



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
 Happy Cup Coffee Operations Manager Adam Bray (from left), the company's founder and Chief Executive Officer Rachel Bloom, and Charley Austin, Happy Cup's head roaster.

Jobs and Hope

continued ▲ from front

difference for many of the adults coming to her in search of work.

The program led to the development of Full Life Recreation at Northeast 33rd Avenue and Sandy Boulevard. The site drew support from state and federal Medicaid funds, and immediately became a community hub for everything from art and crafts courses to basic skill and trade skill sharing, all of which helped many clients feel more ready and confident in the workplace and among each other.

The program also succeeded in being incredibly diverse, welcoming a host of black workers along with other people of color.

"We are committed to representing the communities we interact with," says Bloom. "We want everyone to feel welcome whenever they come to one our locations."

Bloom admits that despite the joy and community interest inherent to Full Life Recreation, it was a constant problem finding enough jobs to fill the demand. Clients came to her seeking work, but many employers found that they could not take on a learning disabled employee.

Bloom opened up a local farm to expand job opportunities for her clients, and continued to make jobs for them available at the recreation location and at the job development office. The clients came in droves, excited to learn food growing and sustainability skills, and she hired many of the job-seekers to plant, maintain, harvest, and sell produce. Bloom admits that even with the

success and popularity of the farm, the organization's loose ends were still not being met financially. That's when she decided to start Happy Cup.

Bloom's has another major project about ready to start, her Up Life Community Arts Center. About two doors down from the coffee shop, the space will provide a number of resources and offer services to clients and community members, including sewing, painting, ceramic, and music lessons, and other skills and creative activities.

Bloom says she is fundraising to have a kiln built into the new center.

"I think when people see this, they'll know we want to be a part of this community and provide care for a population that's deeply in need. We want to share this place for the better good," she says

The Up Life Community Arts Center is expected to open its doors sometime soon. Bonded to its café neighbour for financial support and complete with a functioning piano that was generously donated, the café has already lit up with music and community members eager to learn about the new location and the non-profit center associated with it through Up Life.

The new Happy Cup also comes complete with a back room to hold readings, book groups, or sewing clubs, which is open to anyone in the community looking for a meeting location.

For more information or to donate, volunteer, or participate with Happy Cup or UpLife visit happycup.com or uplifepdx.org.

FROM SICKNESS to HEALTH

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