

# Cascade Connections

BY ALGIE C. GATEWOOD



## Community Participation is Great

Communities work best when everyone has a stake. It is not enough simply to live someplace or work someplace – in order to be a true member of a community, you have to be an active agent in its growth and development. And most of all, you have to watch your neighbor's back.

Not so very long ago -- before our lives became so compartmentalized, before electronic media were able to keep us on the couch instead of on the stoop or the sidewalk – this notion of community was accepted instinctively. Of course everyone had everyone else's back, no question about it.

But today, in an age when it seems communities are as often virtual as they are real, it can take a little extra effort to ensure that everyone has a stake, that we are all active agents in our collective development. That's why Portland Community College's Cascade Campus has joined forces with our neighbors – residents, businesses, government agencies, and community groups – to take steps to make sure our common neighborhood remains a vital, engaged, and safe community.

Founded in 2006, the Albina-Killingsworth Safe Neighborhood Commission – named for the intersection of the two thoroughfares, the center of Cascade Campus' "neighborhood" – counts among its members Cascade Campus, Jefferson High School, the Portland Police Bureau, TriMet, the North Portland Library, the PCC Public Safety Department, the Piedmont and Humboldt Neighborhood Associations, and a host local businesses and residents. Our aim is quite simple – to work cooperatively to address issues of safety and livability in the area that sustains us. In other words, to be active agents in our community.

The commission began simply, with the formation of a neighborhood graffiti response team and the establishment of clearly marked School Zones in a 1,000-foot perimeter around Jefferson High School, Ockley Green Middle School, and the other public school campuses in the vicinity, so that knowledge of

the School Zones – and the increased severity of punishment for crimes committed within them – will serve as a deterrent to illegal activity.

The commission moved on to the installation of a network of surveillance cameras along North Killingsworth Street where it runs past Cascade Campus. The cameras proved their worth immediately, and their footage continues to be used by the Police Bureau to apprehend suspects in the area.

As the commission's work gathered momentum and recognition, the level of collaboration between its members broadened and deepened. The Police Bureau decided to build on the group's success by stepping up its presence and visibility in the vicinity, and even formed a special Street Crimes Unit dedicated to the Albina-Killingsworth area. The Police Bureau and PCC Public Safety collaborate and share information at a higher level than ever before.

All of these measures, and those still to come, are making the environs around Cascade Campus safer and more secure for everyone who uses them – be they a resident, a student, or an employee. More than anything else, though, the commission has been a success because it has drawn the diverse elements of our neighborhood together for a common purpose. People know each other better, communicate more, and are more invested in one another's safety and prosperity.

Will the commission continue be successful? I believe that it will, provided that the members of the neighborhood continue to be active agents on one another's behalf. The commission has shown that with a little effort, people from all walks of life can come together as one. Such a thing has a value that in many ways can't be measured. When neighbors collaborate to work toward a common goal, to make their neighborhood a better place, they become more than the sum of their parts – they are a community.

Algie C. Gatewood, Ed.D., is president of Portland Community College's Cascade Campus.

## Leader in Education Hired

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street. Crew was named National Superintendent of Year in 2008. He previously oversaw public education systems in Miami and New York City.

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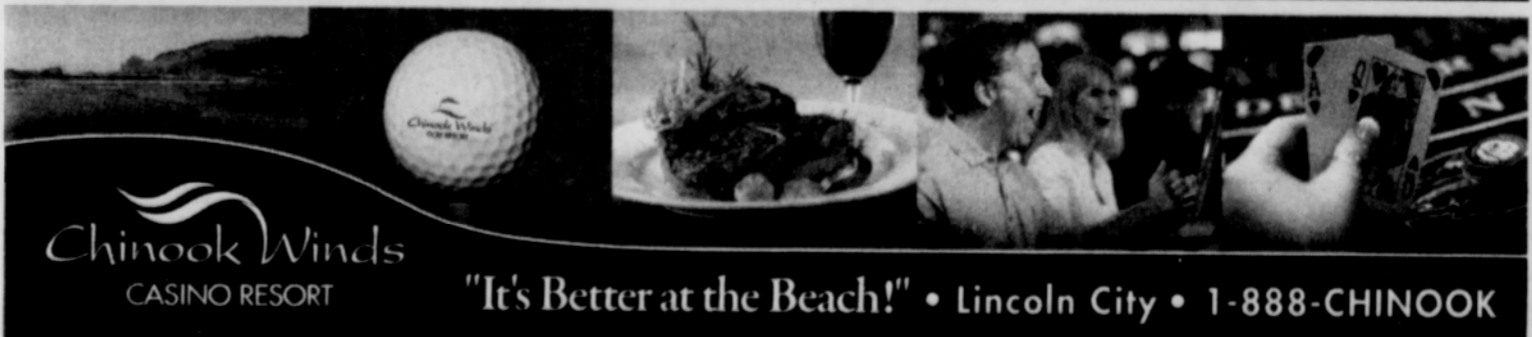
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