

Changing the Face of Biking

Portland's first African-American operated bicycling shop grows

BY CARI HACHMANN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A twisted hunk of metal and tires mangled around a street bicycle rack is exactly what the recently-opened Portland Bike Station hopes to avoid by offering commuters a space to safely park their bikes inside.

"We don't want to see bikes outside," said Bishop K. Sims, executive director of the Portland Bike Station. Looking to join the larger Bike Share program in Portland, the one-stop shop also offers hourly and daily rentals and full-service repairs.

The business united two visions for Sims, a minister at the Full Holy Ghost Mission. He created a place for downtown workers to store their bikes out of the rain and out harm's way, with another life-long mission, employing the homeless and people recovering from drug and alcohol problems.

A Portland native and son of minister parents, Sims helps people in the community transition from

past troubles such as jail, drug abuse, and homelessness, to a more stable life with positive activities.

As the only African-American-run bicycle shop in Portland, he breaks a stereotype in Portland that there is only a certain race of people riding bikes.

"The face of bikes needs to change," said Sims, who learned about bikes from his childhood neighbor, a Schwinn dealer. "It needs to look more like America."

With funding from the Full Holy Ghost Mission, Sims and several volunteers opened the Portland Bike Station, located within the Dekum Building on Southwest Washington Street and Third Avenue, in April of this year.

Most of the volunteers and employees at Portland Bike Station can testify that Sims helped them out in their lives. By gaining job experience or stable work histories, they are making up the favor.

continued ▼ on page 31

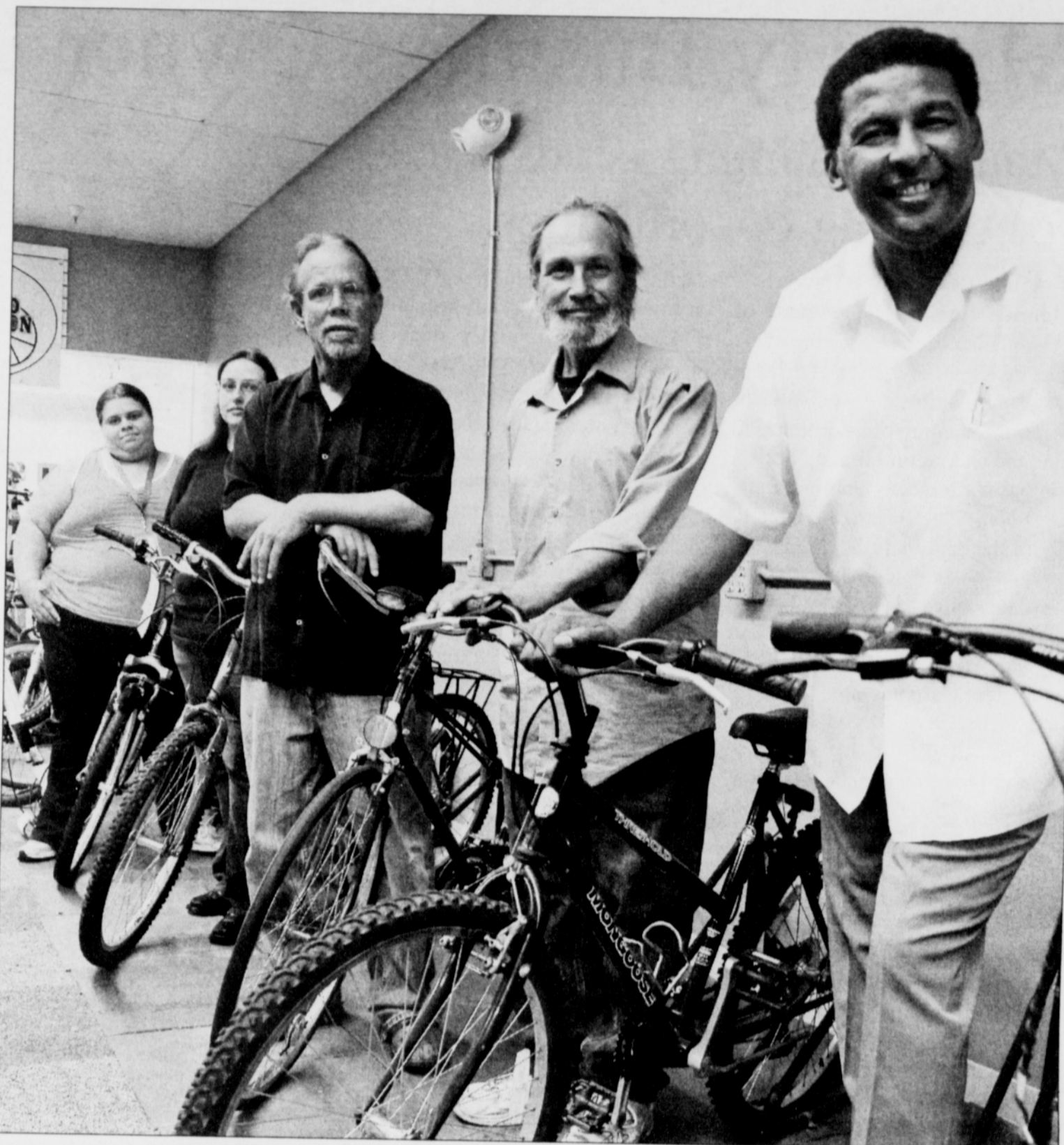


PHOTO BY CARI HACHMANN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Bishop K. Sims (right) opened his Portland Bike Station downtown at 515 S.W. Third Ave. last April. He's the first African-American to operate a bicycle shop in Portland and is part of the changing face of biking in the city.

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