

Care

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That’s because one of the most important parts of the process is determining whether a given client is eligible for financial assistance or other payment help.

So, while the headlines paint a picture of a troubled system, scores of cheerful helpers are waiting by phones in every corner of the county to help anyone who feels

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adrift in the CoverOregon process – many offering same-day appointments and most ready to help all those who need it whether or not they may fall within that organization’s traditional community.

- African American Health Coalition, Inc., is offering appointments for signup help but with only one staff person able to take calls or make appointments, we had to leave a message with another person in the office for a callback. 2800 N. Vancouver Ave., Suite 100, 503-413-1850.
- Cascade AIDS Project, schedule an appointment for in-person help by calling the HIV/AIDS/STD hotline 503-223-2437;

toll- 800-777-2437; in Spanish, 800-499-6940; or email coveroregon@cascadeaids.org;

for more on their help go to www.cascadeaids.org/cover-oregon. Further, people who are HIV/AIDS positive can talk to their case manager at Multnomah County HIV clinic to arrange help with the insurance forms; starting in November a Cascade AIDS Project staffer will be at the HIV Day Center every Wednesday; and more locations in the future. 208 SW 5th Avenue Suite 800, 503-223-5907.

- Central City Concern connected us to a voicemail for one staff person who is helping with sign-ups. 232 NW 6th Ave. Portland, Oregon 97209, 503-294-1681.
- IRCO/Africa House, main offices, Asian Family Center and Senior Services Center-EPCC Office are all offering in-person enrollment help from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., call and schedule an appointment. IRCO main, 10301 NE Glisan St., Portland, 503-234-1541; IRCO Africa House 631 NE 102nd Ave., Portland, 503-235-9396; IRCO Asian Family Center, 8040 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland, OR , 503-802-0082; IRCO Senior Services Center-EPCC Office, 740 SE 106th Ave., Portland, 503 988-6073.
- Multnomah County Health Department, referral line, open weekdays 8 a.m. -4:30 p.m., 503-988-2228, the operator schedules you for a group intake (she offered us a

Social Justice Honor



Antoinette Edwards, right, director of the Portland Office of Youth Violence Prevention, this week receives the Social Justice Fund NW’s Jeanette Rankin Award, in recognition of her lifetime achievement in community activism. Here Edwards is pictured in her office on Oct. 22 with Portland Parks and Recreation Ranger Dave Barrios, another major figure in Portland’s social justice community. Barrios, a former police officer – and Reed College alumnus – is a pioneer of community policing in Portland.

meeting on the same day) or a snail-mailed application with instruction booklet.

- NAMI Oregon, has a dedicated phone staff to help either in person or via telephone (by appointment). 4701 SE 24th Ave.

Suite E, 503-230-8009.

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Clown

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“It fit me to a tee,” she says. “I’m not the biggest person. Nor am I the smallest but I am a particular size. To pull something off the rack—a \$12 dress—you can’t go wrong.”

After her success at Juneteenth, other Black organizations began reaching out. She did events on short notice, mostly free of charge. She just wanted exposure.

Things got serious this past spring. Nicole took a three day, intensive workshop for the Rose Festival. After the workshop, she traded in her Mid-K makeup for professional grade clown cosmetics.

After becoming official, she registered her business with the state.

Now, nonprofits are putting her in their budgets.

It’s important to her that the Brown Clown is separate from her job at Multnomah County. She wants to make sure she can share it with as broad an audience as possi-

ble. Specifically, she feels the character can be a tool to serve the underserved.

The business also represents self-sufficiency, a major tenet of the Nation of Islam.

“That is my goal. Be self-sufficient and show people that when you become self-sufficient you use your creativity,” says Nicole.

The American education system only teaches people to be consumers and workers, she says. Nicole wants to demonstrate that there are more empowering alternatives. She notes that thinking outside of the box helped her make the most of her jobs as a young person.

Her hope is that kids see they can do their art however they wish. She told this to children at the Junior Rose Festival.

“They were like, ‘You’re a girl clown. You’re a Black clown,’” says Nicole. “They had a look like, ‘Oh, I can do something dif-

ferent.’”

Although the Brown Clown started with Black organizations, Nicole gets the full spectrum of clients.

Lents Founder’s Day sticks out to her, as

Culture is a large part of her character’s approachability

she reflects on the large, diverse Asian population that embraced her.

“You didn’t have to speak their language. They got it,” she says.

Still, she wants to expand her command of language. Her goal is to be able to hold short conversations with anyone she comes across.

In fact, speaking Spanish was part of her

Rose Festival audition.

“I can come back with something that no one else would say,” says Nicole. “Más o menos means neither here nor there and that’s kind of funny when a clown says that.”

Culture is a large part of her character’s approachability. She bases Nikki Brown Clown on classy, Southern women she’s met over the years.

Nicole’s mother is from Virginia, her father is from Alabama and she spent three years in the South as an adult.

“I tease my friends that I’m bi-coastal,” she says.

Whenever she gets a compliment, she gives it back, usually saying, “I’m a reflection of you sugar.”

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First Aid

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than heart disease and cancer added together. One in four people are dealing with mental illness at any one time. And around half of everyone will suffer from a mental disorder at some point in our lives. On the positive side, most people do recover, especially if they get help and support.

“You don’t have to be a professional,” says Susie Schenk, the lead crisis specialist with Clackamas County behavioral health.

“It only takes one person to make a difference and that person can be you.”

That’s the thinking behind a growing movement called Mental Health First Aid. Started in Australia in 2001, Mental Health First Aid reached the United States in 2008.

“It’s a class that is really changing the dynamic and the understanding of mental

health conditions around the world, Schenk says.”

“If we as a community can become more welcoming and understanding, we’re not going to see so many people suffering in silence. We’re going to see people getting help earlier and getting on their way.”

Mental Health First Aid is a day -long, hands-on training that teaches community members the ABCs of mental health problems. Take the class and by the end of the day you will know the signs and symptoms of different mental illnesses, as well as how and when to get professional help. You will have the tools and the confidence to help family and friends who are suffering.

Clackamas County Centerstone is taking the lead locally, offering classes in Mental

Health First Aid. They are open to everyone and cost \$100, with a reduced price of \$75 for anyone involved in support organizations, such as Folk Time.

“If cost is a problem let us know, because we can possibly find you a scholarship,” Schenk says.

Roberta Tyler and her granddaughters LaQuoya, LaCrisha Tyler took the youth Mental Health First Aid class this summer. Tyler says her elder granddaughter had a friend struggling with suicidal feelings and desperately wanted to know how to help him.

“They were begging me, please, please can we do this class,” Tyler said. “And it was phenomenal. I learned so much from the kids who shared their stories. And I

learned so much about mental health. It really gives you tools you can use.”

The three feature in a short documentary film about the class that aired at the Bing lounge in downtown Portland, Oct. 11. Directed by Nili Yosha, the film showed young people and family members going through the training.

The film was sponsored by mental health peer-to-peer support organization Folk Time, along with Open Minds Open Doors, a Clackamas County campaign to reduce discrimination against mentally ill people.

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