

METRO

The Portland Observer



Celebrating Black History

From facing wartime challenges to the NAACP's 99 years

See coverage inside, pages B2, B3 and B6

SECTION B

Community Calendar

Homework Help

The Black Parent Initiative and Concordia Teachers Corp. provide free homework help for kids ages 5 to 19 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 3:45 to 5 p.m. at Grace Covenant Church, 5450 N.E. Flanders; and from 3:30 to 5 p.m. at Calvary Christian Center, 126 N.E. Alberta; as well as Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:30 to 5 p.m. at the East Portland Community Center, 740 S.E. 106th Ave.

'Sweet Crude' Reception

Thursday, Feb. 28, from 4 to 6 p.m., Portland's Swahili Imports hosts a pre-show reception for "Sweet Crude" film producer and director Sandy Cioffi. The viewing of the film, a documentary about oil drilling in the Niger River Delta, will follow at 7:30 p.m., at the Portland Community College Cascade campus Moriarty Building.

Catch the Authors

Thursday, Feb. 28, at 6:30 p.m., In Other Words, 8 N.E. Killingsworth St., will host a reading night featuring five gay, lesbian and transgender authors. For more information, visit inotherwords.org or call 503-232-6003.

V-Day Portland

Friday, Feb. 29 and Saturday, March 1, at 6 p.m., the Center for Self Enhancement, 3920 N. Kirby St., presents Eve Ensler's The Vagina Monologues, to raise awareness and end violence against women. Admission is four cans of nonperishable foods or new women's toiletries; for more information, call 503-901-5501.

Doll Festival

Friday, Feb. 29 through Monday, March 3, the Portland Japanese Gardens will host the Doll Festival.

Camp Fire Incredible Kids

Camp Fire USA Portland Metro Council invites the public to honor any incredible child. Honorees will receive an award, coupons and their name in print. The fee is \$25 per child with registration available until March 31. For more information call, 503-224-7800, extension 142.

Town Hall Education Forum

Saturday, March 8, from 10:30 a.m. to noon, Rep. Chip Shields will host a Town Hall forum on education at the PCC-Cascade Campus Student Services Cafeteria.

Electric Car Races

Saturday, March 1, Mt. Hood Community College-Gresham Campus, will host the electric car races beginning at 11 a.m. For more information, call Mark Watts at 503-762-6180, extension 5579.

Children's Book Fair

Sunday, March 2, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., the University of Portland-Chiles Center, 5000 N. Willamette Blvd., hosts a free book fair featuring activities for children of all ages. Each child attending receives a free book.

Volunteer Elder Advocates

Thursday, March 6, certification classes begin for volunteer advocates and investigators to serve the needs of the elderly and those in assisted-living centers to insure they receive the proper care needed with respect and dignity. Call Kathy Walters at 800-522-2602 to sign up.

Problem Pooch - Finicky Feline

The Oregon Humane Society offers answers to your pet's behavior issues. Problem Pooch class, Saturday, March 1 at 12:30 p.m., Finicky Feline class, Saturday, March 8 at 12:30 p.m., both classes will be at 1067 N.E. Columbia Blvd.

In Search of Black Holes

Monday, March 10, at 7 and 8 p.m., Planetarium Sky Theater at Mt. Hood Community College-Gresham Campus, will explore the mysteries of black holes. Limited seating and \$1 admission. For more information, call 503-491-7213.

Great Oregon Beach Cleanup

Saturday, March 29, between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., SOLV needs thousands of volunteers for the 24th annual beach cleanup to restore the coastline to pristine condition. To get involved, call 800-333-7658.

Breaking the Cycle

A safe and confidential forum for males takes place every first and third Friday at 6 p.m. in the Calvary Christian Church, 126 N.E. Alberta. For more information, contact Pastor Eric Carson, 503-422-8573.

'The Inspirational Legacy of Al Forthan'

Film honors late counselor

A local center that helps men recover from alcohol and drugs is celebrating a remarkable story and new documentary of a local African American who overcame his addiction.

