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Volume XLIV
Number II



www.portlandobserver.com
Wednesday • March 4, 2015

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PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Clients celebrate the opening of Happy Cup Coffee Company on Northeast Killingsworth and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

Happy Cup Coffee a conduit for happy lives

BY OLIVIA OLIVIA
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A small corner of northeast Portland is expanding to create more jobs and hope for adults with developmental disabilities. Happy Cup Coffee Company, which was founded in 2010, just opened its doors at Killingsworth Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. The proceeds will support a non-profit organization called Up Life, a program that helps pick up the pieces when adults with disabilities fall through the cracks of government services.

Rachel Bloom, the owner and founder of Happy Cup, once taught special education in public schools. The work, she says, fulfilled her in a number of ways, but also broke her heart.

"It was painful to see my students have such limited options after graduation," says Bloom. "I worried about them

Jobs and Hope

and I felt like I could be doing more."

Bloom decided that she could create more stable work and other opportunities for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities by starting her own organization called Full Life, a company that proclaimed itself as "champions for

people with potential."

Full Life, started off 10 years ago when Bloom received a small grant from Clackamas County to recycle cardboard boxes left behind at local shopping malls. Bloom went to the Oregon Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and suggested that she could employ some of their clients, adults with disabilities. She hoped then that the program would expand and offer more stable employment to workers she sought to help.

Despite the program's success, the shopping malls decided not to renew it and Bloom was left at step one, trying to figure out how best to do the work she wanted to do.

After deciding to start her own job development business, she went from business to business asking employers to create positions that would be accessible to adults with disabilities.

Small jobs, like janitorial positions or positions that allowed her clients to interact and participate more regularly in the daily world were incredibly valuable and made a huge

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