

## Harm

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place,” said Nabarun Dasgupta, a researcher, epidemiologist and founder of the North Carolina nonprofit Project Lazarus, which seeks to prevent overdoses among heroin users.

Many speakers at the conference argued that drug use and sex work should be taken out of the criminal justice system altogether. Instead they argue that decriminalization would make it much eas-

dollars that go into that, all the people that work there. And the war on drug users is supporting all those who are employed in prisons.”

You won’t hear those kinds of political statements from Kim Toevs, who manages Multnomah County’s HIV prevention and harm reduction program. Toevs’ concern is preventing infectious diseases and helping those affected improve their lives.

The harm reduction approach allows staff to build trust with people who otherwise will avoid contact with health professionals, Toevs says. Drug users and sex workers have access to health care, condoms and information from a trusted source.

“The fact of the matter is that people are using drugs,” Toevs says. “And the reason they are

using drugs is complex, and often connected to past trauma. Trying to get someone to stop using drugs who is not ready to stop using, is not very effective.

“We are an anonymous service, so it feels nonjudgmental and safe for people to come to us. That helps us to deliver a lot of health messages that prevent people from the worst harms of IV drug use. And when people are ready to reduce their use, they come to us. So it’s trust-based.”

‘Trying to get someone to stop using drugs who is not ready to stop using, is not very effective’

ier to prevent overdoses, disease, and also property and violent crimes.

Kathy Brown, a licensed psychiatric technician and alcohol and drug counselor, attending the conference, said deaths could be prevented if people could seek medical help without fear of arrest.

“We have a war on drug users in this country,” Brown says. “It’s called the war on drugs, but it’s a war on drug users, and we have prisons that are stuffed with people who are there for nonviolent, drug-related crimes. So drug users are supporting interdiction and the millions and billions of

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## Groundwork Benefit



PHOTO COURTESY GROUNDWORK PORTLAND

Groundwork Portland invites the public to attend its third annual fundraiser and networking social celebration on Thursday, Dec. 6, at the Center for Intercultural Organizing, 700 N Killingsworth Street, from 6 to 8 p.m. A nonprofit that brings about sustainable community improvements to contaminated sites in low-income communities while promoting environmental and social justice, the group holds fun gardening events, including the one pictured above. The fundraiser features performances by the Kemba Shannon Dance troupe, a variety of foods at no cost, a music DJ, and a silent auction. For more information, visit [www.groundworkportland.org](http://www.groundworkportland.org), or contact Executive Director Cassie Cohen at 503-662-2590.

## Cafe

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into the Oregon Music Hall of Fame. Travis, a product of the Jefferson High music program, has been producing since 2000. He founded Trillion Cuts Studios in 2004.

The two have focused on making food and music to fill a void they saw missing in Portland.

“Feed them and let them dance the night away,” says McClendon. “We wanted to provide the town with good music, good food and atmospheres that you don’t see that often.”

McClendon and Travis acquired the property that used to be Varsity Blue Barbecue and decided to turn it into a themed restau-

rant.

They went with chicken and waffles because there were no such restaurants in Portland.

Both men say the response was encouraging. Mack & Dub’s has gotten write-ups in the Oregonian and Willamette Week, as well as a feature on BlackAtlas.com.

Travis says they have regular customers come in from places like Wilsonville all the way to Medford.

“We like to ask people when they come through the door, ‘How far did you come from?’” says Travis. “Some people are like,

‘I grew up right on the corner of Fremont and MLK’

--James McClendon

“We came down here all the way from Seattle.”

To some, Mack & Dub’s has become the unofficial “Black gathering spot” in the wake of Reflections Coffee and Books closing earlier this year.

The owners say that, while they didn’t see

themselves in the lens of one of the last Black businesses standing (mainly because they just started), they do recognize the importance of having a diverse businesses in the North and Northeast Portland community.

“I grew up right on the corner of Fremont and MLK and he grew up in the same neighborhood so to have something in the neighborhood that we grew up with really meant a lot to us,” says McClendon.

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## Contracting

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contractors received 39 percent of all prime construction contracts and only three percent of those valued at \$4,614,247. Out of all the prime contracting dollars awarded to MWESBs, 47 percent went to emerging small businesses, 39 percent went to women owned firms and only 14 percent went to minority firms.

During an interview for The Skanner News’ special MWESB Edition, Greg Wolley of the City of Portland said these initiatives would help create a more equitable playing field in an industry dominated by large, established (the majority of which are white owned) firms.

“Obviously a company that has been in business longer and has done more similar projects has often gotten the nod from our project managers because they have made a bigger impression,” he says. “Our goal is to promote the smaller company.”

The Prime Contractor Development Program attempts to address this with a four tiered system. Currently, there are only two active tiers.

Tier 1 projects are for firms with a gross annual receipt, which is the amount of income a business receives before it takes costs into account, of \$1,700,000 or less and the projects range from \$5,000 to \$150,000. Contractors in this tier will be provided such resources as tuition assistance for classes at PCC’s Small Business Development Center.

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“Over the three years that they’re in that tier, we’ll provide them with technical assistance and other business development things,” says Moody. “The idea is that after they’ve been in the tier they’ve progressed enough as a business to move up to Tier 2.” Once in Tier 2, contractors will be

required to take a ten month, comprehensive business development program that teaches them the “back office piece” of contracting, including marketing, human resources and how to read financials.

The Tier 2 projects will be available to contractors whose gross annual receipt exceeds \$1,700,000 and the projects will range from \$150,001 to \$350,000.

After graduating the program, contractors will go through an evaluation and if they pass, will move on to Tier 3.

“The whole idea is that for Tier 3 and Tier 4, we have enough contractors within those tiers so that we can bid contracts,” says Moody. “Typically when we bid, there needs to be at least three contractors. We’re trying to make sure that within each tier and each category of work we have an ample amount of contractors so that we have competition.”

She says the ultimate goal is for a contractor to graduate from Tier 4 after five to seven years.

Another issue that is hindering MWESBs

is competition from larger firms, according to the City.

The Professional Services Marketing and Outreach Program hopes to address this with two new procurement strategies, which are:

Allow City project managers to contract directly to Oregon certified minority, women and emerging small businesses (MWESB) for contracts up to \$50,000 without competition.

Allow City project managers to contract with Oregon certified minority, women and emerging small businesses for projects from \$50,001 to \$100,000 without advertising, provided that at least four proposals are received and 50 percent of the responses are from Oregon certified MWESB firms.

“They (large firms) have marketing staff so they can just whip out these proposals very easily and quickly without much effort,” he says. “For a small company, that’s a much bigger decision and so proportionately, much more costly.”

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