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Passing the Torch

*Successful minority
entrepreneurship
with family ties*

BY JAKE THOMAS
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

In 1981 a young executive named Sam Brooks was working for the Oregon Employment Department when he decided to take a gamble and open up his own staffing agency after getting strong support from a handful of friends.

He took out the money he had saved up for retirement, which was somewhere between \$14,000 and \$24,000, and opened up Brooks Temporary Associates, the state's first minority-owned employment agency.

Since then, he and his wife, Margaret, have established the Brooks Staffing as a reputable company that employs 200 people in five states.

But Sam and Margaret Brooks are preparing to fade into the backdrop of the company as they pass the reigns to their daughter, Simone.

Simone Brooks, 35, will be steadily taking over the day-to-day management of the company during the next year and a half. But deciding to take over the family business was something Brooks came to reluctantly.

Starting the business from scratch wasn't easy, and getting the company (now called Brooks Staffing, which is a division of S. Brooks and Associates) to where it is now took lots of sweat equity and many long hours.

The company, which graduated from a Small Business Administration program for minority businesses years ago, has remained steady even in the turbulent economy with a strong mix of private



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PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Northeast Portland's Brooks Temporary Associates is a successful minority-owned company led by Sam Brooks, his wife Margaret (left) and daughter, Simone.