

# King's Impact Spans Time and Culture

## East County kids focus on respect for character

BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A skeptic could contend that the messages of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. resonated for a specific place in his nation's development. But, a YWCA program in east Multnomah County proves King's wisdom is relevant today as children in low-income families are just beginning to

learn English.

The LearnLinks homework club at Lincoln Woods has focused on King's 'I Have a Dream' speech as jumping-off point for discussions and activities.

"It's about children judging each other not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character," says Jackie Culver, developer of LearnLinks curriculum.

The students are designing their own squares for a civil-rights quilt after further discussions about equality and respect for others.

*The kids seem to enjoy it a lot. They get the instant gratification of it being fun while the projects help them learn to organize and provide an important message.*

— Jackie Culver, developer of YWCA LearnLinks curriculum



YWCA volunteer Anna Christenson intertwines lessons from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. into a LearnLinks class in the community room of the Lincoln Woods Apartments, 2333 S.E. 130th Ave.

"The kids seem to enjoy it a lot," Culver says. "They get the instant gratification of it being fun while the projects help them learn to organize and provide an important message."

Culver remembers seeing King deliver his most famous speech on TV, and uses the concept of character trumping color with student groups because it stands out most in her mind.

She recalls being overwhelmed by the broadcast images of King looking over the crowd in Washington, D.C.

"I wanted people not to look at me as one of the only Native Americans in Beaverton," she says.

Lincoln Woods, located at 2333 S.E. 130th Ave., just north of Division Street, spreads across a 2.3-acre lot that formerly held an abandoned house claimed by transients and drug users. While clearing the land, workers uncovered a garage that they didn't know existed under a swathe of blackberry bushes.

Somali immigrants make up about 40 percent of the 70-unit building that saw its first residents a little over a year ago. The diverse group's quilt will go on display in some of the area's public schools before YWCA auctions it off to raise money for its effort "Eliminating Racism and Empowering Women."

Oregon Volunteers awarded a \$355 grant for the program in conjunction with help from organizations called Quilt Savvy and Friends of Margaret Carter.

Program leaders will carry on for as long as possible to continue King's dream of civil rights, quality education and basic amenities for all.

"The actions of Dr. King are becoming a more distant memory, but that doesn't mean I can't do his work," Culver says.

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PDC honors Martin Luther King, Jr. on the 79th anniversary of his birth.

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- Martin Luther King, Jr. (January 15, 1929 - April 4, 1968)

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