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Living on the Street

Study: Almost 30 percent of Portland's homeless are Black

By Bruce Poinsette
Special To *The Skanner News*

Blacks are overrepresented in Portland's homeless shelter population, according to a new report by the Institute for Children, Poverty and Homelessness (ICPH).

"This is something that no one really wants to talk about," says co-writer Matthew Adams. "Media attention is focused on the one percent and the middle class."

The study, titled "Intergenerational Disparities Experienced by Black Families," utilizes the US Census Bureau's 2005-2009 American Community Survey data to analyze why Black families are overrepresented in US homelessness and poverty statistics.

Nationally, 23.3 percent of Black families lived in poverty in 2010, compared to only 7.1 percent of white families. To put that in perspective, one in every 141 Black family members stayed in a homeless shelter versus one in 990 white family members.

Blacks made up only 12.1 percent of the US population, but represented 38.8 percent of sheltered persons in 2010. Meanwhile, whites were 65.8 percent of the general population but only 28.6 percent of those occupying shelter beds.

In addition to national statistics, the report also breaks down general versus sheltered populations for Blacks and whites in 37 cities, including Portland.

Although Blacks made up about 5.4 percent of Portland's general population, they accounted for 28.3 percent of the city's homeless. Whites, on the other hand, made up 77.2 percent of the general population and only 41.5 percent of the sheltered population. Blacks are overrepresented in the homeless population by 22.8 percent while whites are underrepresented by 35.7 percent, according to the study.

The authors of the study suggest that racial barriers to resources are the cause for

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NEWSMAKER 2012



Portland Mayor Sam Adams and Chabre Vickers, at a benefit breakfast for Big Brothers Big Sisters last year in Portland. Vickers will be given a medal for her community work by the Royal Rosarians at a gala dinner this week.

PHOTO BY HELEN SILVIS

Royal Rosarians to Honor Visionary

Vickers is active in many local groups advocating for youth

The *Skanner News* has selected Chabre Vickers as its Newsmaker of the Year 2012, in recognition of her exceptional work with Portland's 11:45 Movement to link at-risk youth with adult mentors.

The Royal Rosarians, Portland's official goodwill ambassadors, hold the annual Newsmaker of the Year banquet to honor "citizens who have performed exceptional acts of heroism or benevolent service in the metro area." News organizations are invited to nominate an individual for the prestigious award, which is presented at the banquet.

This year's awards banquet will be held Wednesday, March 14 at the Double Tree Lloyd Center Hotel.

Vickers, who is director of community relations and diversity programs for Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Columbia

Northwest has been active with the 11:45 Movement since it was formed. The pastor-led initiative was created in response to an increase in youth violence that last year took the lives of several teens including: Yashanee Vaughn, Shiloh Hampton, Shalamar Edmonds, Mario Marin and Julio Cesar Marquez.

At its first community-wide meeting last June, Vickers signed up 85 people to become mentors for youth. That was a first for the organization and drew national interest from other chapters of Big Brother's Big Sisters. Vickers spoke at the nonprofit's national meeting in Atlanta about 11:45 and the mentoring initiative.

"People were calling me up from all over the country," Vickers says. "They wanted to know how did I manage to do that – in the least churchd state."

Vickers says Portland's church communities stepped up to help youth because they saw the need and believed in the power of mentors to change children's lives. Since then she has continued to gain volunteers from 11:45. About 2,000 children are on the waiting list for mentors. Vickers said the hardest matches to make are for African American and Latino boys. Many boys of color who need and want mentors grow up without ever being matched with an adult Big Brother.

Vickers work through 11:45 is not her only exceptional achievement. Through a partnership with NIKE's Black Employees group, she has secured donations and opportunities that will help Portland-metro area children for years to come.

If you want to volunteer as a mentor you can contact Chabre Vickers at 503-249-4859.

Foreclosure Reform Passes Legislature

Enforcement of new law for homeowners remains a question mark

By Helen Silvis
Of *The Skanner News*

The last-minute success of a foreclosure reform bill, which the Oregon Legislature passed on the last day of this year's session, astonished even seasoned Salem watchers.

"We did the impossible; I'm

not kidding," says Angela Martin of the nonprofit advocacy group Economic Fairness Oregon, which lobbied hard for the bill.

"Homeowners will now have the right—whether they are in default or are underwater with their homes, but have not fallen behind – to have a face to face

meeting with their lender. The lender has to show up and they have to send someone who has the power to make decisions and can give a full accounting of any fees the bank says they owe."

How effective the reform will be remains unclear, since the law doesn't give the Attorney General power to enforce it.

What the new Oregon law does say is that mortgage lenders must meet with homeowners in the presence of a mediator and make a good faith effort to avoid foreclosure. And banks are forbidden from simultaneously pursuing foreclosure,

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