

Police

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dards on misconduct, providing they give adequate notice and the change doesn’t conflict with the police contract.

Attorneys Greg and Jason

propose the bill.

The firm has successfully sued the City of Portland in more than one police misconduct case. Greg Kafoury represented Alex Clay, Harold Hammick, and Ri’Chard Booth, for example, who in 2009 were awarded \$175,000 in a case where they told jurors they were falsely arrested and Hammick was

physically abused by a Portland officer.

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Kafoury of the law firm Kafoury and McDougal asked Shields to

School

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and health research. Rebecca Skloot documented the history of Lacks’ family and the HeLa cell in articles in the early 2000s and her 2010 book The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks.

The new school in her namesake will feature focus areas in pharmacology, health informatics, bioengineering, biosciences and nursing. Students can choose which track they would like to take. Their first two years will center on basic medical foundations and standard courses like English, math and science. Junior and senior year will see the students take on four to six intensive courses in their area of study, which will include high level math and science.

They will also participate in a related internship, mentorship or medical research program. Deeder says this worksite experience will be integral to their education.

“We think the future of education is around kids having that,” he says. “We’re really looking for ways to have all kids experience something in a worksite before they graduate from a high school so they can develop some of those work habits. Develop some of those attitudes on how you work with other people, how you collabo-

rate and how you communicate. We want them to know the importance of getting to work on time, the importance of being there period and how important you are as an individual to the success of a firm or organization, as well as how important it is that you understand that you are a part of the bigger picture and what part you play in the success of the firm.”

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According to Deeder, the school will eventually serve 500-600 students. It will begin with freshman and sophomore classes.

If students are interested in playing sports or participating in other extracurricular activities, they will be allowed to do so through their neighborhood schools.

The largest source of funding for the building came from the federal stimulus program, through Qualified School Construction Bonds. According to Deeder, this program allows school districts to borrow up to \$17.5 million for capital improve-

ments. It’s a zero interest loan so the district has to pay back the money within 17 years. Evergreen has 14 more years to pay it back because the district took out the loan three years ago. Deeder says the district is taking out \$1 million a year from its general fund and putting it into a sinking fund. Due to

interest rates, the district will end up paying only \$13 million of the \$17 million loan.

The rest of the funding came through state money. Deeder says the district qualified for \$11 million of State Matching funds, which can pay for buildings that serve “un-housed students” when there are enrollment overflows at other schools in the district.

All told, the district will be paying less than half of the cost of the actual building.

Ultimately, Deeder sees the new school as a way to keep students interested in learning.

“We think that this kind of school will keep some kids that may not have fit in a comprehensive high school engaged in school because they’ll be doing something they really like,” he says. “Their whole program will be based around it and they’ll be immersed in it so they can develop some real skills.”

For more information on Hela High, go to the Evergreen Public Schools page.

Race Talks: Fluoride



PHOTO BY HELEN SILVIUS

April’s “Race Talks” discussion looked at the divisive issue of fluoridation. The event, held at the Kennedy School in Northeast Portland, drew a crowd of around 100 people. Pictured here are Meies Matz an NAACP member who spoke against fluoridation and Damien Fair, an OHSU neuroscientist, who spoke in favor (seated) talking to an audience member. Phil Wu MD, in the background also spoke in support. The other speakers were: Kellie Barnes, a licensed physical therapist, and Jo Ann Hardesty of Hardesty consulting, who both oppose fluoridation. Most people at the event were already decided: asked if they had changed their minds on the issue, just four people raised their hands.

Veterans

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schedule six patients a day in each of those nine rooms. They could easily do 50 hearings a day. But they’re doing four or five. That’s a waste of resources. They’re operating at 10 percent of capacity.

“That’s one thing I think they really need to fix. They could work a lot harder there.”

Bash says he’s written to Veteran Administration Sec. Eric Shinseki to expose the problem with the Appeals Center. But he says he has sympathy for the VA’s argument that the backlog has grown because of the expanded number of claims.

“There are a lot more diagnoses involved than in the past,” Bash says.” Now veterans are applying for 10-15 claims at a time and each claim is more complicated.”

Building the knowledge and skill needed to process claims quickly takes years, he says. But he’s hopeful that staff members hired in recent years are now reaching that level of expertise.

“I’ve noticed recently that the cases are being processed a lot faster,” he says. And, he says the move to an online system is making a difference.

“Vets love using the online E-Benefits and MyHealth portals,” he says. “They can read

their medical notes online, make appointments and go in and get help.”

The Center for Investigative Reporting found that veterans filing for disability wait longer in Los Angeles, than they do in Lincoln, Nebraska. And they published an interactive map that shows the data from 58

Many Veterans are returning with severe, more complex injuries, as well as increased demand by our aging veteran population

sites around the country.

“The agency tracks and widely reports the average wait time: 273 days. But the internal data indicates that veterans filing their first claim, including those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, wait nearly two months longer, between 316 and 327 days.

Those filing for the first time in America’s major population centers wait up to twice as long – 642 days in New York, 619 days in Los Angeles and 542 days in Chicago.”

So how about Portland and Seattle? Both cities are processing new claims faster than the Los Angeles VA, but more slowly than

in many other parts of the country. According to the map, updated on April 1, the average wait in Portland is 317 days but 450 days for first time claimants. In Seattle the average wait is 333 days, but 124 days for first-time claimants.

Portland VA spokesman, Scott Bond says

the agency counts claims that have been filed for more than 125 days as part of the backlog. In Portland currently 8,621 claims are backlogged.

Often those claims are complex and may involve missing records or other problems, Bond says. And about 60 percent of them are from veterans who already are receiving some benefits from earlier claims.

“The numbers change daily,” Bond says. “They try to complete the new claims that are easy and get them out of the door. But they also want to complete the older claims where people have been waiting a long time.”

The VA maintains it still is on track to end the backlog in 2015. “Many Veterans are returning with severe, more complex injuries, as well as increased demand by our aging veteran population,” the agency says in a report. “In addition, we have also righted some old wrongs: Secretary Shinseki made the long overdue decisions to recognize for the first time medical conditions related to Agent Orange, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Gulf War illness – which has led to a nearly a million new claims.”