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What's on your list today?



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Charles McGee, president and chief executive officer of Portland's Black Parents Initiative, addresses the non-profit group's "Circle of Growth" benefit on Feb. 22 at the Sentinel Hotel, downtown. The luncheon drew hundreds of supporters and raised more than \$146,000 for programs to help parents make healthy choices in a child's life and help educate and mobilize families to achieve success.

Moving Forward

Black Parents Initiative builds program support

BY ZACHARY SENN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

One of the hallmarks of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s civil rights legacy was its focus on the importance of education. "The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically," Dr. King wrote in a 1947 essay for the Moorehouse College student paper, "The Maroon Tiger."

Charles McGee, a Liberian-born Portlander, has dedicated his life's work to continuing to carry out Dr. King's legacy in regards to education. McGee, along

with friend Johnell Bell, founded The Black Parent Initiative in 2006 in order to assist black families and their children attain educational success but also financial and spiritual success.

The non-profit group believes that children are more likely to succeed when supported by stable, engaged adults. It's a mission that drew hundreds of supporters last week when the organization raised \$146,000 for programs to help parents make healthy choices in a child's first 1,000 days of life.

McGee was born to a father who worked for Liberia's intelligence services. When political tides, shifted, however, his family fled to the U.S., and eventually settled in northeast Portland.

"What made me who I am today is the family that I grew up in,

and the community that my family was able to orchestrate around me," McGee told the Portland Observer. "They let me know very clearly that not only was failure never an option, but also that I was predestined to do something great."

As the president and chief executive officer of the Black Parents Initiative, McGee seeks to instill members of Portland's black community with a healthy sense of self, turning back the negative narratives regarding poor communities and communities of color that can have adverse affects on children's achievements.

"Doses of healthy cultural identity are not only pivotal, but they're instrumental to the formation of human development," he says. "We focus a lot on kind of redefining what people's cultural

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School District Bond Referral

Levy for more school upgrades and rebuilds

The Portland School Board plans to refer a capital construction bond to Portland voters in May, the second in a series of property tax measures to fully modernize school sites across the district over the next few decades.

As outlined in referral documents the board was scheduled to approve Tuesday night, the \$790 million bond would fund renovations and additions at Benson and

Madison High Schools, and full rebuilds of Lincoln High School and Kellogg Middle School. If approved by voters, the bond would also fund planning for upgrades of Cleveland, Jefferson, and Wilson High Schools as part of the next series of school modernizations.

Additionally, at least \$150 million would fund district-wide health and safety projects, including replacing old pipes and fixtures to reduce lead, improve water quality, and reduce the need to use bottled water; Removing or encapsulating exposed lead paint and asbestos; Upgrading fire alarm and/or sprinkler systems;

Repairing or replacing leaking or deteriorating school roofs; Improving accessibility for people with disabilities; Improving building foundations and ventilation to decrease radon exposure; and strengthening school safety and security.

The average levy rate for this bond issue is estimated to be \$0.68 per \$1,000 of assessed property value over 30 years. The levy rate is estimated to be \$1.40 per \$1,000 for the first four years, declining thereafter. For a house assessed at \$200,000 the initial annual cost would be about \$280 with the overall average cost \$136 annually.