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Life Without Gangs

Former members start up anti-violence program for youth

By Donovan M. Smith
Of The Skanner News

Ask Nicky today, and she will say the gang wars she once front-lined for are “pointless.”

Stopping today’s youth from following her path by joining the ranks of this same “pointless” war she and so many other thousands have fought since the late 1980’s is the reason she has launched the new initiative Neighbors Against Violence.

The alliance comprised entirely of female ex-gang members—some once rivals—aims to steer young people into job opportunities, camps, and provide scholarships with the hopes that paths like these will fulfill their bottom line, “trying to save some lives.”

Most organizations combating the ills of gang-life tend to be male-led and male-centric as the overwhelming majority of those in gangs are young boys—but the ladies of Neighbors Against Violence are taking a different approach.

“The girls are the ones having the babies and having to raise them when these men die,” Lunita Renfrow, one of the group’s members says.

“The girls are the ones that are stuck afterwards and end up having to be single mothers and not being able to take care of the kids, or the kids keep going back to the street and raising little gang members again.”

Renfrow adds that though they will keep their focus on women, certain resources like scholarships will be available to boys as well.

But they also hope to other services such as daycare so mothers can go to school.

Neighbors Against Violence acts only as an initiative at the moment, but Taylor, the group’s creator, says she is working on getting it to 501c3 status.

After 24-year-old Andre Lee Coggins was killed in one of the city’s three gang-related

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2000TH STRIKEOUT

Seattle Mariners pitcher Felix Hernandez threw his 2000th strikeout in a sold-out game against the Oakland Athletics on Mothers Day. The Mariners beat the A’s 4-3.

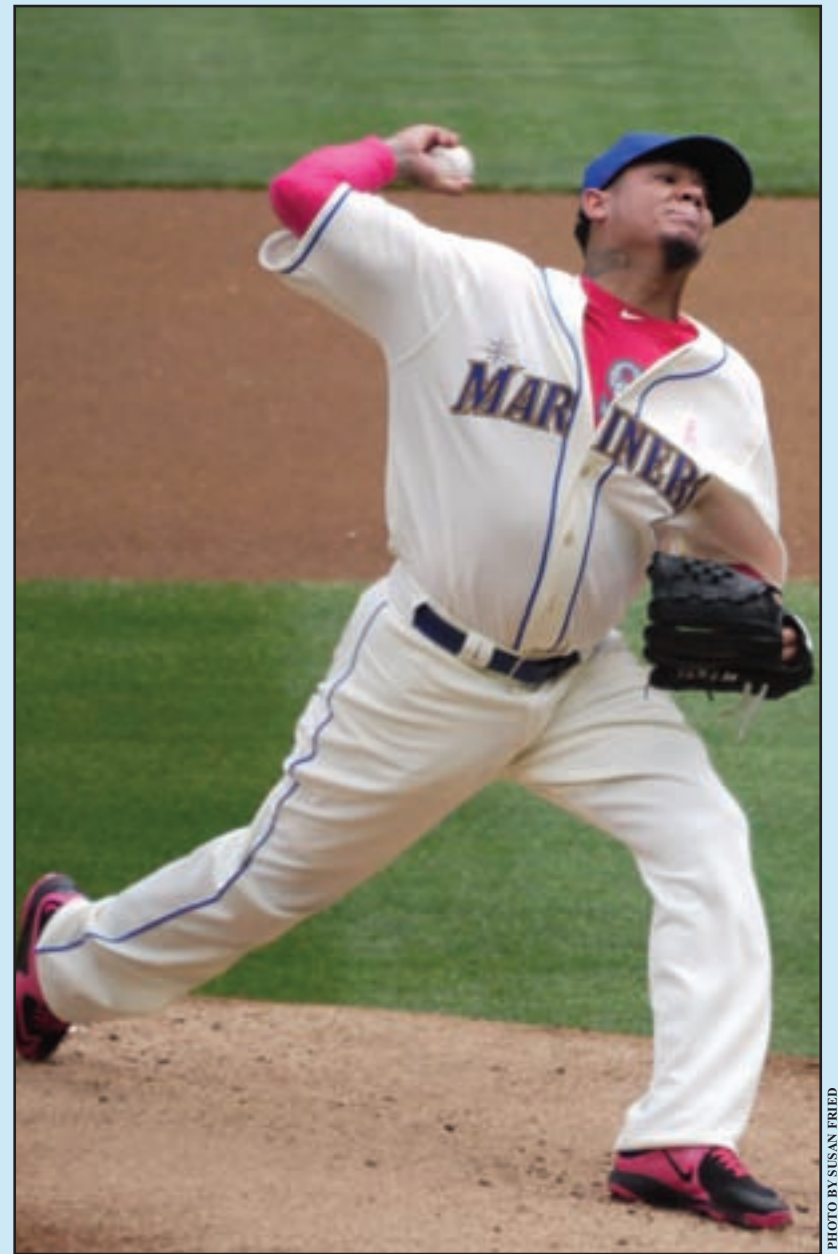


PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Construction on Your Block?

Good luck figuring out who to call when dangerous problems arise

By Arashi Young
Of The Skanner News

A demolition crew moved to tear down one of the last remaining walls of a 111-year-old church last month in the King neighborhood of Northeast Portland. The front boom of the excavator knocked the wall outside the protective fencing.

Onlookers gasped as the side of the building fell and bounced against the power lines. A YouTube video of the blunder

circulated on social media, becoming a flash point for discontent about hazardous demolitions.

A poster mocking construction regulation agencies seen around town and in the Facebook group “Stop Demolishing Portland,” accuses the Bureau of Development Services, the Department of Environmental Quality and the Oregon Health Authority of being negligent overseers of development hazards.

Neighbors are increasingly

concerned about the safety of demolitions in their communities and have been asking for more accountability from regulators.

The trouble is – finding the right person to talk to can require multiple calls to multiple government offices.

In the process of writing this story, The Skanner News spoke with six government agencies: the Bureau of Development Services, the Oregon Health Authority, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality,

the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Portland Police Bureau and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Dealing with construction hazards is further complicated by regulatory loopholes. One example is lead paint, which is not regulated in full demolitions of residences. Similarly, asbestos has strict disposal standards, but enforcement of those rules depend on voluntary

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‘State of Black Oregon’ Report Issued

An urgent call and path forward for a Black Oregon policy agenda

By Donovan M. Smith
Of The Skanner News

The release of the Urban League’s second State of Black Oregon report this week shows that problems in the Black community have persisted or gotten worse.

Generational problems like unemployment, health, education achievement,

housing instability, disproportionate incarceration rates, and business retention continue in Oregon’s Black community, mirroring national statistics.

Urban League of Portland president and CEO, Michael Alexander, says that despite some progresses, systematic inequities continue to be perpetuated through racism and lack of economic opportunity.

“As Oregon works to build a healthy and

prosperous state, we risk failing to fulfill our potential and our promise if we do not dismantle the legacy of inequity and institutional neglect of communities of color,” says Alexander. Civil Rights attorney Nkenge Harmon Johnson will replace Alexander, who retires this month.

The report uses intensive research, statis-

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