

# METRO

The Portland Observer



## Powerful Performances

Matsiko Children's Choir to visit Portland

See A & E section, inside

SECTION B

## Community Calendar

### Health Inequities

The public is invited to join in the dialogues with community members, organizations, business leaders and local elected officials to discuss the root causes of health inequities as well as long-term solutions in a this seven-part series. For neighborhood locations, dates, and times visit [mchealth.org/healthequity](http://mchealth.org/healthequity).

### No Justice, No Peace

Saturday, April 5, at 2 p.m., the National Action Network's open invitation to all people concerned with justice and equality for all members of society to attend at the Midland Library, 805 S.E. 122nd; for more information, call 503-988-5392 or 503-775-3635.

### Rain Garden Workshop

Saturday, April 5 from 9 a.m. to noon, the Leach Botanical Gardens, 6704 S.E. 122nd Ave., will host a workshop teaching how to build a beautiful rain garden to capture rainwater runoff, followed by a community open house of the Botanical Gardens, from 1 to 4 p.m. To register, visit [Welcometherain.org](http://Welcometherain.org) or call 503-652-7477.

### Beach School Auction

Saturday, April 12, Beach Elementary in north Portland will host the annual auction and dinner fundraiser to benefit the homeless children's after-school program; items to be auctioned include: horseback riding lessons, use of vacation homes, gift certificates and more to be held at Magdalene Parish Hall, 3123 N.E. 24th, with the doors opening at 5:30 p.m.; \$25 ticket includes appetizers, dinner dessert and beverages, child care is available.

### Where People Matter

Monday, April 7 thru Wednesday, April 9, from 3 to 7:30 p.m., Lewis & Clark College host the student-run International Affairs Symposium with focus on human trafficking, global health, and more; the event is free; for more information, visit [Lclark.edu/org/ias](http://Lclark.edu/org/ias).

### Lents Home Buying Fair

Saturday, April 12, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at Kelly Elementary School, 9030 S.E. Cooper St., the public is invited to learn about opportunities to buy their own home. The free event features various workshops and more, highlighted by a drawing for a \$4000 down-payment assistance grant; for more information, call 503-788-8052 x 105.

### Math and Science Info Night

Thursday, April 10 at 6 p.m., The Black Parent Initiative and Concordia University invite parents with outstanding students to attend a free information session preparing students to achieve more in high-school math and science; to RSVP, call 503-284-8000.

### Feminism Discussion at PCC

Thursday, April 10, from 6:30 to 8 p.m., the public is invited to attend the free panel discussion at Portland Community College's Cascade Campus, Moriarty Auditorium, 705 N. Killingsworth, featuring women leaders of the community; for more information, call 503-317-2611.

### Buckman Art Show & Sell

Friday, April 11 and Saturday, April 12, the Buckman Elementary School hosts its fundraiser featuring arts, crafts, ceramics, jewelry, gourmet foods, music and dance. For more information, visit [Buckmanelementary.org/artsale](http://Buckmanelementary.org/artsale).

