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CHALLENGING PEOPLE TO SHAPE A BETTER FUTURE NOW



Fighting For Child Welfare

Grandmother wants to bring reform to the state agency

By Brian Stimson
Of The Skanner News

There's a passage in Multnomah County's report on Child Welfare that Evelyn Murray likes to point out. It may run contrary to what some people think about the foster care system, but it reflects what many studies have found.

"When a child is removed from their home and separated from their family, even if required for safety reasons, the traumatic impact is severe and long-lasting," states the opening paragraph to the 2010 Multnomah County Child Welfare Workgroup Report.

Murray, a member of the group Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, says she's been fighting to keep her grandchildren within her family after they were placed into foster care several years ago. Her daughter had suffered from post partum depression, which caused the initial separation. Murray says the last time she had contact with her grandchildren was September of 2010.

Murray, along with supporter Margaret Curtis, has been staging a protest and fundraiser at the corner of Alberta Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to raise money for a lawsuit to force DHS to change policies that keep African American children out of, and out of touch with, their biological families.

For years now, The Skanner News has interviewed African American residents with similar stories: Attempts to adopt grandchildren or relatives by African Americans are stymied by bureaucratic hoops that often seem subjective and ever-changing.

A 2010 study by PSU's School of Social Work looked specifically at why racial disparities exist. Not only did they find cultural ignorance on behalf of caseworkers, judicial officers and those who are required by law to report suspected child abuse, the researchers found the child welfare system

See REFORM on page 3

PROJECT HOPE



PHOTO BY HELEN SILVIS

Dozens of incarcerated youth at the Multnomah County Juvenile Detention Center worked for months to create a series of murals designed by artist and youth advocate Arvie Smith.

Stunning Murals Created in Detention

Artist Arvie Smith unveils youth paintings at the county juvenile facility

By Helen Silvis
Of The Skanner News

"Wow! I love this work." "These are amazing." "The colors are so vibrant, and look at those textures." Those were just a few of the comments from a group of people invited to the unveiling and dedication ceremony for of five stunning murals created by artist Arvie Smith and teens in Multnomah County Juvenile Detention Center.

But chair Jeff Cogen may have said it best: "They are so moving. I'm far from an art critic but it's hard not to feel it deep inside. You look at this work and it's so beautiful, emotional and inspirational."

The murals are all part of Project Hope, created by Smith and more than 100 young people in detention, over the course of two years. Each one is rich with images and cultural references from 's multicultural heritage. And each tells a different story of

hope. Smith, whose body of work has received international acclaim, mines the history of marginalized and disempowered people to create provocative, compelling images filled with beauty and meaning.

Carol R. Smith, RACC board chair (not the public schools superintendent), was one of the speakers at the dedication ceremony. Creating art has a transformative impact, she said. And this project clearly had a powerful effect

on the teens who worked with Smith.

"It really reaches their heart and soul and gives them a tool beyond the written word."

About 40 people were invited to the dedication, including representatives from Mayor Sam Adams office, representatives from the Regional Arts and Culture Council, Multnomah County staffers, detention staff; and artists. They were lucky. They were able to view all five murals in

See ART on page 3

INDEX

News2,3,8-10,12

Opinion4,5

A & E6,7

Bids/Classifieds11

Quakers Hold Portland Freedom School

Events will teach young people of color about their own history

Lisa Loving
Of The Skanner News

Taking off from the Civil Rights Movement tradition, the American Friends Service Committee held the Jacqueline Lynch Holmes Summer Freedom School through Saturday, June 25, at the Northeast Coalition Of Neighborhoods. Free workshops and events

planned on Thursday and Friday, with a cultural field trip and outing on Saturday.

AFSC youth coordinator Mireaya Medina says the event is a crucial point of education for young people of color who are not adequately taught about the history of their own communities in school.

"Our goal is to be able to train between 40 and 50 youth, and then those 40 to 50 youth go and train another 40 to 50 youth," she

said. "So the training is constantly evolving sand breaking the chains of racism in Portland."

Freedom Schools were grassroots education projects by African American Civil Rights organizers in the South during the Civil Rights movement. Their subject matter – race, class and political history – gal-

See FREEDOM on page 3