

Artists Perform to Support Better People

By Helen Silvis
Of *The Skanner News*

Linda Hornbuckle, Portland Police Chief Michael Reese and Deputy Director of Human Services, Margaret Carter: What do these very different people have in common? All three will be performing next Saturday evening at Irvington Covenant Church.

The event is Jazzy Evening, a benefit for Better People, the nonprofit that helps ex-felons become productive members of society. Hornbuckle will perform with her band, featuring pianist Janice Scroggins. While former Sen. Carter will sing and Chief Reese will play guitar. Also on the playbill are: duo Barb Galloway and Donna Lockett; Lee Anthony Orr and comedy from Portland

Police Sgt. Willie Halliburton.

"This is going to be a wonderful event and we encourage everyone to come along and enjoy themselves," says Clariner Boston, executive director of Better People. "And they

ly groups that use a special technique called Moral Reconciliation Therapy. MRT is a type of therapy that focuses on choosing ethical and moral behavior. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration,

when we talk about their histories, we refer to clients' past legal issues."

A felony conviction almost always has a long term impact. Former felons are routinely denied housing and employment, making it far more difficult for them to live ordinary, crime-free lives.

"I originally decided to join Moral Reconciliation Therapy to find a job," said Julie C., a program graduate. "However, once I began to learn more...I realized that this is not just a job placement program. Really, it is a process of becoming a better person... being honest with myself and everyone else; going back to school and staying away from people I associated with in the past are all positive things MRT has helped me bring into my life...I am now doing positive things that guide me toward my future."

Joining the program demands a serious commitment from clients. Before clients can receive employment assistance, they must attend therapy sessions. The goal is not only to help clients find and keep permanent living wage employment, but also to help them develop solid ethical principles and behaviors. It's telling that police officers are among the program's strongest advocates.

"I continue to be impressed with Better



Linda Hornbuckle, who will be performing May 14 at Irvington Covenant Church

Boston and her small staff run a program designed to help former inmates find and keep employment

will also be able to support a good cause at the same time."

Boston and her small staff run a program designed to help former inmates find and keep employment. The program offers twice-week-

studies show that the therapy significantly reduces recidivism.

"We do not refer to our clients by any derogatory names," Boston told *The Skanner News*. "We treat everyone with respect and

People," says retiring North Precinct Commander James Ferraris. "This organization works with those who have fallen down in society to turn their lives around and become productive and law abiding members of our community."

Boston admits that this is not the easiest time for anyone with a less than perfect record to seek employment. But, she says, once employers join the program, they stick around because Better People's graduates usually prove themselves to be hardworking, loyal employees with a lot to contribute.

"Our graduates do really well," Boston says. "We have alumni who stay in touch with us for years, and

we are very proud of their successes."

In June, Better People will hold one of its semi-annual forums on the topic *The Economics of Incarceration: Pay Now or Pay More Later*. That event will be held June 9 from 11:30am to 1pm at Irvington Covenant Church. Watch this space for details of speakers.

This month, however, you can support Better People and enjoy some of Portland's finest musicians at Jazzy Evening, 7-10 pm, Saturday May 14, at Irvington Covenant Church, 4046 NE Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd. Buy tickets online at Brown Paper Tickets.

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