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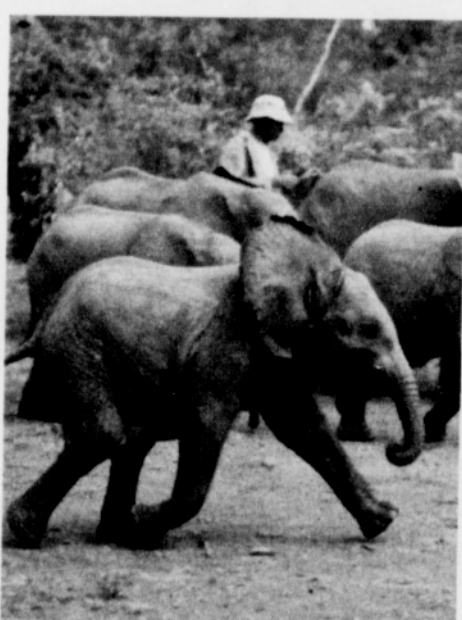
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What's on your list today?.

LOCAL NEWS

Workforce Training in Crosshairs

Cuts aimed at programs bringing diversity to trades

BY MINDY COOPER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

After a long history of searching for employment, Brian Beasley is gaining skills to become an electrician in the future.

Pat Daniels is the executive director for Constructing Hope, which is a non-profit pre apprenticeship program that targets low income, minorities and individuals with a legal history to prepare them for jobs within the construction and trade industry throughout Portland.

Even as unemployment rates remain extremely high throughout the state, recent federal budget cuts have job training and placement programs throughout the Portland area worried about their future ability to better the economic lives and opportunities for minorities within the community.

The loss of funding includes the elimination of billions of dollars for the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) which is expected to have a trickle down affect, impacting all tiers of the trade industry.

Although many facets of the construction industry have been committed to increasing the amount of workers for future work projects throughout the city, many employment and training systems could be shut down, especially if services become terminated for participants who rely on these programs in economically difficult times.

Beasley, 33, is in his fifth week of apprenticeship training with Constructing Hope Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program. Founded in 2007, the non-profit service program prepares students with apprenticeship placements in the trade industry come graduation from their nine-week program.

"It's giving me a second chance at doing something constructive for my life," he said. This is opposed to continuing being a part of a vicious cycle and ending up in jail again."

In the past, Beasley has long had trouble finding work, but with the help of Constructing Hope program, his dreams of becoming an electrician and building his own house



Brian Beasley, 33, picks up his worker's belt and hard hat during his 5th week of apprenticeship training with Constructing Hope in northeast Portland, where he is gaining skills to become an electrician in the future.

someday are real achievable goals in his future.

"That is what this program is geared toward, which is helping people with legal history find employment in the construction field," he said. "We're actually helping to re-build stuff, instead of tearing stuff up."

But after the U.S. House of Representatives cut funding in February, and if the latest appropriations bill is passed, these financial cuts would cancel all new funding for state and local programs, as well as drastically affect the programs affiliated with them.

Although the final numbers have yet to be determined, some stakeholders in Oregon said it is likely that the resources available to serve disconnected youth, disadvantaged adults and dislocated workers will experience a 25 to 35 percent loss of WIA resources.

According to the Oregon Workforce Partnership, Oregon received \$47 million in federal WIA

funding in 2010 to serve at risk youth, job seeking adults and dislocated workers. Although this represents a 20 percent decrease in funds over the last decade, the funding has helped over 280,000 Oregonians in the past year to participate in programs to help the unemployed.

In response to a nationwide trend of diminishing qualified trade craft workers in the construction industry, companies like TriMet use the Workforce Training and Hiring Program to maximize apprenticeship opportunities for people of color, women and the economically separate.

Loretta Young, who has worked for the City of Portland for over 26-years, said the goal is to increase the numbers of women and minorities in the construction trades through apprenticeship opportunities on local government projects.

Since the beginning of the program, which began in 1997 with the city has witnessed a slow, but defi-

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