

# Barbers Focus on Community

continued ▲ from A11

Barbershops have been the heart of the African American community since the late 1800s, when segregation and racism were still very prevalent. The barbershop gave black men a place to call their own, and allowed them to speak freely about an array of subjects such as relationships, religion, weather, sports and even politics.

It's slightly before 9 am, when I enter the logo encrusted glass door of sports themed Champions Barbershop at 3827 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Rich earth hues of burgundy and gold line the walls, as does a flat screen television, framed sports memorabilia, and a red snack machine.

A perfectly organized rack of trial-sized basketballs serves as a center piece.

Patron Daryl Thomas is already seated in a barbers chair, draped

in a red cape waiting to get his swagger right.

Fully staffed with six chairs, Champions Barbershop offers their predominantly male clientele an upscale environment.

Lane has been in the barbershop business professionally for the last eight years, and has been the co-owner of Champions for nearly a year.

Thomas said he enjoys the environment and "the camaraderie." "All the guys, they get along... [it's] just good conversation," he added.

Champions look to its professionalism and community involvement to keep them a cut above the other barbershops on the MLK strip.

"Our main focus going into business was to be professional," Lane stated. "Community involvement was something we set out to do... and we made it one of our focal points to be involved in the community."

The budding barbershop is currently partnered with the Portland Housing Center, promoting homeownership within the community, and The Big Brothers Big Sisters program. Champions is also open to working with any other organization aiming to build up the Northeast community that it's proud to be apart of.

Although Lane cut hair as a youth, he never dreamed he would be a barber. But he did know he wanted to be a business owner. Unable to continue in his previous profession due to an injury, he decided he might as well pursue something he already knew how to do.

Lane went on to get his barber's license from Beau Monde School of Hair Design, and it turned out to be "one of the best things I ever did," Lane said.

A self-proclaimed believer in the Lord, Lane believes God directed this path.

"He placed me where He

wanted me to be," added Lane.

He further attributes his faith to the whole transition into business ownership within a down economy and a seemingly cornered market.

"It went so smooth, it was scary how smooth it went," he said.

He looks for the same seamless opening of a second Champions Barbershop in the future.

But right now the business is focused on "bringing the razor back," Lane stated. He said customers can come in and get pampered with a hot towel razor shave.

"It just gives more defined detail to a cut and shave," he added.

Well, besides an excellent cut with definition, Lane would like his customers to take away a comfortable experience.

"I want them to say, Man, that was a cool shop," he concluded.

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The cost is \$55 pre-paid or \$65 at the door with a \$5 group discount for each additional person. With limited seating, clients are encouraged to pre-register to ensure space. Registration is 8 a.m.

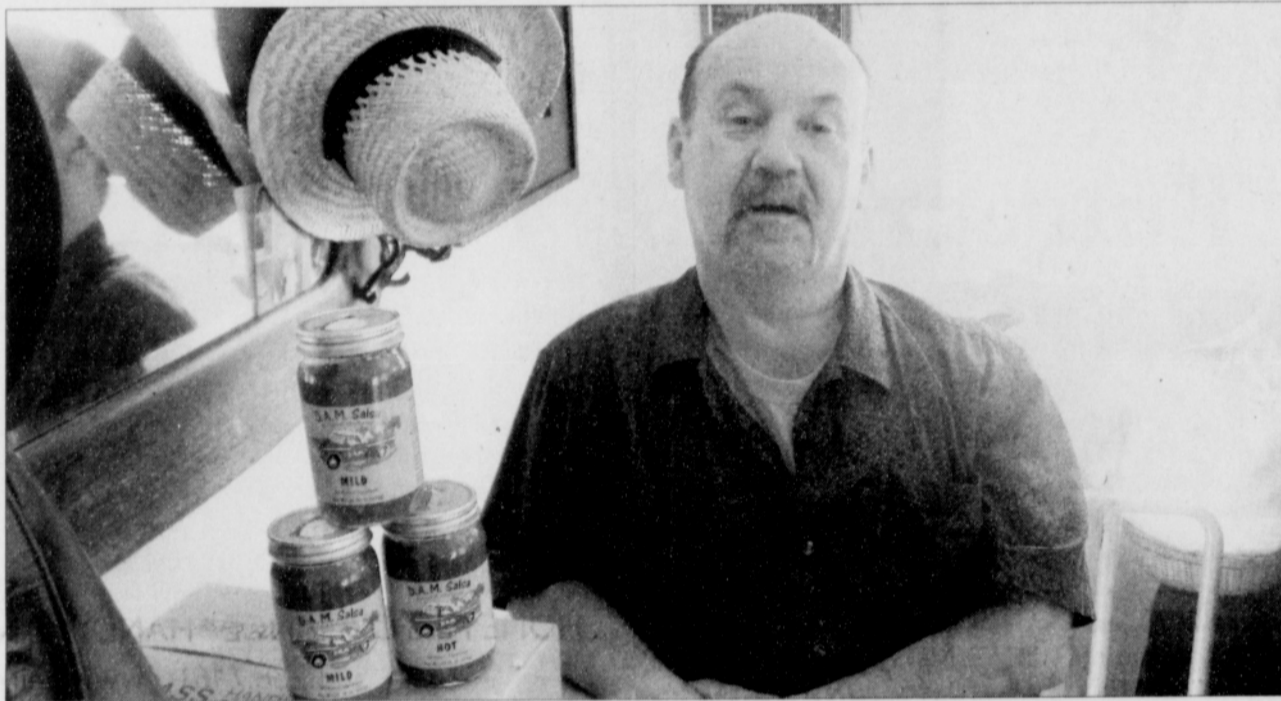
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# Micro Loan Helps Entrepreneur Succeed

continued ▲ from A12

which Martinez reluctantly decided to do.

Martinez remembers his first salsa coming off the production line on the ominous date of June 6, 2006. Since then the product has taken off. New Seasons and Whole Foods carry it, in addition to a slew of smaller grocery stores in the Portland area and the Willamette Valley. A coffee shop sells it, in addition to a hair salon. He's now looking to get it on the East Coast. "This is the type of salsa where you put the chip in the salsa and you come out



with salsa, not a wet chip," said Martinez, who proudly proclaims that the thick salsa-choked full of onion, jalapeno, cilantro, oregano, and spices is all natural with no preservatives. Although Martinez realizes that he's in a crowded market, he's remains undeterred. "I want every house to know my product whether they buy it or not," he said.

David Martinez, the proprietor of D.A.M. Salsa, rests against stacks of salsa bearing his initials and product name.

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