### Earth Day Celebration

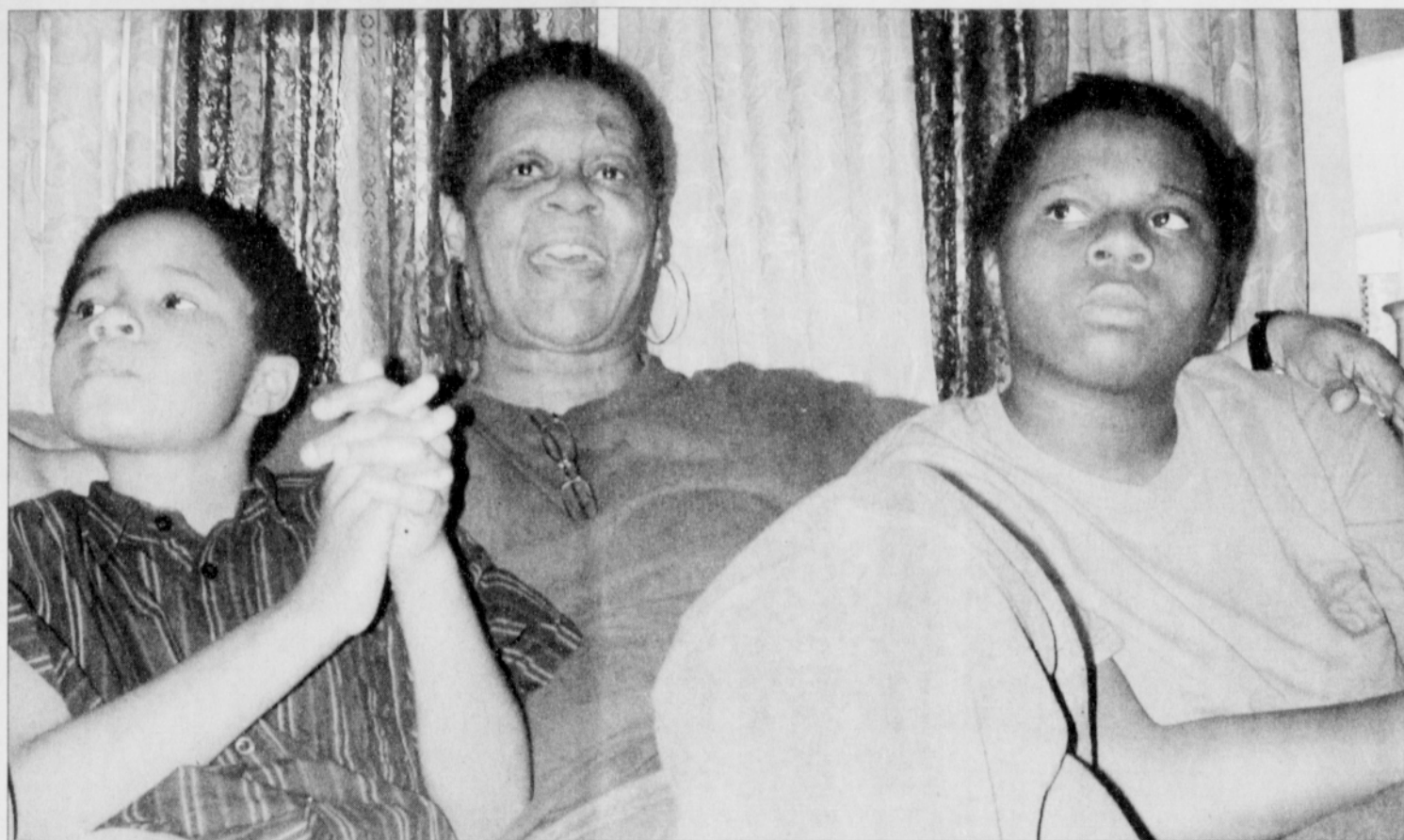
Saturday, April 19, from noon to 4 p.m., the People's Food Co-op, 3029 S.E. 21st Ave., invites Portlanders to celebrate Earth Day with workshops, live music and free organic cotton tote bags (while supplies last); this is a free, family-friendly event.

### Gresham Earth Day Celebration

Saturday, April 19, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the City Hall, 1333 N.W. Eastman Parkway, the public is invited to attend this free family event featuring live music, free workshops, activities and more; for more information, call 503-618-2526.

### Spiffin' Up MLK

Saturday, April 19, SOLV and neighborhood businesses and community members will work together to pick up trash, clean graffiti and remove street debris along three miles of the Boulevard, from Broadway to Northeast Lombard Street; visit [Handsonportland.org](http://Handsonportland.org) or call 503-413-7787 to get involved.



Carolynn Smith, 61, takes care of five grandchildren in her four-bedroom house in the Woodlawn neighborhood of northeast Portland.

PHOTO BY  
RAYMOND  
RENDELMAN/  
THE PORTLAND  
OBSERVER

## Grandparents Raising Kids

### Workshop to focus on the special challenges

BY RAYMOND RENDELMAN  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Northeast Portland resident Carolynn Smith has to juggle daily sports practices, parent-teacher conferences and meals for five children whom she also hassles to keep up on homework in the evenings. She frets about dishes in the sink, basketballs strewn across the yard and no time for anything but what she sees as necessary.

