

PCC Celebrated Black Business Month

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

es. All of these have helped me in business today.”

Then the pandemic became a flipping point. Cross launched Gourmet Brothers Catering, eventually leading to food carts and then the opening of Norma Jean’s Soul Cuisine in 2023, named in honor of his grandmother. But Norma Jean’s is dedicated to more than just great food; it’s committed to the people.

“We’re here to serve the community with love, care and concern—and most importantly, taste—but we also do our part for the less fortunate,” said Cross.

“I think it’s important to highlight the great work of Black-owned businesses because a lot of times we come from underserved communities and don’t have a lot of resources available to us historically,” said Marquise Cross, owner of Norma Jean’s Soul Cuisine and proud PCC alum. “Including, but not limited to, loan and grant access; being unfairly pushed out of buildings; and in some cases, targeted.”

“All in all, I appreciate the opportunity to give voice to this and to share my journey,” he continued. “I’ll continue to do my part to support my community.”



In 2010, PCC alum David Jefferson embarked on a journey that would transform him and the fashion landscape in Northeast Portland. Founding Stackin Kickz, a cutting-edge streetwear brand, Jefferson introduced a dynamic blend of style and began shifting the culture.

Located in the Lloyd Center Mall, the brand quickly resonated. Stackin Kickz’s mission statement was, “Embrace the sneaker culture and create a dynamic of confidence, individuality, and expression through fashion that makes it clear to the world exactly what we care about: without having to say a word.”

Fourteen years later, Stackin Kickz is a cornerstone in the community and the Lloyd Center.

“It dawned on me how inspiring my journey has been to others who are looking to create their own definition of self,” Jefferson said. “As I’ve grown as a human being, the brand has elevated as well. It’s become synonymous

with energy, inspiration, community, leadership, and love.”

Jefferson’s influence extends beyond fashion. Passionate about community engagement, he frequently speaks at middle schools, high schools and youth entrepreneurship programs like Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon (MESO). His outreach efforts also include talks at business organizations, Oregon’s state universities, and correctional facilities, where he inspires both youth and adults in custody.

Jefferson’s roots in Portland and his education at PCC played a crucial role in shaping his path. His early exposure to PCC’s summer youth programs, and later accounting classes, laid the foundation for his academic journey, culminating in a degree in Political Science from the University of Oregon.

“PCC has always been a community staple since I was a child,” he said. “I lived off Kerby and Alberta for some years and we would always walk through (Cascade) campus. It was literally the only college I had ever heard of at that point.”

For more information about PCC’s SBDC, check out www.pcc.edu/professional/small-business/

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