



PHOTO BY CERVANTE POPE/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Boy Scouts of America district executive and former Peace Corps advisor Jonathan Malloy joins members of the Coalition of Black Men to greet and encourage the success of students entering Ockley Green Middle School in north Portland on the first day of classes for the new school year.

Youth Mentoring from the Start

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says.

To overcome this disparity, school leaders worked harder to ensure that schools with the highest level of minority student punishment were making better use of existing programs directed at helping black kids, while also making clearer guidelines and incentives for better behavior, and using conflict resolution instead of actual punishment. That's also when the district reached out to the Coalition of Black Men.

The Coalition have stepped up its efforts by mentoring a large group of kids at both Ockley Green and Boise-Eliot Middle Schools, two high-minority enrollment schools serving north and northeast Portland. From the first bell of the current school year to the last, the Coalition, for example, has worked to show the influential impact a responsible, successful and nicely dressed black adult mentor can have on the insights of not only black youth, but all youth in general.

Since the beginning of their collaboration with PPS in 2015, the Coalition of Black Men has mentored 80 male youth, offering guidance on how not to let stereotyped, violent and inappropriate behavior define them. The outreach included field trips to Intel, tours of Legacy Emmanuel Medical Center and meeting retired NFL running back Mar-

shawn Lynch.

The efforts have not gone unnoticed.

"A lot of the responses we're getting from school district administrators and teachers are that the boys are more present, more engaged, more involved and respectful," says Watts.

"Each day we're at a school, we go there and greet every kid that's coming through that door, so what we try to do is a model of positive interaction," he says. "It's changed my life being involved with good black men that have a greater mission than just what's good for personal gain."

Useni Eugene Perkins, a distinguished youth worker, poet and playwright from Chicago, started Portland's Coalition of Black Men in 1988 when he served as chief executive officer of the Urban League of Portland. His tenure here was only two years, but the impact he made is carried on by the Coalition today.

Perkins will be a guest of honor, when the Coalition kicks off a drive to encourage new mentors to join them in a "Power of Presence-Mentoring our Youth" conference later this month focused on providing informative materials on how to become a mentor with their group of with similar organizations.

Perkins will speak at the event and a continental breakfast will also be provided.

"The Power of Presence – Mentoring Our Youth" will be held on Saturday, Sept. 24 from 8

a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Legacy Gantenbein Ave.

Emanuel Medical Center Lorenzen Conference Center, 2801 N.

For more information about attending the session, or hosting

a table at the event, contact Cheryl Thompson at 503-919-6804 or cthompson@cobmportland.org.



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