

Ground Broken for Learning Garden

Humboldt students, partners celebrate

Students, teachers, parents and community members gathered on Thursday for the symbolic ground breaking for the Humboldt Learning Garden next to Humboldt Elementary School in north Portland.

The representatives from key project partners included the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership, Portland Public Schools, the Housing Authority of Portland and Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services.

The ceremony was the culmination of many months of planning. Plans for the garden call for new fencing, new paths, an outdoor classroom, native plants and raised vegetable garden boxes for Humboldt students and residents of the Housing

Authority's Humboldt Gardens housing development across the street.

Eventually, as additional funds are raised, a large buried cistern will be installed to capture stormwater from the school's roof to reuse for garden irrigation.

Once completed in winter 2010, Humboldt School staff and students have big plans to use the garden for science, art, and other educational purposes. Food grown in the raised garden beds may eventually be used in the school cafeteria. Residents of the Humboldt Gardens housing development will utilize the site in the summer as a community gardening plot.

Michelle Mathis from Greenworks PC designed the



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Students from north Portland's Humboldt Elementary School join Chris Hathaway of the Lower Columbia River Estuary Project (center) to turn a shovelful of dirt for the groundbreaking for the Humboldt Learning Garden.

Learning Garden with input from Humboldt School staff and students. Drakes 7 Dees Landscaping is serving as the

project contractor. The Estuary Partnership also is working with Humboldt School on educational pro-

gramming and service learning days that tie into the garden's construction. Next fall, under the Estuary

Partnership's direction, students will plant native plants and conduct garden maintenance.

Self Defense Skills Build Confidence for Girls

Pilot program reaches out

On a sunny afternoon at Humboldt School in north Portland five girls stand in a line with stern faces as they scream, "Go away!" "Back off!" at Carolyn Haycraft and Sara Johnson who walk slowly toward them. When they get within an arms reach the girls break out in gales of laughter.

The girls are participating in Girls Strength, a pilot program sponsored by the Portland Police Bureau. The program takes a holistic approach to young women's self defense, incorporating confidence building exercises as well as lessons on how to ward off predators.

According to, Haycraft, Girl Strength's coordinator, the program has reached about 100 middle school girls in about five months.

Johnson, the director of the Police Bureau's WomenStrength! — a 30-year-old program Girls Strength is

modeled after — said the latest outreach was created after enough parents and teachers asked if there was a program like it for girls.

"It became a need," said Johnson, who explained that it's the only program of its kind offered freely to middle school girls.

Johnson said that middle school is often a time when girls' self-esteem suffers and it's crucial that they learn to be confident and assertive.

Haycraft and Johnson won't go into the specifics of the self-defense techniques taught to the girls, since a predator might anticipate them, but stress that the program does more. It includes activities to get girls feeling confident with their bodies and intuition, learn to build alliances to cope with bullying, and generally be more assertive.

"There are choices you can make as a girl or a woman that can prevent certain situations," said Haycraft, who explained that the program isn't "fear based," meaning girls aren't bombarded with statistics and horror



PHOTO BY JAKE THOMAS/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Girls practice non-verbal skills that tell a potential threat to 'back off' during a Portland Police Bureau Girls Strength self-defense class at Humboldt Elementary in north Portland.

stories about violence toward women. Instead, the program aims to instill in girls enough mettle so they can face the dangers they could potentially face. It also provides girls with simple strategies to keep them out of harm's

way. "Girls Strength is one of the best things I've ever done," said Davis, a fifth-grader at Humboldt School. She added that she feels confident that she can dodge sketchy situa-

tions and confront them if need be. "It makes you more comfortable."

Emogene Hillman-Jackson, fifth-grader at Humboldt, also feels less fearful from doing the program. She liked the "the strength part," and "the girl part too."

In one exercise the girls sit in chairs arranged in rows of two. The girls pretend they are sitting on the bus when Haycraft and Johnson approach them pretending to be "creepy" men who ask them their names and where they go to school. Each girl assertively tells them to buzz off, causing Haycraft and Johnson to express mock chargin.

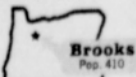
Many girls said they liked to physical activities the best. One of them involves the girls huddling in a circle and grabbing each others hands. They then spin around until they are in a perfect hand-joined circle.

Haycraft said that the program is still a work in progress, and has changed after visiting five schools to incorporate more physical activity.

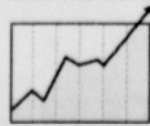


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