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# LOCAL NEWS



Johnell Bell



Keith Edwards



Nathan Nayman



Joe Esmonde

## Baseball Group Hires Team

### Taps leaders with ties to the community

Portland Diamond Project, the organization behind a push to bring Major League Baseball to Portland has expanded its community engagement efforts by hiring a new team led by longtime African American community leader Johnell Bell and others with deep ties to the community.

Bell previously served as U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkely's Oregon field director and before that a longtime executive at TriMet where he was director of the Department of Diversity and Transit Equity. Keith Edwards, another longtime African American community leader in Portland, and two other engagement professionals—Nathan Nayman and Joe Esmonde—

—round out the team.

“As a native Portlander whose grandparents survived the Vanport Flood to raise a family in Portland, I have witnessed the transformation of our city and state,” Bell said. “This history—and transformative opportunity—are the reasons I am thrilled to join the Portland Diamond Project. Working in partnership with the community, we will not only build a world class ballpark; we will also help advance social equity and ignite economic empowerment in intentional and impactful ways.”

“We’re extremely happy to have him on board to further our mission of listening, learning and ultimately partnering with all Portland to make it better with baseball,” Portland Diamond Project President and Founder Craig Cheek said.

Edwards, an electrician and

labor leader, sits on the TriMet Board of Directors and has been a member of the Coalition of Black Men since its inception 1988. He was a member and past president of the Portland Chapter of the NAACP, served on the Board of the Columbia Willamette United Way, and was a co-founder of Constructon Apprenticeship Workforce Solutions, an organization formed to diversify and enhance the construction workforce.

Nathan Nayman recently moved to Portland after decades building coalitions and advocating for legislative, regulatory, corporate, community, and industry initiatives in the San Francisco Bay Area; and Joe Esmonde, who handles labor relations work for PDP, was a longtime labor union business representative for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

## Ministries Group Honors Toran

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon will honor Kay D. Toran, president and chief executive officer of Volunteers of America Oregon, as “Ecumenist of the Year” on Wednesday, April 24 at its Benefit Dinner and Awards Celebration.

Toran has directed Volunteers of America Oregon since 1999, a nonprofit which serves children and families, single adults and the frail elderly. She previously served as director of Oregon's Services to Children and Families Department and as the director of affirmative action for the state. She also worked as an assistant professor in the Graduate School of Social Work at Portland State University.



Kay Toran

Toran's choices in life were motivated by her background.

“My parents, who were successful small business owners and deeply religious, modeled to us

the importance of service to others, giving back to those in need,” she said. “My parents’ imprint, my personal belief system informed by my religious beliefs, and my love of others is what fuels my leadership. It is my personal joy to serve others whether it is children, adults, families or those who are temporarily off-track. Helping individuals to get back on track is truly my life’s mission.”

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's April 24 celebration is the single most important annual fundraiser for the organization's vital ministries to the poor, the vulnerable, the hungry and the sick throughout the state of Oregon. For reservations and more information, visit emoregon.org.

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