

Volunteers Prepare Food Boxes

For annual holiday giving

Almost 200 volunteers have gathered in a north Portland warehouse in the past few days to pack and deliver 4,000 holiday food boxes to disadvantaged residents.

Each box of the Portland Police Bureau's Sunshine Division held all the fixings of a traditional holiday meal.

The annual "Pack Nights" and "Delivery Day" are always bustling, festive affairs that attract volunteers of all ages—individuals, groups, students, families.

The Sunshine Division operates year-round to provide temporary relief not only to Portland individuals and families who lack essential food, but also to 30-some other food-relief agencies in five counties.



Holiday food boxes are sorted for the disadvantaged at the Sunshine Division warehouse.

Thanks to generous donations of food and finances from both individuals and corporations, the nonprofit agency receives, man-

ages, and distributes an average of 750 tons of food every year.

For information about volunteering with Sunshine Division, call

503-823-2116; for information about emergency food relief, call 503-823-2119 or email the organization at mail@sunshinedivision.org.

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CASCADE CONNECTIONS

BY DR. ALGIE C. GATEWOOD

Education on Top of Wish List

Dear Santa Claus: For Christmas this year, I want every young black man to have an education and a good job. I want the number of young black men with a college degree to outnumber those who are in prison. I want every young black man to assume his rightful place in his family, his community and his nation.

You can handle that, can't you, Santa?

Unfortunately, it will take more than a jolly man in a red suit to make this Christmas wish list come true. Black men, for a whole range of reasons, have for generations found themselves overrepresented in the criminal justice system and underrepresented in business, in the halls of academia, and as family men. It will take a concerted effort from all corners of our society—including from black men themselves—to undo the legacy of the past.

But at the top of my wish list is one thing that can come true—and it's the key to everything else:

There is no more significant determinant for one's economic success – and everything which flows from that success – than education.

education.

There is no more significant determinant for one's economic success—and everything which flows from that success—than education. Earning a two- or four-year degree, or especially a graduate degree, is the one factor that can trump all the obstacles that confront black men—whether those obstacles be intergenerational poverty, institutional racism, or even a shortage of self-belief.

When you embark on the road to a college degree, you also begin a voyage of self-discovery. Whatever you ultimately choose as your field of study, the educational process broadens your awareness of history and clarifies your understanding of society. More importantly, the educational process crystallizes your perception of yourself, and helps you to realize the options at your disposal and the power you have to choose your own path in

the world.

Earning a degree reaps financial rewards, to be sure, but this new concept of self is something that is beyond price. This can be particularly true for black men, many of whom for generations have been denied the power to choose the path before them. Education helps to fuse ambition with the tools necessary to get you where you want to go. Education is the one true way forward from the bonds, both literal and figurative, that have prevented black men from attaining their collective birthright.



Dr. Algie C. Gatewood

Of course, the transformation I describe here is available to everyone, not just black men. I mention black men because they are the most at-risk group of people in the nation—at risk of everything from chronic incarceration to chemical dependency to an early death. According to a 2006 Harvard University study, high-risk urban black males can expect to live as many as 15 years less, on average, than members of lesser-risk populations.

What better tool than education to break this cycle?

This is not to say that the many factors which put young black men at risk are the result of their own individual choices. Far from it—the historical record of inequity between African Americans and the majority population is copious and detailed. But the right kinds of individual choices can help black men to overcome these obstacles, and it starts with the choice to stay in school and go to college.

Give yourself and your family the best possible gift this Christmas, young black men. Make the choice to get an education. Don't let cost or anything else deter you. There is more financial aid available than you might think, particularly at community college, and classes can be scheduled to fit your life. If you make the right choice now, this Christmas—and every one to follow—will be merrier for you, your children and your grandchildren.

Dr. Algie C. Gatewood is President of Portland Community College's Cascade Campus

Ask Deanna!



Real People, Real Advice

An advice column known for reality based subjects!

Dear Deanna!

I'm a single parent and I never have enough money to buy gifts for my children. I made a mistake this year by spending the money I had saved and have had a relationship. I spent money on dinners, new clothes and my boyfriend thinking he would be around for the holidays and help

me out. We broke up and now I don't have money and my kids are going to be so hurt. How do I explain and make this up to my children on Christmas? --Michelle B., Decatur, Ga.

Dear Michelle:

The calendar doesn't change and Christmas continues to come on the same day every year. There's no excuse for your selfish behavior. Although the holiday should be spiritual instead of material, you still set your kids up for heartbreak. You put a man before your children's happiness and now they have to suffer. You need to hustle and find a charity or church to help you and get your act together as

the New Year comes around.

Dear Deanna!

I am going to make my last New Year's resolution in 2008. I've decided to live to the fullest, eliminate negative people and put myself first. The moment I made this announcement, the people I thought were friends laughed at me and my family thought the idea was a joke. I was shocked that they laughed and hurt because I see how they really feel about me. How to I enforce my new resolution knowing I have to start with family and friends first? --Carolynn; Omaha, Neb.

Dear Carolynn:

You're getting the idea of putting

one foot before the other and then keep on trucking. You've managed to flush away your dead weight and expose your naysayers all in one breath. All you have to do is stop negativity as soon as it starts, do the things you want to do and put yourself first in most situations. Hopefully you'll reflect happiness and confidence that'll make the people in your circle jump on the bandwagon. If not, smile and keep it moving.

Ask Deanna is written by Deanna M. Write Ask Deanna! Email: askdeanna1@yahoo.com or 264 S. LaCienega Blvd. Suite 1283 Beverly Hills, CA 90211. Website: www.askdeanna.com

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