

Veterans Celebration at PSU

Viking Vets, a student-veterans group at Portland State University, will hold a celebration in honor of Veterans Day on Thursday, Nov. 10, from noon to 2 p.m., featuring guest speakers, refreshments, and information on veteran-related support services. The free and open to the public event will held on the first floor of

Smith Memorial Student Union.

"It is important for us, especially on this campus, to help celebrate our veterans," said Paul Polsin, acting president of Viking Vets.

Polsin noted that PSU was founded in the wake of World War II to provide returning service members with access

to higher education.

"Viking Vets understands how important PSU's unique relationship with the veteran community will be in the near future, as thousands of veterans return to the Portland area following service in the global war on terrorism," he said.

Returning Soldiers

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that job aren't those that are in demand right now."

"We just keep working away and try to get those veterans jobs," said Dominick, who encourages any veteran or military person who hasn't contacted the veteran representatives at the Oregon employment office to do so.

Dominick said he just hopes the economy turns around so there are more available jobs for people.



PHOTO BY CARI HACHMANN/
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Femininity and nature
are subjects found in
works of Kate Ferris, a
formerly homeless artist
who paints from her
experiences.

Artist's Gallery is the Street

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Ferris sat by her side everyday at OHSU during her last living days.

At this point, Ferris was exhausted, out of money, and her own health was suffering. After her mother died, "Everything fell apart," said Ferris.

In the same year, she and her husband both fell ill with chronic health problems. With her shop long-closed and no health insurance, Ferris sold her house to pay for medical bills. The couple lived out of her car with all that was left of their belongings.

"It was embarrassing," Ferris said. While some of her Sellwood friends remained well-off and upwardly mobile, she was mentally distraught by the fact that she could no longer keep up and pay for the house she enjoyed for 20 years. Then, another misfortune struck; her car was stolen.

"That's how I ended up doing this," said Ferris, pointing to a hand-painted cardboard sign. Homeless with her husband, she lived in a tent near Goose Hollow from May through November, nearly eight months. "It was so

abrupt," she said.

Ferris learned the ironies of homelessness after she was released from one hospital visit into the not-so-welcoming arms of nature. Weary and cold, she took rest under some bushes near an office building.

There were a few things she could not get used to while living outside, including the rain and cold, people stealing everything, the mentally ill and physically pained people wandering the streets at night, and other nightmares. She often watched people getting into their toasty cars and just wished to be warm.

Ferris had quit painting in her free time long before she was homeless, but cold and wet with empty pockets, she longed for some expression of hope, "I feel so much more comfortable when I have an outlet," she said, "It definitely saved my life."

Flying signs by the side of the road were less intimidating than a stuffy art gallery, she said, but people still hollered everything under the sun at her. "Get a job!" one lady dripping in diamonds called from a Cadillac. Some people gave her their trash.

Other drivers were extremely pleased and surprised by the art-

work she crafted with supplies from the Dollar Tree. Ferris has sold over 160 paintings, all ranging in price, from \$5 and up, to sometimes free.

Ferris bought eye contacts with one driver's \$100 offering, a near-sighted necessity she lost with her car.

A journey of homelessness ended when Ferris and her husband were picked up on a snowy day by JOIN, an agency that helps people off the streets. JOIN helped the couple into an apartment, where they reside now.

For all the troubles she has come to face, Ferris is surprisingly optimistic and happy. As an artist, she admits to, at times having liked the idea of living free and unbothered on the skirts of society.

She considers time spent living with her husband in their neat and tidy tent downtown "kind of fun" and calls the entire experience "amazingly informative."

Largely, Ferris is elated to be painting again.

"Where are all the people today? In their cars?" She answers her own question as she continues to interrupt rush hour traffic with her prismatic paintings.

Battling High Costs of Cooler Days

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learn how to stop cold drafts in their home by using affordable and simple tools such as scissors and a screwdriver.

"Our workshops are important because they allow everybody to have control over their energy costs, even if they are renting," said Smith. "If your house is drafty, you'll love it."

Recently, there have been a high number of funding cuts to the city's energy assistance programs, which have helped individuals in the past pay their heating bills. Smith said, however, by taking the workshop, residents can learn how to reduce their reliance on these assistance programs. "The people who take the classes are their own heroes," she said. "In a way what we are really doing is removing barriers people have to make their own changes."

Smith said, people who have taken the classes report saving \$30, on average, a month after taking a workshop.

Through education, hands-on training, and distribution of weatherization, water conservation, and lead poisoning prevention materials, the Community Energy Project works for a future where all members of the community have affordable homes they live in with dignity for both themselves and the surrounding environment.

And their organization is not alone, said Smith.

A number of local businesses, public and private organizations, and the county are also working with members of the community on ways people can reduce energy costs during the drafty days of winter.

One local business, headquartered in north Portland is Indow Windows, which was founded in 2010 by Chief Executive Officer Sam Pardue who wanted to find a better and less expensive way to insulate the windows in his 1906 Portland Craftsman home.

After a gust of innovation, sustainable and energy efficient designs, "thermal window inserts"

emerged, known as the Indow Window.

These custom-manufactured sheets of acrylic glazing are edged with a patent-pending compression, which provides double pane window performance—at a fraction of the cost.

"In these days, everybody is trying to save money with the economy being so tough," said Pardue. "It can save people between 15 and 30 percent on their energy bills."

Indow Windows, which simply press into place on the inside of a window frame, create a tight seal without any nails, screws, or adhesives, and provide insulation and energy savings.

Through collaboration with the regional Neil Kelly Company, Indow Windows strives to give homeowners an easy and cost-effective way to insulate their homes, which will also help to create more jobs for local residents throughout the winter months.

"We're hiring employees as we try to keep up with demand for efficient and affordable green building products," said Pardue. The company, which has 12 employees currently, expects to double that number in the next four months.

Pardue said individuals love their product because it boosts the comfort in homes so dramatically. "That's really what it's all about," he said. "And our product is much more affordable than double pane window replacement."

"Saving energy has an effect and reduces your carbon footprint," said Smith. "Conservation energy and conservation of natural resources go hand in hand, and it's a win for everybody."

Coming up on Thursday, Nov. 10, the Community Energy Project will hold its second fundraising event, which is sponsored by Indow Windows, which will be auctioning off their product at the function.

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. at the Kiernan Community Center located at 4940 N.E. Eighth Ave.

For more information about the fundraiser and a schedule of the free weatherization workshops, visit communityenergyproject.org.