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Volume XLV
Number 3



www.portlandobserver.com
Wednesday • January 20, 2016



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PHOTO BY OLIVIA OLIVIA/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A temporary men's shelter was opened Monday in a building on the corner of Southwest Fourth Avenue and Washington Street, a site which had previously housed the now-defunct Western Business College.

Property owners give up space for homeless

BY OLIVIA OLIVIA
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

For many, the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday was a reminder of the late civil rights leader's dream for freedom and equality. Across the city, service projects and community gatherings took place to honor King's work and set an example for giving back and racial progress, but one of the most notable moments came with Monday's opening of an emergency men's shelter in downtown Portland.

Beds now fill the former classrooms of the Washington Center, which had housed the now-defunct Western Business College on the corner of Southwest Fourth Avenue

Shelter Answers Call

and Washington Street. The building's owners, Menashe Properties, temporarily donated the mostly empty site to help homeless people, where the gap between the American Dream of owning a home clashes so sharply for disadvantaged residents who are living on the streets.

The donation could be compared to a vision King advocated for when he called for a "Beloved Community," in which all peo-

ple can share in the wealth of the earth and where poverty, hunger and homelessness would not be tolerated because interna-

tional standards of human decency would not allow it.

The plan to use the Menashe property as a temporary housing site was formalized with the help of Portland City Commissioner Dan Saltzman who is responsible for the Portland Housing Bureau. The Portland Business Alliance also threw their support behind the proposal and met with Menashe Properties to facilitate the temporary use of the building.

The effort followed a declared housing state of emergency by Mayor Charlie Hales and a rental state of emergency as issued by the Community Alliance of Tenants of Oregon, a non-profit group that estimates there are 4,000 people in need of shelter on any given night in the Portland area.

The number of people without a place to call home has been on the rise in the past

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