This seems like the hectic life of an average parent, except Smith is 61 and her children have a few different last names.

Called the "neighborhood granny" by others living near Woodlawn Park, Smith would look after more children in her four-bedroom house if the state's human services allowed. She asserts that growing up in rural Oklahoma prepared her for hard work over an entire life.

"As long as I have them with me, I could take care of them because I love all my grandbabies," she says, pointing out the craft table where she works with her kids filling found-glass bottles with liquid soap to help pay the bills.

Such caregivers provide a safety net inside and outside of the foster-care system as biological parents struggle with issues like substance abuse, mental illness, incarceration, economic hardship, divorce or domestic violence. Whenever Smith heard about one of her 20 grandchildren in trouble, she had been in the habit of adopting them, but the state decided to limit this practice, instead paying for foster guardians.

The policies inspired her to start an organization called Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. She took her concern that her parental rights had been violated to the Oregon capitol in Salem last week to follow up on a series of weekly vigils in front of north Portland's human-services building.

*"As long as I have them with me, I could take care of them because I love all my grandbabies."*

—Carolynn Smith

Not everyone in Smith's caregiver position can be so active, and experts see special challenges for the estimated 2.4 million grandparents nationally taking on primary responsibility for children's needs. In Oregon, more than half of the 37,536 children living in grandparent-headed households have neither parent present.

"It can be an isolating experience, because their peers have retired in the traditional sense," says Loriann McNeill, a coordinator with Multnomah County Aging and Disability Services.

McNeill points out that the summer months present extra challenges for parents' free time and pocketbooks.

More grandparents also must struggle with living off of Social Security. Out of the county's 4,069 grandparent caregivers counted by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2006, 26 percent were living in poverty. In 2004, eight percent the 4,539 grandparent caregivers were living in poverty.

But there are many agencies that want to help, and last spring the county started a yearly retreat for relatives who run households with kids.

Citing some of last year's 85 attendees who hadn't known another grandparent caring for children, McNeill argues that caregiver solidarity and access to resources represent the keys to success. She also acknowledges

*continued* ▼ on page B4

## 'Dreamgirls' Extended

### For two nights at Jefferson auditorium

Stumptown Stages, after several weekends of sold-out performances of Dreamgirls at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, is pleased to announce two additional performances at Jefferson High School.

Following the career of the Dreams from backup singers to headliners in the '60s,

Dreamgirls stars Jefferson alum and Portland singing sensation Julianne Johnson as Effie. A portion of the ticket sales will help benefit Jefferson High School's Showcase 2008.

The performances run Friday, April 11 and Saturday, April 12 at 8 p.m. at Jefferson High School's auditorium, 5210 N. Kerby Ave.

Tickets are \$27, \$25 for student or seniors, and \$15 for groups of 10 or more. Call 503-381-8686 or visit [Stumptownstages.com](http://Stumptownstages.com) for more information.



PHOTO BY PAUL S. FARDIG

Dreamgirls features, from left to right, Lava Alapai as Lorrell, Julianne Johnson as Effie and Joann Coleman as Deena.



The politics behind the immigration debate is explored in the documentary 'The Other Europe.'

## Immigration Tragedies Documented in Film

### Multicultural showcase continues

"The Other Europe" is a penetrating study of the economics and politics behind the immigration debate, with revealing parallels to our own country. The documentary is coming to the Multicultural Film Festival at Jefferson High School.

The film provides a cross-section of the immigrant experience, arguing that the economic system says we have plenty of jobs and will pay you more than you could ever earn at home. But the political systems warn: We don't want you.

Unlike most American coverage of the immigration issue, The Other Europe explains why undocumented workers are an integral part of Western economies. The film is an unambiguous call to stop the hypocrisy and political posturing and develop humane consistent policies for the foreigners who come to do the jobs we won't.

The 58-minute film shows free to the public at Jefferson High School, 5210 N. Kerby Ave., starting 6 p.m. on April 7.