residential-care facilities, assisted-living and adult-foster-care homes; training and certification begins Thursday, Jan. 10. For more information on how you can get involved contact Kathy Walter at 800-522-2602.

Learn to Make Recycled Art

Portland Community College is offering the hands-on training to create art from recycled materials; classes will be held at the ReBuilding Center, 3625 N. Mississippi Ave. Call 503-731-6622 for more information.

Helping the Hungry

The Oregon Food Bank desperately needs your donations of nonperishable foods and funds. To find out how you can help, call 503-282-0555.

Literacy Volunteers Needed

The Volunteer Literacy Program at Portland Community College-Cascade needs volunteer tutors to provide free individualized instruction in basic literacy, English language, and math skills. Call 503-244-3898 or visit oregonliteracy.org.

Volunteer for Crisis Line

Want to make a difference in your community? Volunteers and advocates are needed for the Portland Women's Crisis Line. The needs include on-call advocates to respond in person or over the phone, outreach and educational efforts, and fundraising and administrative duties. Call 503-232-4176 for more information.

African American Council

You're invited on the third Tuesday of each month, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., when the African American Advisory Council meets at the King Facility, 4815 N.E. Seventh. Call 503-823-0000 for information.

Opening Doors to Diversity

Career electrician promotes union workforce

BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A 20-year career electrician, Larry Warren immediately saw a problem when he started organizing for his Portland trade union. African Americans make up about six percent of the city population but only one percent of the union workforce that's committed to protecting high wages and generous benefits.

The discovery was even more "unbelievable" for Warren, since unions represent black workers nationwide in a larger proportion than any other ethnicity. Of employed workers, blacks have 14.5 percent union membership to the 11.7 percent of whites, according to the latest U.S. Department of Labor survey.

During the 1940s in Portland, blacks had particular difficulty in obtaining union membership, as frequently reported in the local African-American newspapers of that time.

Civil-rights obstacles to African-American union membership in Portland have diminished, but disparities remain. Lead labor organizers hope to show that union doors have opened much wider now for minorities and that people of color only need to discover the advantages of industry solidarity.

"The biggest barrier is that people aren't applying," says Warren, the minority-recruitment coordinator for his local chapter of the International Brotherhood of Electricity Workers. "When you take hundreds of applications and you only get two or three applying, then they're not knowing that the opportunity's out there."

Unions attract dedication through generous pay packages that increase with cost-of-living adjustments and each year of experience. With the current starting wage at \$33 an hour on the check, Portland's



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Larry Warren concentrates on minority recruitment in his efforts as lead organizer for the local chapter of the International Brotherhood of Electricity Workers.

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—Larry Warren

IBEW members make a minimum wage and benefits package amounting to \$48.09 an hour.

"The retirement you will receive off of that will just be tremendous," says Warren. Many IBEW retirees can expect to

receive about \$7,000 a month after the age of 55.

Warren sees a common misperception in thinking that skilled trades are more dangerous or require a certain personality. "A lot of people tend to think of

electrical as being difficult, but with any job, once you learn a job, it's very easy," he says.

Also a track coach at Jefferson High School, Warren strives to connect with students across the city who are beginning to consider plans for the future, in addition to his mission to unionize unaffiliated workers.

"We're really reaching out as well to try to educate the youth on the requirements," Warren says, citing the 2.0 grade-point average and year of mathematics needed to get into the IBEW training center. Any-

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Alternative Transportation History Revealed

Artist plays off 'Traveling through Time' series

BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

While riding Max trains this year, Gabe Flores saw something missing among the "Traveling through Time" placards of old streetcars, trains, ferries and tour buses

that display Portland's transportation history. Flores longed for images that confronted the history of those who were subject to oppression.

His research led him to the Oregon Historical Society where he found photo-

graphs of African Americans between 1900 and 1962 working as servants, caterers and luggage handlers. He then transfigured those photos with logos that played off TriMet's series for an art exhibit he calls "Traveling through a Simpler Time," on display this month at the Portland Art Center, 32 N.W. Fifth Ave.

Flores, who has a history degree from Portland State University, wanted to bring out aspects of the past that are often overlooked in mainstream literature.

"We're so afraid of pointing the finger at ourselves," he says.

A longtime resident of northeast Portland, Flores hopes that his alternative history will act as a strike against racism resurfacing. He wants his artwork to serve as a reminder that it wasn't that long ago that the Klan was a powerful force in the state.

Flores credits a philosophical discussion with his friend Rachael Wilson with the concept and wishes to thank her for helping him sift through the primary documents at the Oregon Historical Society.

There is one Hispanic person in his display, but Flores hopes to find more racial diversity among railroad builders as he strives toward his own 50-image archive.

Wearing a shirt to his First Thursday opening last week that read "hyphenated-american," Flores himself is a mixture of French, Native American, Italian and Spanish.

He considered ending the series on a positive note with his favorite piece representing an African-American bus driver named Robert Dillard in the early '50s after the Urban League exerted pressure on the

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PHOTO BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Gabe Flores found historic photographs of African Americans in Portland and then transfigured them to TriMet "Traveling through Time" logos to create an inspiring art exhibit.