



Tax help volunteers Jose Soto (from left), Marya Gonzalez and Jerald Robinson, join Camille McDonald with the non-profit CASH Oregon to help low income persons fill out tax returns and sign up qualifying families for earned income tax credits.

Events Help Local Tax Filers

Tax credits for families a priority

Paying your fair share of income taxes can be a bit stressful, but there are people out there who can help. And with some new changes in federal and state law, you might walk away with a hunk of money.

Because of the weak economy, many people might qualify for the earned income tax credit for first time because their income declined or their marital status changed. The credit was also expanded under the stimulus bill signed into law last year.

The ETIC is meant to offset the tax burden on working low-income people. The amount of the tax credit varies, depending on your situation, but you could get a couple thousand dollars. The stimulus gives people with three or more children an extra boost with a larger tax credit this year.

If you, like many other Oregonians, have been receiving unemployment benefits you can now have a \$2,400 allowance of tax-free unemployment compensation.

A number of community organizations partnering with the Internal Revenue Service are offering assistance with tax preparation. Volunteer Income Tax Assistance programs help out people earning \$49,000 or less and Tax Counseling for the Elderly programs help people 60 and over with their filings. To find one near you, dial 211.

The non-profit CASH Oregon also offers similar services at a number of locations in the area free of charge. To find one, visit cashoregon.org or call 503-243-7765.

Entrepreneur Stays with Dream

continued from Front

After getting out of prison in 2002, he took a job at a barber shop in the Lloyd Center making the state's minimum wage: \$7.25 an hour.

Jackson patiently built up a steady clientele who followed him to Platinum Fade Salon in 2006.

"It was a big step," said Jackson.

Raheem Sadruddin, who also cuts hair at Platinum Fade, worked alongside Jackson at the shop in the Lloyd Center and came along with him when he opened his new shop. He admits that he was a bit nervous leaving a steady job for a startup business, but had confidence in Jackson's savvy.

"I knew he had a good plan," said Sadruddin.

Jackson attributes his rise to his unwavering com-

mitment to giving a good cut every time, telling customers that if there's a line in you hair, the cut is on the house. He also points out that he has barbers who use actual razor blades ensuring a clean cut.

"I try to give the best service I can," he said.

Jackson works seven days a week and hasn't had a vacation in four years, but seems unfazed by it.

When he does find spare time, he talks to kids at churches and schools with a fistful of old newspaper clippings chronicling his fall and incarceration. Jackson's message for young people is always simple: If you follow his path, you will not pay a price.

Jackson thinks about taking the business to another level, opening a shop in Gresham.

"But for right now, I'm focusing on Ninth and Alberta," he said.

Grandmother's Heartache

continued from Front

In 1972, the National Association of Black Social Workers said that trans-racial adoption amounted to "cultural genocide," a charge it later softened.

Experts on the issue argue that children in transracial adoptions can experience serious psycho-social difficulties later in life if proper precautions aren't taken. However, they say that federal law serves as a stumbling block for some important conversations on race and family from taking place.

There are few steady numbers for tracking transracial adoption. A New York Times data analysis from 2006 found that 26 percent, or 4,200, of black children adopted from foster care in 2004, were adopted transracially, nearly all by whites, up from 14 percent in 1998. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that in 2000, 15 percent of adoptions were transracial.

Over the last decade, the U.S. has seen a wave of adoptions from overseas, with several high-profile celebrity adoptions getting significant attention. The high water mark was in 2004, when Americans adopted 22,000 children from other countries, according to U.S. State Department numbers.

In Oregon, a disproportionate number of minority children get caught up in the state Department of Human Services. Thirty eight percent of children spending at least a day in foster care are non-white, and 32.6 percent of adopted children are ethnic minorities.

DHS doesn't track the number of transracial adoptions or the ethnicities of adopting parents, but with the state population estimated to be around 90 percent white by the U.S. Census Bureau, it's safe to say that some minority children are being taken under the wings of pallid-skinned adults.

But discussions about issues of race are largely absent from agencies like DHS, which have a large role in setting up transracial adoptions.

In 1994, Congress passed the Multi Ethnic Placement Act, which prohib-

its any federally-funded agency from using race as a factor in placing children in adoptive care. Before the law was passed, it was often up to social workers to make the call on where to place children. Because many of them had reservations on transracial adoption, minority children ended up languishing for long periods in foster care due to the lack of minority families looking to adopt.

Two years ago, a landmark report released by the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute made call for reform of the law. It made the case that children in transracial adoptions can end up wrestling with issues of self-identity and self-worth, have trouble adjusting, and are blindsided by discrimination later in life.

There are other issues, like health-problems some ethnicities are prone to, or something as simple as hair care. But there are other problems as well. For instance, how should a white couple react if their minority child is called a slur? The report said that these issues need to be talked about by agencies like DHS.

"These are challenges that are not overwhelming and can be addressed," said Keith Alford associate professor, School of Social Work in the College of Human Ecology at Syracuse University.

Alford, and other experts, argue that white parents can care for a colored child if they make efforts to connect them to their heritage, live in a racially-integrated neighborhood that provides mentors, and are generally aware of the challenges their child faces.

Kory Murphy, a policy analyst with DHS, said that it would be beneficial to have white parents adopting a child of color to have some sort of counseling on the issue, but because of MEPA workers in the agency avoid any discussion of race to avoid a lawsuit.

"We just cross our fingers and hope the kids are going to get it," he said.

Astrid Dabbeni was adopted with her sister from Columbia and raised in a transracial family. She recalls growing up with a sense of white privilege that clashed with the real world once she left the nest.

Now the executive director of Adoption Moasiac, a Portland non-profit that provides educational services for adopting couples, Dabbeni recommends that agencies like DHS could work around MEPA by having all couples receive some sort of counseling on transracial adoption.

"They have a sense of 'I don't belong here,'" said Dabbeni if children don't have an anchor.

The topic hasn't risen to prominence at the state or national level. Still, Murphy points out that a study being conducted by Portland State University that focuses on disparities in foster care system might spark a broader discussion on the issue.

But before that happens, Smith has two empty seats at her table.

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