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Committed to Cultural Diversity

Community effort confronts gun violence

Group formed to renew ties to local youth

BY BEVERLY CORBELL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Law enforcement hasn't solved the problem of gun violence, but Joe McFerrin believes a community can.

McFerrin is spearheading a new coordinated community effort called The Village to bring gun violence way down, just like a coalition of local nonprofits did in the late '80s and '90s.

McFerrin was deeply involved in coordinating efforts back then, when many nonprofits sprung up to serve the African American community as well as the community at large, to reduce gun violence.

But many of those social service agencies weren't structured for the long haul, and when gun violence decreased, they closed up shop, because they weren't built to last.

"This is what I lived through," McFerrin said. "I was working with all these community partners, but they disappeared when the guns and bullets slowed down."

They didn't have the ability to "pivot to provide services that were greatly



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Joe McFerrin II (center), the administrator for two long time educational programs serving the Black community, is getting help from at least 11 Portland Black leaders who have pledged to help bring down gun violence, including Lisa Saunders of FaithBridge (left), former Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith and Jamal Dar of The African Youth and Community Organization (AYCO).

needed," he said. "Just because the bullets stop doesn't mean services should stop."

Organizations that made a difference

decades ago included the Albina Youth Opportunity School, the Youth Employment Institute, House of Umoja, Portland Youth Redirections and Minority

Youth Concerns Action, he said. The House of Umoja even provided housing

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Simone Biles of the United States performs on the balance beam during the artistic gymnastics women's apparatus final at the 2020 Summer Olympics, Tuesday, in Tokyo, Japan. (AP photo)

Biles Wins Bronze on Beam

Gymnast recovers to excel in Olympics final

(AP) — Simone Biles isn't going home with a fistful of gold medals. A mental block — one brought on by exhaustion or stress or something the American gymnastics star still can't quite grasp — that forced her to pull out of four earlier Olympic finals saw to that.

Yet standing on the podium Tuesday, a bronze medal hanging around her neck and tears in her eyes, the 24-year-old Biles may have claimed something far more valuable: a piece of herself back.

From the "twisties" that have haunted her for a week. From the endless speculation about her state of mind. From the hype machine — one, admittedly,

she fed into at times — that set expectations so high coming to Tokyo nothing short of the impossible would have been enough.

It all became too much. A week ago, her internal wires got crossed when she hopped on uneven bars during practice. Suddenly, she couldn't spin. She could barely move. She still doesn't quite know why. And if she's being honest, the wires still aren't reconnected. She's not sure when they will be.

"It was something that was so out of my control," Biles said. "But the out-

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