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Oregon Probes Tazo Tea

Starbucks workers allege discrimination at Portland plant

By Brian Stimson
Of *The Skanner News*

The Bureau of Labor and Industry's investigation into charges of racial discrimination by Starbucks' Tazo Tea aren't the only allegations the company has faced.

After an investigation last week by *The Skanner News* found at least four Black Starbucks workers that claim to have been wrongfully fired from the company's Tazo Tea factory, reporters decided to look further. In June of 2009, Starbucks agreed to pay \$120,000 to settle a lawsuit of racial discrimination and retaliation in the case of Victor Washington, an African American lead network engineer.

At the time, Starbucks said an internal investigation found Washington's allegations to be "unsubstantiated and without merit" but decided to settle in order to "avoid further costs of litigation."

Tazo Firings

In total, *The Skanner News* has confirmed that four Black workers have been fired within the last two years from the Starbucks-owned company. The Skanner News was able to only speak to three of them. A fifth employee – now deceased – was also dismissed, but The Skanner News was unable to confirm details of his employment.

While the complaints and situations around their firings from Tazo are different, each man tells a similar tale of disparate treatment and dismissal by management when compared to the actions of their White co-workers. All of the Black workers were employed in the manufacturing/shipping section of the Tazo Tea factory in Portland.

The complaint alleges that Black employees were placed under closer scrutiny than any other employees at the plant. The former employees who spoke to The Skanner say the atmosphere made the working con-

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NEW TECH

Giorgio Johnson, CEO and founder of Nyxio Technologies shows off his cutting edge products, designed in Portland, Ore. See story on Page 11.



PHOTO BY JULIE KEEFE

Region Looks to Expand Broadband

Why everyone must have access to high-speed Internet

By Helen Silvis
Of *The Skanner News*

In his State of the Union speech, President Obama stressed the importance of high-speed Internet access for all, pointing out that America's top engineers give our current broadband infrastructure a miserable D grade.

To compete internationally, Obama said, we need to have both a strong national network and a technologically trained workforce.

"Within the next five years, we'll make it possible for businesses to deploy the next generation of high-speed wireless coverage to 98 percent of all Americans," he promised. "This isn't just about faster Internet or fewer dropped calls. It's about connecting every part of America to the digital age. It's about a rural community in Iowa or Alabama where farmers and small business owners will be able to sell their products all over the world. It's about a firefighter who can download the

design of a burning building onto a handheld device; a student who can take classes with a digital textbook; or a patient who can have face-to-face video chats with her doctor."

Being wired for speedy Internet access is crucial for the U.S. national economy and for our state and local economy. But 100 million Americans still don't have access to broadband connections at home.

So last year, the FCC laid out a national broadband strategy that includes major investments

in broadband and urges government at all levels to push for robust competition.

Portland's Newest Effort

That's why the City of Portland launched a new Broadband Strategic Planning effort Jan. 28, which seeks to deliver affordable high-speed Internet to every home and business in the city.

Joanne Hovis, president of Columbia Telecommunications

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Sugar Affects Brain's Rewards System

New OHSU study explores how fructose affects your behavior

By Brian Stimson
Of *The Skanner News*

That soft drink in your hand is telling your brain to do things.

Researchers at Oregon Health and Sciences University say that a certain kind of sugar – fructose – is found to affect a part of your brain in a different way than other kinds of sugars.

Fructose is an extremely common sugar found naturally in nearly everything we eat. It's an essential nutrient, but it's overabundance in processed food has also earned the ire from nutrition scientists who say it is partially to blame for the obesity epidemic in the United States.

For processed food manufacturers, High Fructose Corn Syrup has become a staple ingredient in everything from bread to soda.

To fully understand what the study means – and doesn't mean – it's important to understand the basics of sugar.

Basic white sugar – which is typically derived from either sugar beets or sugar cane – is made up of pure sucrose. Sucrose is a carbohydrate formed from the combination of the molecules of fructose and glu-

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