

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Bobby Fother volunteers to teach kids dance and arts at King Elementary School.

Community Artist Gives Back

Volunteer builds sense of worth in others

The Steve Lowenstein Trust Board has selected community artist Bobby Fother for its annual cash award to a person who has made a significant personal contribution to assisting the underserved.

First awarded in 1992, the Lowenstein honor was presented to Fother on Dec. 8 at Portland City Council.

Fother, a dancer, designer, visual artist, and educator, has committed much of his life to using the power of the arts to inspire an appreciation of beauty, and a sense of self worth, in others.

It is safe to say, over the 40 plus years of his life as a teaching and performing artist, thousands of children and families have been the greatest beneficiaries of his efforts.

"Mr. Bobby," as some children like to call him, can take well-earned pride in teaching the arts as both inherently worth-

while, and as a tool for connecting young people, and their parents, to history, business, geography and myriad cultures of the planet. He strives to impart to them their potential and very real ability to constructively and beautifully shape their futures and world around them.

A second generation Oregonian, Fother recently put significant time and energy into stoking a community fire for building an exemplary arts curriculum at Dr Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School in northeast Portland. He received the 2009 Spirit of Portland Award for his unceasing dedication and creativity in making good things happen even with scant resources. He is truly a life-long

community and arts activist.

Fother has been often heard to say everything he does is simply about "Helping to nurture the children of the community and families who nurtured and supported me as young artist."

The Lowenstein Trust is part of the legacy of Steve Lowenstein, an inspiring model of public service who served in the Peace Corps after law school in the early 1960s. Throughout his life he was a vocal civil rights activist; the founding director of Oregon Legal Services; author of a groundbreaking history - The Jews of Oregon 1850-1950; and at the time of his death in 1990, served as Chief of Staff to former City Commissioner Mike Lindberg.

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