

NNPA

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News Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast in 2015. Chavis was the leader of the Wilmington Ten, a group of civil rights activists wrongfully incarcerated for allegedly firebombing a grocery store; the court case against them was so controversial it made headlines all over the world. Their convictions were eventually overturned by a federal appeals court but not until they had served 10 years in prison. In 2012, Chavis and the six surviving members of the group for pardoned by North Carolina Gov. Beverly Perdue.

NNPA CEO Ben Chavis will be the keynote speaker at *The Skanner* News Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast in 2015

The convention kicked off Wednesday night with a gathering to honor Portlanders who have contributed to making Oregon a more equitable and just place. Honored at the event were: Former state senators: Margaret Carter and Avel Gordly; Oregon Historical Society; The Portland Development Commission, its board and executive director Patrick Quinton; Dr. T Allen Bethel, Dr, LeRoy Haynes and JoAnn Hardesty for their work with the Albina Ministerial Alliance Coalition for Justice and Police Reform; Pastor Mary Overstreet Smith and Dr. Jill Ginsberg of the North by Northeast Community Health Center. At the NNPA merit awards were held Thursday night at the Nines Hotel, the *St. Louis American* won the National

Summer Reading



The James John K-5 School teachers, along with librarian Robin Rolfe, bring blankets, pillows and plenty of books every Tuesday to the St. John's Community Center, 8427 N. Central St., to read with students during the Portland Parks & Recreation's Summer Lunches program, from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. One of Supt. Carole Smith's top priorities is to ensure that all students read at grade level by the end of the third grade. Research shows that students who read by the end of third grade are more likely to stay in school, graduate on time, and succeed in college and careers.

Newspaper Publishers Association's Russwurm/Senstacke Trophy for general excellence for the third consecutive year, it was announced Thursday night at the NNPA's annual convention. It was the Missouri newspaper's 8th time winning the NNPA's top award in the past 15 years.

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Jobs

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County alone, between 6,000 — 7,000 of those disconnected youth have no high school credential. Across the Portland-metro region the overall employment rate for youth is 27 percent, meaning one in four youth have a job. But for Black males aged 16-19 the employment rate is just 12 percent. “That’s an unemployment rate of almost 90 percent,” said Heather Fitch of WorkSystems. “It’s disgraceful.” That figure, and all the other statistics that show Black youth are failing to thrive in Multnomah County is why Mayor Hales has set aside 25 of the city’s 100 jobs for African American males. Hales also is throwing his weight behind the Black Male Achievement initiative, a new effort to link Black boys to opportunities and support. “There are several ways we as a community have failed the African American youth — education, employment, incarceration rates,” Hales said. “These internships help level the playing field in a key performance measure, employment. This program pro-

Across Multnomah and Washington counties 36,000 youth aged 16-19 are out of school and not in work

vides a leg up. It’s a small step, but a good one.” Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, who also attended the launch, also pointed to the destructive impact of poverty. “What I can tell you is that we know that crime feeds on poverty, despair and a lack of hope,” he said. “We know that for certain. And that’s where SummerWorks steps in, because it is an antidote to that kind of poverty and that despair and that sense of hopelessness. “I want to showcase for the federal government this program, because the federal government has got to be a better and smarter partner in the job training space.” Now chair of the powerful Senate Finance Committee, Wyden said employers number one need is for educated and trained people. “The single most important thing we need to do as a community, a state and a country is to make sure that we get the high-skill, high-wage jobs.” Getting on track for college and career is no problem for students whose families can link them to jobs, or pay for tutoring, cultural activities or travel. But poor students lack the family stability and support to help them stay in school and on track for career success. And youth in Multnomah County are among the most deprived in the country. As the county’s new poverty report shows, one in three county residents are teetering on the edge of survival. According to the poverty report 238,419

people in the county are living at or below the official federal poverty level. And almost 115,000 more people are living at less than 185 percent of poverty, so poor they qualify for food stamps and other safety net help. More than 34,000 of those poorest county residents are under 18. And about 9,000 of those young people in poverty are raising their own children. Take a look at maps from the Coalition for a Livable Future’s Equity Atlas, and several trends emerge. Gentrification has pushed poor minority communities east, away from the urban center and out toward the edges of Multnomah County. The maps show the highest poverty areas are also where the highest numbers of Black and other minority families live. Those areas also overlap with areas police have identified as “crime hotspots.”

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Cannabis

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start raising their bar-coded plants; advocates who wish more public health messaging had been done by now; and would-be pot vendors like O’Neil who say bad luck, minor oversights on their applications, or errors by state officials have torpedoed otherwise promising efforts. Washington’s Liquor Control Board expects to issue the first 15 to 20 marijuana retail licenses July 7, months later than first expected, but it’s not clear how many of those shops are ready to open. Board staff said last week only one shop in Seattle is prepared for its final inspection. Randy Simmons, the board’s legal pot project manager, predicts a “bumpy road,” with an initial shortage of stores and marijuana alike. Many businesses that got lucky in the pot-shop lottery in April have since been disqualified, such as by being too close to schools or playgrounds. Others

haven’t finished building or made deals to buy pot from licensed growers. Pot shortages are certain. More than 2,600 people applied last fall to grow marijuana, but those applications are being reviewed glacially by the board’s 18 swamped licens-

‘This is a gold-rush mentality and everybody wants to get rich’

ing investigators. Only about 80 growers have been approved, and some won’t harvest by early July. Hundreds of applicants haven’t even been assigned an investigator. Prices could run more than \$25 a gram for the heavily taxed pot — about twice what the state’s unregulated medical dispensaries charge — until more growers are licensed, Simmons says. There will be no edibles available. People who want to make brownies, cookies or other pot-infused treats must have their kitchens inspected by the state. Of the two tested so far, one failed — it didn’t even have a hand-washing sink. The report on the other hasn’t been completed. The board has capped the number of retail stores statewide at 334, but dozens of jurisdictions have banned them, prompting lawsuits in two cities. Colorado, which also voted in 2012 to legalize pot for adults over 21, is bringing in millions of dollars a month while Washington struggles to build its industry.

Unlike Washington, Colorado already had a regulated medical system, making for a smoother transition when it allowed dispensaries to begin selling for recreational use in January. Washington has also done more work developing marijuana safety standards. Many industry hopefuls have found Washington’s delays maddening. Douglas Taylor spent \$230,000 on land for his planned outdoor grow. The payments run \$1,600 a month, and he says the board hasn’t even started reviewing his application. Meanwhile, he has missed the outdoor growing season — a revenue loss of about \$500,000, he estimates.

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