

HEALTH MATTERS



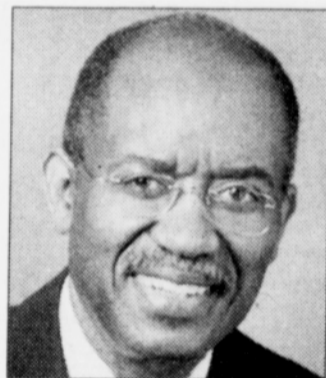
School Wins Fitness Challenge

Students from Clarendon-Portsmouth School hold a ceremonial \$5,000 check from the Humana Foundation, the winnings from a national "American Horsepower Challenge" fitness competition. The north Portland school scored in the top 5 out of 37 schools nationwide. About 100 Clarendon-Portsmouth students were given smart pedometers to wear on their shoes to monitor daily activity for eight weeks, logging a total of 16.2 million steps or approximately 6,149 miles.

When Work Takes a Toll on Health

Expert says key is relief for stress

BY JAKE THOMAS
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER



Sherman James

John Henry, the steel-driving man who beat a steam-powered hammer in a competition during the late 1800s, only to work himself to death in the process, is thought to be a longstanding African-American folk legend with dubious roots in actual history.

But Sherman James, a Duke University professor who is visiting Portland as part of Oregon Public Health Week, argues that Henry is more than a myth. In fact, the folk legend can be found in scores of working people trying to get ahead.

James was one of the first researchers to examine what has been called "John Henryism."

According to James, it's a personality predisposition characterized by a tenacious commitment to hard work and meeting goals, despite circumstances that stand in the way like poverty, racism or interpersonal conflict. People with these traits drive themselves too hard at the expense of their health, and because of their socio-economic status they often don't have the support mechanisms, like paid time off or adequate health care, to cope.

"It's sort of a never-give-up-never-say-die attitude, and after time it can cause wear and tear on various organ systems, particularly cardiovascular systems, and lead to hypertension," explained James in a telephone inter-

view. James took a look at the phenomenon in the early 1980s in North Carolina. Many studies on the topic have focused on African Americans, and have sought to explain why the social segment is disproportionately prone to hypertension and cardiovascular diseases.

However, James points out that subsequent research demonstrates that the trait is present among all ethnicities.

James argues that if the U.S. didn't suffer from so much inequality, and if people with John Henryism had a better support structure, society would benefit from their determination and hard work.

"There's nothing wrong tenacity, determination, commitment to hard work, and optimism," said James. "So if you level the playing field you could see some big pluses."

But until we have that more level playing field, James said that it's important for people with this personality disposition to be aware of it and to exercise, eat right, try to reduce stress, and generally take care of themselves.

He also added that the trait is very prevalent among African Americans, and can easily be found in black churches across the nation, and is

particularly common with pastors.

"[African Americans] are really working very hard trying to achieve," said James. "This runs squarely in the face of the typical image that plays out in the mainstream media of who black people are."

Sherman James will be speaking during a public forum at noon, Friday April 9 in the Moriarty Auditorium at Portland Community College's Cascade Campus in north Portland.

"PULSE" a Dance Concert

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Under the direction of Dana Ingram & Jenelle Yarbrough

Friday April 16th, 2010

Show starts at 8pm / Preshow Mixer with DJ 'OG' One starts at 7pm Tickets available for \$15 or \$20 at the PCPA box office and at all Ticketmaster outlets

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A Sister of Sisters (S.O.S.)

African American Breast Cancer Survivor Support Group

Transition to Wellness ~ Mind & Body

Sponsored by Portland Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

The Portland Alumnae Chapter Delta Sigma Theta is organizing a breast cancer survivor support group for African American Women. We would like to invite all African American Breast Cancer Survivors to join "A Sister of Sisters" (S.O.S.) - a breast cancer support group focusing on issues relating to African American women surviving breast cancer.

If you're an African American Breast Cancer Survivor - please join us:

Time: April 29th, 6:30PM - 8:30PM
Place: Providence Irvington Village (community room)
Address: 420 NE Mason St. / Portland, OR.

- Light refreshments will be served -



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