

# Rockwood Site to Serve Growing Population

## With social-service providers, housing



Human Solutions Executive Director Jean DeMaster overlooks a proposed building site in Rockwood for a center that would provide services for a growing low-income population in east Multnomah County. Kiele Fletcher, 5, who attends Davis Elementary School, was among the group touring the site.

BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The first urban-renewal district in east Multnomah County has transformed much of the area's landscape since its creation in 2003, but even more dreams wait to be fulfilled for a growing population that needs social services and affordable housing.

Human Solutions, one of the area's largest community-development organizations, envisions a Rockwood International Building at Northeast 181st and Couch that would provide the group and at least six other social services agencies with needed space.

The five-story project aims to provide families with a clinic, bill-paying assistance, job training and emergency meals all in one site, including 90 low-income apartments in the upper floors.

Most of Gresham's poverty-stricken households, nearly 58 percent, consist of families, and more than 38 percent of Gresham's children live in poverty, according to 2000 census statistics.

Poverty has continued to increase in the area as indicated by the exponential jump in the number of East County children qualifying for free or reduced-cost lunches between 2001-02 and 2005-06.

Jean DeMaster, executive director of Human Solutions, doesn't mince words in identifying the trend as a civil-rights issue.

"It is unjust for families to be homeless, doubled up with other families or living in other dangerous situations," says DeMaster.



PHOTOS BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A Multi-Service Center in what would be called the Rockwood International Building is planned for this site on Northeast 181st and Couch, providing space for a half dozen social-service agencies and 90 units of low-income housing.

"The challenge is that the number of families in desperate circumstances has gone up, but the amount of dollars available to serve them has stayed the same."

DeMaster has advocated for the Human Solutions structure to be part of a "three-pronged approach" to new developments in the Rockwood Town Center area. One of the first of those developments will be the construction next year of a \$14.3 million Multnomah County Justice Center with four new courtrooms, offices, holding cells and processing space.

As criminal-justice developments are on the fast track in East County, Gresham Police Chief Carla Piluso joined in calling for a holistic approach to preventing crime and

increasing the quality of life for everyone.

Piluso told the Portland Observer in October that "it's a challenge for all those pieces to the puzzle" when social-service budgets stagnate amid a quickly expanding population.

DeMaster dreams of a self-sustaining community that promotes alliances among impoverished peoples.

"This community brings together a number of diverse traditions," she says. "We think diversity is a real strength that we want to promote with a multi-service center."

Over the past five years, DeMaster has turned Human Solutions from a small rental-assistance

agency into one of East County's largest charities, serving more than 6,000 households a year. She has more than 35 years of experience in advocating for services and housing for low income people.

DeMaster warns that the effects of impoverishment could spiral out of control through future generations if social-service organizations fail to work closely together in providing comprehensive assistance.

By creating a centralized and convenient hub for access to a multitude of services, she hopes to more efficiently stabilize lives and help people become self-sufficient. "What we're trying to do is break through that cycle of poverty and homelessness in the East County and Rockwood area," says DeMaster.

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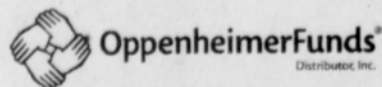
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## Paramedic Charged with Sex Abuse

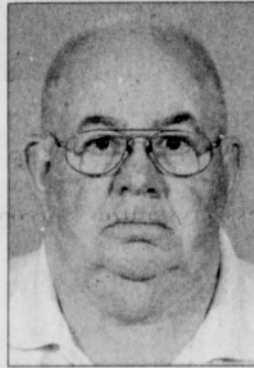
### Patient files lawsuit

A Portland paramedic accused of sexually abusing a local African-American woman during an ambulance transport to Legacy Emanuel Hospital is facing a lawsuit and two counts of first degree sexual assault.

Lannie L. Haszard, 61, was fired Dec. 17 as an American Medical Response paramedic after Portland Police arrested him for the Dec. 8 assault.

The victim, Royshekka Herring, filed a lawsuit Thursday against the ambulance company and Haszard, claiming she was groped while she was being transported to the hospital.

Herring was transported by



Lannie Haszard

AMR after she passed out at her home on Dec. 8 and her children called 911.

In her lawsuit, Herring claims that Haszard touched her pubic area while she was semi-conscious. She alleges battery and negligent retention and supervision by

AMR with damages to be determined at trial.

The police investigation began when Northeast Precinct officers were called to meet the Herring at the hospital. She provided information leading officers to believe that she had been sexually assaulted by Haszard.

Police say he admitted touching Herring inappropriately and wrote

an apology after an interview with detectives.

The note said: "I am very sorry I did this to you. . . . Please accept my deepest apologies for my actions during our contact. . . . I will attempt to seek some help so I do not ever do anything like this again," according to court documents.

Another woman had reported a similar incident with the same paramedic in April, but the police inquiry was suspended after a month. Prosecutors will be looking at that complaint again. Police detectives are currently seeking information on other women who may have been victims during emergency medical care from Haszard.

Anyone with information is asked to call Detective Todd Prosser at 503-823-9320 or Detective Vincent Cui at 503-823-0466.

## Celebrating KWANZAA

continued ▲ from Front

each of the Seven Principles of Kwanzaa.

Under the auspice of The Center for Black Studies at Portland State University, Senator Avel Gordly, Reverend Dr. W.G. Hardy Jr., and Dr. Dalton Miller-Jones share their

photos from a recent trip to Ghana. The works will be on view in the Gallery from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Tuesday - Friday, and from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, through Dec 31.

For more information, visit portlandparks.org or ifcc-arts.org/kwanzaa.html.

## Mayor's Award



Edna Robertson

Edna Robertson was recently honored by Mayor Tom Potter with a Spirit of Portland

award. Her name was misspelled in a headline and photo caption about her many contributions to the community in last week's issue. We regret the error.

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Christmas has a different meaning to everyone, and that meaning can change from year to year, depending on what fate has brought your way. For some, it has been a year of prosperity... for others, it has been a year of loss. Fortunately, time has a way of healing, and letting us go forward—to celebrate again. Whatever the year has brought your way, we want you to know our family's thoughts are with you.



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