

# The INSIDE

The Week in Review page 2



M&SB WEEK inside



page 16  
METRO



pages 18-19  
OPINION



pages 21-25  
Arts & ENTERTAINMENT



CLASSIFIEDS page 26

CALENDAR page 27

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What's on your list today?®

# Focused on Equity

## Diversity paramount for new PDC leader

BY CERVANTE POPE  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The new leader for the Portland Development Commission says she's ready to promote economic opportunity in the city while making sure that the people who benefit from new business growth and jobs include people of color and other disadvantaged groups.

PDC Executive Director Kimberly Branam said creating more equitable wealth by increasing access to jobs for residents in need, as well as evaluating the results of who gains from PDC's investments, initiatives and programs, is part of a five year strategic plan at the government agency that she takes seriously.

"It is my job to make sure that we are moving forward with this important work," Branam said, in an interview with the Portland Observer.

"When I think about what I need to focus on and what I want to accomplish in the first year," says Branam, "one area that's a primary focus is ensuring that we have a diverse work environment that reflects the City of Portland."



Kimberly Branam

A former deputy director at PDC for five years, Branam was promoted into the governmental agency's top position last month. She also has experience leading the economic and workforce development team of former City Commissioner and Mayor Sam Adams.

A Portland native, she brings a deep knowledge of the city with connections to the movers and shakers in government and private industry. She holds a masters degree in public policy and has the unique experience of doing community development work in West Africa as a volunteer for the Peace

Corps.

One of her first hiring decisions at PDC was adding an experienced African-American leader to her team. Serilda Summers-McGee will be leaving her position as head of Human Resources at the Oregon Department of Education to join PDC as its new director of human relations and workplace development. Summers-McGee starts the position in October.

Branam says PDC requires "a diversity of backgrounds so we can be as effective as possible."

The agency's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan runs deep, but it essentially calls for developing healthy and accessible neighborhoods, improving access to employment, equitable wealth and creating civic networks, institutions and partnerships that establish "prosperity among all Portlanders."

Given the disparities that exist, not everyone has benefited from PDC's past economic development activities and future investments need to focus on widely shared prosperity amongst all residents, Branam says.

"We want to make sure we're helping communities that have historically not had the same opportunities as wealthier communities," she says.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

# Racial Healing on the Stage

## 'Blue-Eyed Black Boy' launches series

In light of recent violent acts against people of color, a collaboration of professional artists are launching a new outreach and a series of plays to elicit greater understanding of historical events relating to today's racial environment.

The Brown Paper Bag series by Portland's Triangle Productions will feature four of several dozen anti-lynching plays mostly written by African American women between 1916 and 1934 to begin this fall and continue through the spring of next year.

The intention is to shed light on past atrocities and to inspire open dialogue about ways in which these historical events affect us today.

The first production is an im-



Andrea White



James Dixon

pactful staged reading of "Blue-Eyed Black Boy" directed by Andrea White and including a diverse cast of Portland actors, including Skeeter Greene, James Dixon, Rachelle Schmidt and Josie Seid. It will be presented on Wednesday, Oct. 5 at 7 p.m. at Triangle's performance venue, located at 1785 N.E. Sandy Blvd.

In Georgia Douglas Johnson's

1930 one-act play, Pauline Waters is alarmed to learn that her son has been arrested for brushing up against a white woman on the street, followed by the woman claiming he was trying to attack her. Police have dragged him to the jail, and the Waters family is terrified that Jack will be lynched.

A discussion will follow the reading.