The Volunteers of America Men's Residential Center will host "The Inspirational Legacy of Al Forthan," at the Hollywood Theatre on Thursday, March 13. Forthan was the first person to move from an alumnus of the treatment center to come back and work for the MHC.

He passed away in 2006. But his amazing story and the fine work he did for others is told in the center's archives.

An imposing 6-foot-4-inch frame, a tough street-smart attitude, a long record of convictions and hard time—it was the kind of "currency" that commanded respect among fellow prison inmates. Al Forthan had it all.

He also had a 25-year addiction to heroin and enough hustlers and players waiting back on the streets to keep the cycle going. It would take some potent intervention to turn this life around, that and the one last close-call with police that left Forthan shaken for days.

Forthan was born in Portland, the eldest of seven children. The family was



Al Forthan was known for inspiring others to quit drugs and alcohol.

shuffled around from one housing project to another until Forthan was 13. His parents did their best raising the family with his father insisting that they get the education he never had.

He wasn't buying it. Except for sports, school was no match for hanging out with friends on the street and in pool halls, pushing the limits of the law and eventually, at age 19, getting arrested for robbery.

When he emerged from the Oregon prison system 18 months later, he finally felt his life had some direction. He had

learned a more sophisticated rule of street ethics: how to play the system, how to traffic in drugs and all the finer points necessary for starting the life of a career criminal. And, so it began.

It was the mid-'60s, back when drug dealing was relatively limited to pot and pills. Before long, he had more money than he had ever had before and the rush he felt, this new sense of purpose, gave him what he believed to be "self-esteem." Everything he had learned in prison seemed to be paying off.

But when Forthan was introduced to heroin, the stakes were suddenly raised. It was no longer enough to just deal—now it required acts of violence in order to support his own addiction. His arrests and convictions led to nine stretches in prison, and while none of the convictions were serious enough to keep him from eventual parole, they still robbed him of a total of twelve years of his life.

"It didn't matter if I was in prison or out," Forthan recalled. "I was 'somebody,' I had power. I was respected inside and on the streets. I'd get out and then step right back into the same game, the same habits. I didn't realize that the lifestyle itself, the power and control, had become as much of an addiction as the drugs."

Over the years, Forthan participated in several drug rehabilitation treatment programs. It was never a committed relationship. Nothing took. "Spin dries" he calls them. "No life altering counseling. No follow-up mentoring. You're in, you get clean, you're out. Spin dries."

The turning point came in July of '91. As he pulled his car into the driveway, he saw police cars and officers in the process of a bust. They were not there looking for him, they waved him to get out of their way. Forthan's car was filled with drugs and paraphernalia, a gun and enough cash to have landed him in a Federal prison indefinitely. Miraculously, nobody even

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Lorna Nakell opens her studio to the public.

Art Event Seeks Diversity

Portland Open Studios is recruiting minority and multicultural artists for next fall's annual tour of artist workspaces.

