

# On Mission to Change the Statistics

continued **▲** from front

Founded in 1965 by the Johnson Administration as part of the war on poverty, Head Start has served more than 27 million children and families since its inception.

"For children who have not had experiences like Head Start, they often go into kindergarten and might not know all of the colors, how to write their names or many numbers," he said. "But all the things that could keep kids from doing well in school, we have put an emphasis on."

Herndon said most of the families at Albina Head Start have children enrolled in full-day services, which, which extend from 7 in the morning until 5:30 at night.

"We concentrate on reading, math, shapes and helping kids learn how to learn the alphabet, an emphasis on learning about nutrition, health care and how to interact with other children and how to share," he said.

"These are learned behaviors," he said. "And if you can help kids go into kindergarten with skills, than it is more likely they will be successful in school."

Herndon also said one of the biggest benefits of Head Start, which is probably the least realized, is the emphasis the program puts on health care for children.

He said data that came out during the Bush administration gave credit to Head Start for reducing the childhood mortality rate by 50 percent.

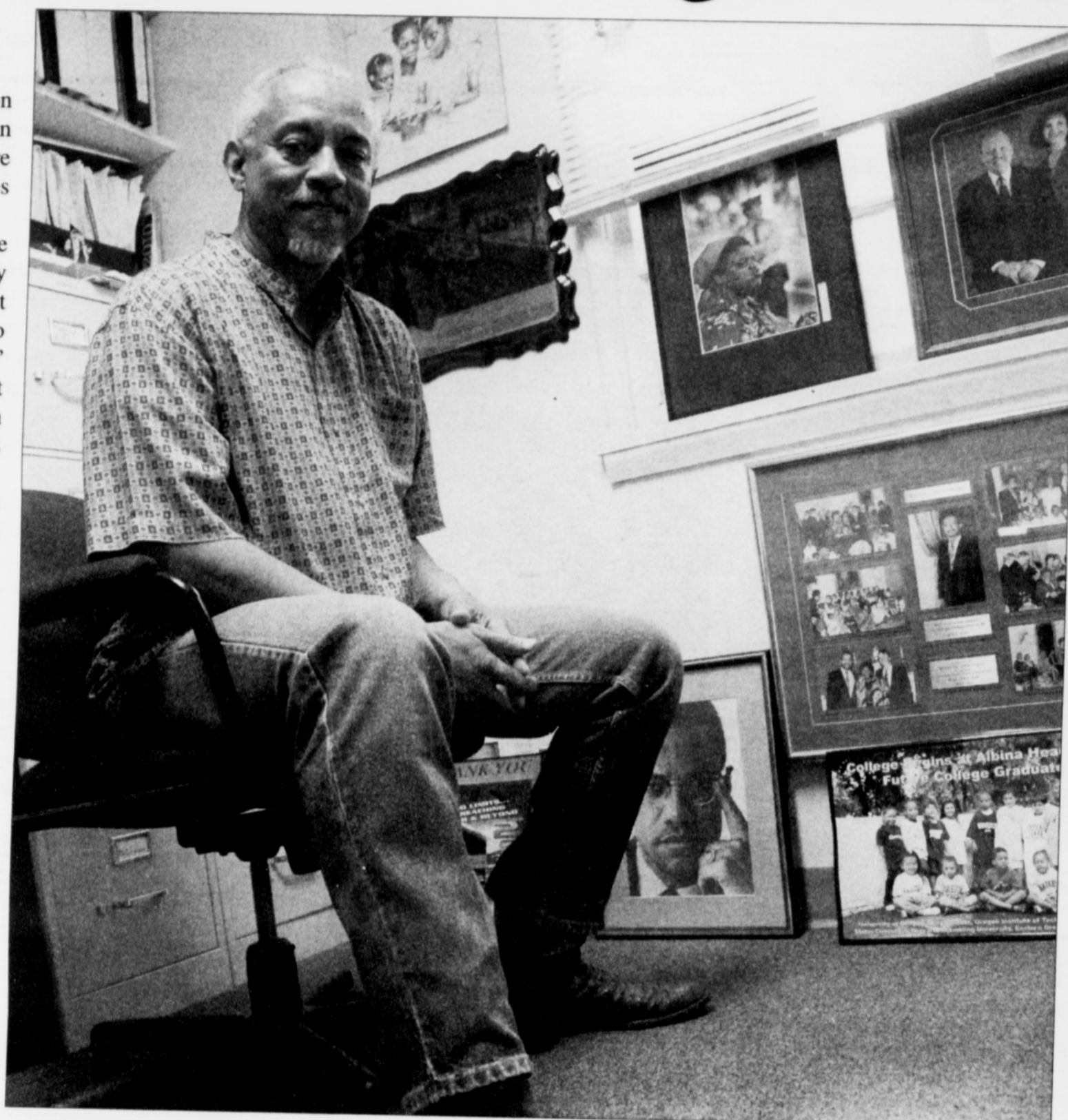


PHOTO BY MINDY COOPER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER  
Portland activist and director of Albina Head Start, Ron Herndon, believes the advocacy from parents, mentors and the community is the main factor that determines if a child receives an education that will enable them to graduate from college or become successful in life.

being the most successful.

"Within every county in the country, a Head Start exists," said Herndon. "But two major challenges lay ahead."

Efforts have been made by politicians to cut the funding or get rid of Head Start, despite all of the research.

This is a huge problem, he said. Head Start is currently able to serve only 30 to 40 percent of the kids eligible for the program. "This is almost like you have discovered the vaccine for Polio, but you can only give it to 30 percent of the children."

His second concern lingers around the quest by many stakeholders to try to make a Bachelors Degree mandatory to become a teacher within the program. He said this is troublesome because, since its creation, Head Start has hired people from within the communities of those they serve.

"The more troubling part is that given all the information that is out there, it appears to me, there is no correlation between a college degree and a good teacher," he said.

Herndon emphasized the importance in a college education, but said there is no compelling research that a college degree equals a better Head Start teacher.

Still, he is dedicated to continue to help families and children receive the encouragement and preparation to help them have an equal chance to both do well in school and increase their quality of life.

He said he was grateful to have been hired in 1975.

And after working as the director of Albina Head Start over three decades ago, Herndon said, "I am just as privileged and grateful now as I was then."

Health care and nutrition education are important, he said, because by the time the children enter school, they have already discovered most issues that could prevent them from

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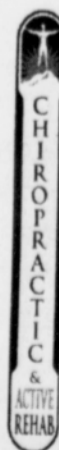
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## African American Literature courses at Portland Community College

In an effort to increase diversity, PCC is offering African American Literature (Eng. 256 & 258) courses at both the Sylvania and Cascade campuses this fall. English 256 will be offered at Sylvania Monday and Wednesday from 1-2:50 p.m.

The course will be taught from an African American perspective. It covers the African American experience, as well as the international influence of Pan African writers. The course is unique amongst other classes covering U.S. history and will explore little known historical events; discover books that were purposely taken out of print; and books that have been lost for years or never written in English. Students also will explore topics based on their historical or literary interests.

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