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Housing Pilot Project

Urban League, city partner to stabilize Black households

By Donovan M. Smith
Of The Skanner News

A new partnership between the Urban League and the Portland Housing Bureau promises to help stabilize 50 Black households by July of next year.

City Council appropriated \$391,000 from the general fund to pilot the project, which sees the Housing Bureau partnering with a culturally specific organization for the first time to benefit their target population.

The deal comes right on the heels the city's recent declaration of a housing state of emergency, when Mayor Charlie Hales promised \$30 million dollars to help the city's growing houseless population.

Bisi Carter, head of the Urban League's healthy families program, said African Americans have been in a housing crisis for a long time, but called the partnership with the City a "step in the right direction."

"African American homelessness continues to kind of rise, so we're seeing the crisis of homelessness every day," Carter said. "We're pleased with the commitment from the city to address the racial disparities, and consider this investment a small but strong step in the right direction."

The League will spread the across their many services, using them for both eviction prevention and getting homeless people into stable housing.

There's been an increase of almost 50 percent in African American homelessness since 2013 alone, according to Multnomah County statistics released that year. That, coupled with a growing joblessness rate, has had a crippling effect of Blacks as a booming Portland is even beginning to price some of its more affluent residents out.

Jerome Brooks, program coordinator for the housing bureau says the numbers are probably higher once factoring in people not traditionally factored in homeless counts, like those "couch surfing."

"You're not always going see somebody

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CLIMATE



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

On Oct. 14 Seattle joined 170 communities around the country in the People's Climate March. About 1,000 people marched from City Hall to Occidental Park in Pioneer Square to protest the TPP, and try and impact the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris in November.

On Black Male Achievement

National conference sends attendees home with mood of urgency

By Donovan M. Smith
Of The Skanner News

After a three-day conference of organizers working nationally to better the outcomes for Black men and boys, the general mood was one of urgency as organizers prepared to return to their respective cities.

Thirty-five representatives from six cities convened in Portland from Oct. 14-16 to discuss the Black Male Achievement and different strategies to better

effect, the program's four core areas of concern: education, employment, family stability and ending the disproportionate representation of Black males in the criminal justice system.

As the conference came to a close, on the top floor of the Marriott hotel downtown, many participants commended the Portland conference for what they viewed as progressive work on the front of restorative justice.

Local Black Male Achievement organizer, C.J. Robbins

cautioned that there is still much to be done in the city.

"There are [schools] that are struggling with implementing restorative justice with any kind of fidelity. There are organizations that just pay lip service. And as you go further out [in East County], you'll see more of the hurting. It's just like any other gentrified area, where people are being pushed out to an area where they are not welcomed," Robbins said. "I just want to be honest about what Portland is facing."

Mayor Charlie Hales, who interacted with the conference intermittently during the three days, agreed with Robbins adding that the City has underinvested in African Americans for decades.

Activist and author Eric Grimes, of the New York chapter of Black Male Achievement, said there must be innovation in how Black lives can be bettered on the levels of policy as well as perception.

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Crews Reflects on Teaching Conference

Event drew more than 500 people to highlight work of educators

By Arashi S. Young
Of The Skanner News

Educator Karanja Crews has a calling to change the way teachers reach their students. Through his 12 years of professional teaching experience, he has made his teaching culturally relevant and empowering to students of color.

For the last five years, he has helmed the Teaching With Purpose conference, which shares these insights with other local educators. The event has grown from attracting 10 attendees to bringing in more than 500 and highlights the work of nationally renowned educators.

Crews spoke with The Skanner News about the recent conference, the current state of equity in local education and his plans to

continue this work. Here are excerpts of that interview, edited for space and clarity.

The Skanner News: First and foremost, how did the conference go?

Karanja Crews: It was an awesome weekend, awesome high energy. I think people really left empowered and charged up, which is the goal.

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