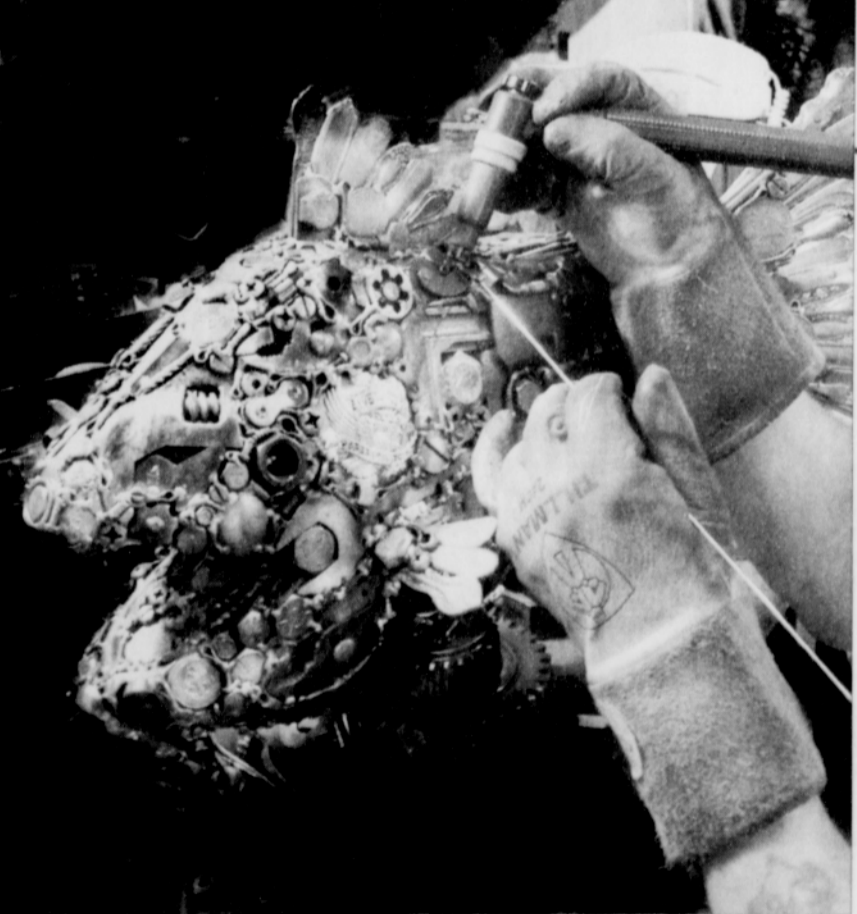
Of course, there are advantages to the artists who open their studios. Audiences are built, artwork sold, inspiration grows and communication happens. One artwork image from each artist appears both in the official tour guide and on the Portland Open Studios website, which extends the benefits after the scheduled tour weekends of Oct. 11 and 18.

There are advantages to each neighborhood where artists have their studios, too.

Visitors discover the art in their own backyards and venture out in to parts of the metro area that they have never been. Artists and visitors participate in growing a local arts community filled with a diversity of artists making art in all media.

Painters who use oil, acrylic or water color; sculptors who cast bronze, weld found objects or mold clay; fiber artists who weave, make quilts or print fabric; mask makers; book artists; and artists who use just about anything else that artists use to make artworks can all apply.

Portland Open Studios offers the Kimberly Gales Emerging Artists Scholarship to encourage young artists be-



Joe Pogan works with metal.

tween 20 and 30. The winner receives a waiver of all fees and a \$100 stipend.

To apply for participation or for more

information on the scholarship, go to portlandopenstudios.com. Applications are due March 15.

Empowerment Center Envisioned

To reduce domestic violence

The Rotary Club of Portland has awarded \$1 million to Bradley-Angle House as the first step toward creating a Rotary Center for Community Empowerment—a community resource center that will bring together concerned citizens from all backgrounds to work on reducing domestic violence in the greater Portland area.

The donation provides the foundation for a project that could exceed \$3 million before its doors are opened in May 2010. The domestic violence group will seek additional donations from private foundations and individuals to purchase a property, remodel it, and fund basic center operations for three years.

As the oldest domestic violence organization on the West coast, Bradley-Angle House was founded in Portland in 1975 by women who needed services and support, neither of which was available anywhere at that time.

In its 33 years, the group has been a national and a regional leader in a movement to create confidentially located safe houses to shelter survivors and provide peer support until they can gain the confidence, skills and resources needed to live safely on their own.

The new center will be open and accessible to the public, where conversation, strategizing and community input can be channeled toward initiatives that will make domestic violence less and less socially acceptable.

The facility is minimally projected to house Bradley-Angle's non-residential services (including youth services), administrative offices, volunteer services, a library and resource center, an affordable licensed childcare center, community meeting rooms, performance and exhibit space, and a healing garden. Depending on the size of the building, other programs could be based there as well.

"The only possibility we have to end domestic violence is to involve the entire community in changing the conditions and perceptions that perpetuate the violence," said Karla McFarland, Bradley-Angle House executive director. "We welcome Rotary's vision in selecting this project from the dozens of worthy submissions. Domestic violence intersects with so many other issues facing our city right now—homelessness, drug addiction,

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