



Moose's Heartfelt Legacy

First Black police chief dead at 68

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Armed car-jacker killed by police

Crime spree shuts down I-5

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Committed to Cultural Diversity



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/PORTLAND OBSERVER PUBLISHER

Nancy Mejia (from left), Denise Tupper, Jataune Hall and Ahquoya Brooks of Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon (MESO) invite the community to shop for Christmas by visiting the MESO holiday market at 1237 N.E. Alberta St. Doors open Tuesdays through Saturdays through Dec. 24.

Shopping to Make an Impact

Holiday markets support Black community

By BEVERLY CORBELL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Businesses traditionally rely on Christmas sales to increase their bottom lines, and minority-owned businesses have been hit particularly hard by the Covid pandemic.

To give entrepreneurs of color

an added boost this year, several holiday markets aim to give minority vendors more exposure while giving shoppers plenty of options for buying holiday gifts.

An innovative approach by the nonprofit Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon, or MESO, for example, is bringing the products of 14 local, minority-owned businesses to a formerly empty storefront at 1237 N.E. Alberta St., now through Dec. 24, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Tuesdays

through Saturdays.

Since it was founded in 2005 by the Black United Fund, MESO has helped thousands of small businesses through its five area offices with services that include classes on financial education and wealth building, developing business plans and more, said MESO business development specialist Jataune Hall.

“We provide hands-on technical assistance, whether they are up and running or planning to

open, but also lending opportunities,” Hall said. “Most banks won’t take on startups, but we do. We work with them so they can open or storefront or go online.”

MESO has businesses offices in Portland, Gresham, Clackamas County and Vancouver.

“We walk them through the process to figure out how to grow and prosper and help them acquire generational wealth,” Hall said, but it’s been a tough year.

“It’s been a huge challenge, and holiday time for vendors is usually a time to grow,” she said. “So we decided, let’s create something and help vendors out. They can use our website (mesopex.org) so people can buy online.”

The MESO holiday market has restrooms and hand sanitizer stations. Children are welcome, especially to meet Black Santa

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PHOTO COURTESY PORTLAND OFFICE OF COMMUNITY & CIVIC LIFE

Budtenders Cheyenne Hillard and Justin Jackson begin inventorying the sales floor before the store opens in the Burlingame neighborhood of southeast Portland.

Help for Burglarized Cannabis Stores

City awards \$1.3 million to offset loses

Portland has become the first government jurisdiction in the country to allocate cannabis tax revenue to help marijuana businesses and workers as they to endure negative impacts from multiple robberies, COVID-19 and other issues.

According city officials, a total of 200 cannabis retail establishments have been burglarized since March of last year—an average of 10 burglaries a month—with

many establishments being hit multiple times.

Unlike restaurants, retailers, gyms and professional service-oriented companies, cannabis-linked companies are unable to file insurance claims when their stores are damaged or money is stolen. Cannabis businesses are also ineligible to receive federal or state funded relief for issues related to the 2020 wildfires or COVID-19.

During this week’s City Council meeting, commissioners approved \$1.33 million in Cannabis tax revenue for grants to locally

licensed cannabis businesses and employees that have been impacted by the emergencies.

The financial help is geared to help marijuana businesses remain open and continue to grow their revenue, and ultimately the city’s cannabis tax revenue which goes back toward community and business grants programs, like Social Equity & Educational Development (SEED) Initiatives, funds supporting economic and educa-

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