

Performance *for* Peace

continued **▲** from front

Family Center, Mt Olive Youth Choir and more.

The Peace Festival is the inaugural event of Black Women for Peace, an organization created in response to a rise in youth violence, which took the lives of several young black men and women in the north and northeast Portland community.

The organization Black Women for Peace was originally founded by Commissioner Barbara Waller in 2010, when she called together 50 black women from different networks around the community to look at, address and discuss the high level of youth and gang violence that was occurring at that time, said Regena Warren, one of the original members of the organization.

"One of the things we talked about was how can the power of women within those networks create peace and stop violence among young people and within our community."

As the inaugural event for the women's group working for change within the community, the event will not only offer Portlanders a chance to enjoy the creative and diverse talents of youth throughout the city, but the showcase will also present the opportunity for individuals to come together for a better tomorrow.

"We wanted to give young people an opportunity to express themselves and convey messages of peace through spoken word, song, and dance. It is young people from diverse communities," said Warren.

Warren said the fine arts provide youth with the opportunity to find their personal power and passion and express themselves in non-violent ways.

Participants and guests will also be asked to support the Black Women for Peace by signing a Peace Pledge to end violence, she said.



Regena Warren, one of the original members of the Black Women for Peace, an organization of women from throughout the community dedicated to curb the rise in youth violence.

"We want everyone who attends to make a pledge for peace."

Last weekend, youth of all ages were staggering into the June Key Delta center in north Portland Saturday to practice for their upcoming performances.

Upcoming high school senior Nichelle McKinney, 17, said she is excited about the event, where she will be performing her original spoken word poetry, which she said she hopes will inspire others to respect themselves more.

"It (her writing) is talking about youth and how they don't respect themselves," she said. "It is fun writing and talking."

McKinney said she has been working hard with her performance partner who will be singing while she recites her words on stage, and she believes the event is important because it will showcase youth's talents.

exciting aspect of the showcase is the diversity within the lineup. "I think it (the event) is a good opportunity to promote our culture because we are not a melting pot. We are all so different, and we need to celebrate that diversity," she said.

Warren agreed.

Although everyone's unique differences should be shared, she said she hopes everyone within the com-

250 people.

"Events like the Peace Festival help our young people to feel and know that they are valued and celebrated," said Commissioner Loretta Smith. "This is the first of many initiatives and activities where our community can share ideas, discover our commonalities across communities, and create spaces where youth feel safe and secure."

"We have had a lot of enthusiasm from the young individuals who are going to be participating. We hope people come and have a good time and enjoy the young people."

— Regena Warren, original member of the Black Women for Peace

community has the same goal for peace.

According to the organization, Black Women for Peace aims to bring its collective wisdom, power, resources and community relationships to prevent violence among African American youth.

In May of 2011, Multnomah County Commissioner Smith convened a historic town hall meeting of African American men and young males as a vehicle for identifying barriers to their overall success in Oregon, and Black Women for Peace was an instrumental community partner in the landmark event, attended by over

Our organization is just now starting to build its foundation as a working non-profit, said Warren, who invites everyone to the Peace Festival this weekend.

"We have had a lot of enthusiasm from the young individuals who are going to be participating," she said. "We hope people come and have a good time and enjoy the young people."

The free event requires advance tickets. For ticket information contact: mpurcell@ulpdx.org or harris.cynthia18@gmail.com. Tickets will also be available at the Urban League of Portland, 10 N Russell Street, Portland 97227, or you can call (503) 280-2600.

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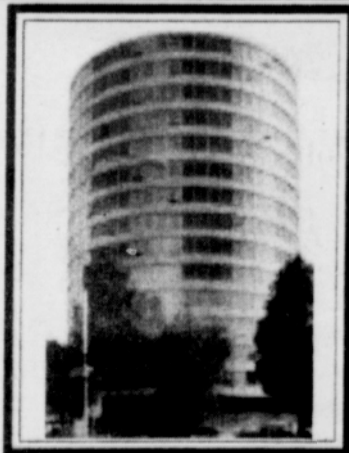
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