

# Rising to the Top

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has also served as an important mentor to many of us in the Portland design community.”

Hart told the Portland Observer he sees more opportunities for minorities and women in the architectural fields than when he started out, but said design firms need to make more of an effort. They need to make diversity an obligation, he said.

“We ought to have more outreach in our community to diverse populations” Hart said. “We really should support it — give staff time and really mentor them, within company time instead of off hours.”

He said young people of color as early as junior high and high school benefit when they have adult mentors who can let them know about the design field and the career possibilities a degree in architecture might bring, besides designing buildings.

“You can work in movies, you can work in theater designing sets, you can be involved in a franchise company as the on-staff architect,” he said. “We need to let students know there are other things

they can do instead of being at a computer screen all day doing the same old thing.”

The design industry needs more a more diverse pool of young professionals, but to find them, it will take “a broader voice, a larger audience,” Hart said. “By the time we reach them they’re usually in college, and that’s a little late in the game.”

Design firms are known to recruit potential employees at colleges and some make an effort to recruit from universities with a high percentage of minority students, but much more work will be needed to bring more diversity to the field.

According to a recent article in Forbes magazine, innovation, creativity, business performance and decision-making are all improved dramatically by employee diversity. It also gives firms a hiring advantage because most top candidates firms prefer firms that value diversity.

“In today’s world, that means creating a culture of inclusion, respect and understanding from the top down,” said software company owner Jason Downes.

For Hart, diversity means collaboration at all levels. He said

working with younger design professionals, for example, gives him a wider perspective.

“I can see some of the challenges but I can’t see all the challenges,” he said. “But I can help with advice if we partner together.”

Hart is very generous with his advice and takes time to keep up with young professionals, said Kevin Sabeta-Bak, a Zimbabwe native and project engineer with Colas Construction, a major black owned Portland construction firm, who said he was first struck by Hart’s gentle demeanor.

“He has focused a lot on developing young professionals in the design and construction industry, involved in trying to get people to stop working in bubbles,” Sabeta-Bak said. “He has been dedicated to making sure that people know who else is out there and how to develop opportunities.”

Sabeta-Bak said Hart often invites him to networking events and does the same for others.

“He’ll host the table and at the event you’ll see him towing two or three people with him and introducing them to even more people,” he said.

Although he pushes him with a

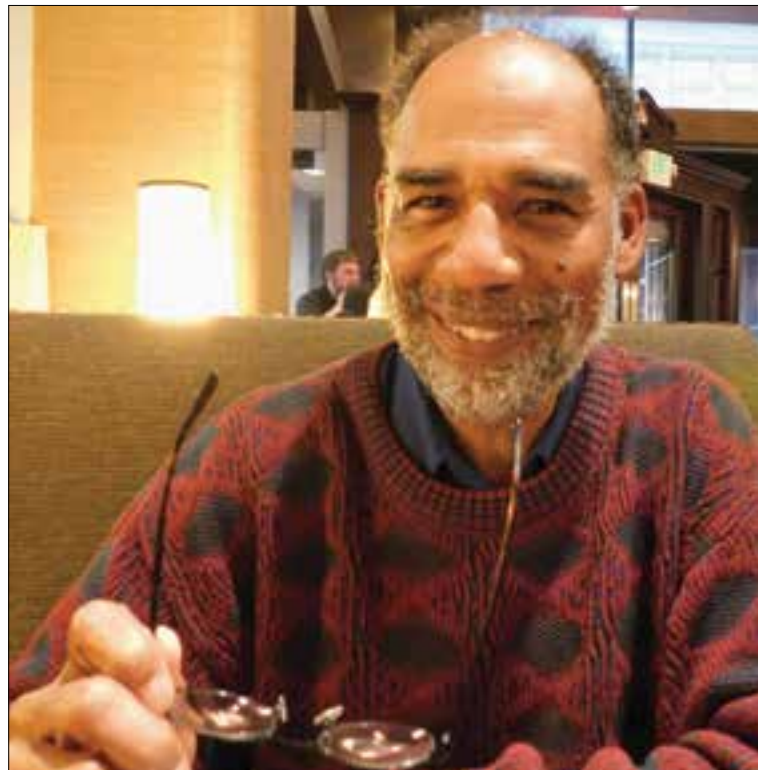


PHOTO BY BEVERLY CORBELL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Portland Architect Bill Hart was honored with a lifetime achievement award this month for his successful work to increase diversity in the architectural field. The honor was made by the Daily Journal of Commerce. Hart founded Carleton-Hart Architects 25 years ago.

“gentle energy,” Sabeta-Bak said, Hart also keeps him grounded to reality.

Architect Julia Mollner, a job captain at Carleton Hart, said Hart has been invaluable as a mentor for the past four years.

“It’s very inspirational to have someone in his position to check in on you,” she said. “He gives you articles and shares interesting

thoughts about what’s going on in our profession. He’s been very valuable to my career.”

Hart is also grateful to his mentors, and in his acceptance speech he singled out Joachim Grube, principal and founder of Yost Grube Hall Architects, not only for his leadership, but the challenge to do a better job, a challenge he tries to meet by example.

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