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All Thumbs Up on 42nd Ave

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PHOTO BY CHRISTA MCINTYRE/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Pastor April Murchinson of Emmanuel Temple Church introduces Good in the Hood President Shawn Penney during a special ceremony at the north Portland church on Sunday to honor him for his bravery and leadership in response to the death threats made against the multicultural celebration last June.

Festival organizer honored for brave defiance

BY CHRISTA MCINTYRE
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Shawn Penney did not let racial and violent threats stop him or his community when the multicultural Good in the Hood Festival received death threats last June. On Sunday, Penney, the president of the festival, was honored for his bravery and leadership in response to the hatred spewed.

His church community in north Portland wanted him to know that his dignified efforts to turn back the attacks and continue with the festival drew their respect and appreciation.

In spite of a terrible situation, his love

Courageous Stand

for people and desire for unity overcame the threats, said Pastor April Murchinson of Emmanuel Temple Church.

Penney has led Good in the Hood, the Pacific Northwest's largest annual multicultural festival, for the last 12 years.

On June 5, a letter with Ku Klux Klan images and violent racist threats was mailed to Good in the Hood via way of

the non-profit organization's offices next door to King Elementary School, demanding a shutdown of the celebration. The letter threatened Penney personally and promised "a bloodbath," should the festival go on. He and his family were given an FBI security detail because the agency believed the letter to be credible and had seen similar racist threats in other parts of

the country. An investigation into the letter is ongoing.

On Sunday, Emmanuel Temple honored Penney with a community recognition award. Pastor Murchinson introduced him, describing Penney as an outstanding role model, an activist and a black leader in the community.

He was also honored for his past work in the community, helping disadvantaged children and people of all colors and races to further their education and get ahead in life.

"Mr. Penney will always fight for bringing communities and family together," Murchinson said.

Penney said the threats against Good in the Hood, were "so senseless."

"It brought tears to my eyes," he recalled. "But, I know how strong I am as a man and I'm not going to run or hide from anything."

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