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ees. Oct. 28 marks the official revival of the Black Women's Gathering — the largest congregation of African American women in over two decades. The open mic will also return.

Under the theme, "Together We Rise in Strength, Unity & Community," hundreds are expected to turn out at Portland Community College's Cascade Campus for a commitment to social justice and a celebration of Black female strength and power.

"There's so much going on right now related to women, particularly African American women," said Joyce Harris, a first-time organizer and original supporter of the Black Women's Gather-

ing met for the first time at the Matt Dishman Community Center, after an African American woman in the community lost her life to domestic violence.

The gathering became an annual tradition — held each year on the Saturday before Mother's Day — for women to "share food, create alliances, develop mentors and reflect on community issues," wrote the organizers in a press release.

But eventually, over time, the volunteer-led gathering ran its course. By the mid-1990s, the women had got involved with other initiatives; some moved away, and others even passed away.

Yet this year's event — with a small planning

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ing. "We needed a venue for people to come together."

Word has spread, with inaugural participants returning to the Rose City this week, including women from as far as Atlanta and New Orleans.

And the timing couldn't be better, said Harris.

"If you think about what's happened in the last 20 years, we've seen an increase in incarceration of African American women," continued Harris, who is the manager of community outreach at Northwest Education. "We've seen growing disparities in education. There's also the big movement, 'Say Her Name,' for Black women who have been victims of police brutality."

Harris moved to Portland in 1969 to attend Reed College, and in 1980 she co-founded the Black Educational Center, which ran for 27 years.

As an educator and active community member, Harris said the decision to bring back the gathering was finalized after just one conversation among a handful of her peers.

Closing the generational gap was also a driving factor in the gathering's revival, explained Harris. "Black women want their daughters to experience what we experienced."

Yet what really brought it home for Harris was the recent homicide on a 26-year-old African American woman, Lila F. Streeter, at the hands of her partner on Oct. 2 in Southeast Portland.

Initiated in the 1980s, the Black Women's Gather-

ing committee along with immense support and anticipation — will no doubt pick up where it left off over 20 years ago.

The gathering will open at 10 a.m. with what the organizers are calling a "healthy body warm-up," followed by a ritual libation to call on the female ancestors who "laid the groundwork," said Harris.

Those who have passed on will also be recognized for their dedication to civil rights, including Judge Mercedes Deiz, the first Black woman judge in Oregon, and activist Bobbi Gary, who fought against racial discrimination.

The day's program will include shared meals, workshops, and a chance to honor the achievements of the city's Black women leaders and business moguls.

Female doctors, including Oregon History Makers recipient Nathalie Johnson of Legacy Health, will be present to speak on health-related issues and trauma that affect Black women; and entertainment will be provided by Julianne Johnson-Weiss, to sing the Black National Anthem, and poet and spoken word artist Tasha Williams.

Judy Boyer, community activist and member of the early Black Women's Gathering planning team, has also returned this year as an organizer. "I look forward to a day of celebration as our theme of many years ago proclaimed: We come together as a celebration of our being, our spirits and our survival."



PHOTO COURTESY OF PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION

Volunteers Sought for No Ivy Day

Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R)'s No Ivy League welcomes volunteers across the region to take part in the 14th annual No Ivy Day. Volunteers will focus on removing this invasive species from Portland's treasured parks and natural areas from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Oct. 28. Volunteers will work at sites across the metro Portland area including: Baltimore Woods Natural Area, Forest Park, Hoyt Arboretum, Gateway Green, Johnson Lake, Marquam Nature Park, Mt. Tabor Park, Terwilliger Parkway, River View Natural Area, Springwater Corridor Trail, Woods Memorial Park and many more sites. To learn more, visit <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/article/634648>. During last year's No Ivy Day, more than 350 volunteers removed more than three acres of ground ivy and cleared the harmful vine from a whopping 130 trees.

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unique challenge for the Forest Service itself, is how do we support these missions that are out in these locations?" Jones said.

Jones has worked for the Forest Service for two years, after spending most of his adult career in the military, based out of Ft. Lewis Army Base in Tacoma, Wash. He holds a bachelor's degree in information system security from ITT Technical Institute — which was the natural culmination of a lifelong interest in technology and a tendency to tinker.

"My father bought us a Zenith TV, which had a picture-in-picture (a feature that displayed two images, from different channels, at the same time). As a kid, I thought it was two TVs in there," said Jones, who grew up in Mississippi. "The babysitters must have been doing something, and I got a screwdriver and took the whole thing apart."

He got in trouble, though he did

put the TV back together. But as time went on, he became the person family members would ask for help when a piece of electronic equipment was broken or mal-

“There's no Verizon, there's no AT&T out in these locations

functioning.

"Some may think when you say U.S. Forest Service we're thinking natural resources, we're thinking recreational — planting trees and fighting fires," said Forest Service spokesperson Shandra Terry. "But it really shows the business function side of who we are as well."

The Forest Service is one of the sponsors of The Skanner Foundation's scholarships, for which applications are due Oct. 31. Terry is hopeful young people who

are interested in technology will consider careers working for the Forest Service.

Terry and Jones said those looking to pursue a career path like Jones' should consider majors like geographic information systems, computer science or degrees with IT or security concentrations like Jones'.

Jones also noted applying for jobs with the U.S. government can be daunting, and he applied for several positions before he got the job he has. He urged potential applicants to seek feedback on rejections if it's available and to be persistent.

"I moved up the ladder rather quick, also, for someone my age and where I'm at in my career, just because the IT field is so diverse and it's amazing. So that's one thing I can say, looking back on my life, that one decision that I know I did right is the career field that I chose," Jones said.

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for women."

Local jails, according to the SJC's website, are meant to hold people serving short sentences, while detaining those awaiting court proceedings who pose a threat to public safety.

However, many jails have become warehouses for people with mental health and substance abuse issues. Facilities are bloated with individuals held on non-violent traffic, property, drug or public order offenses, and incarceration is levied disproportionately against people of color.

In 2015 Multnomah County was among the preliminary cohort of 20 jurisdictions selected for inclusion in SJC's collaborative network.

The selection process drew applications from nearly 200 jurisdictions in 45 states and territories, and an initial award of \$150,000 helped the county fund the Racial and Ethnic Disparities

Report, a bleak account of inequity released to the public in February of 2016.

Produced by independent researchers assigned to the county, the report found that people of color are negatively impacted in greater numbers than White

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counterparts at every stage of the criminal justice system — from initial contact through arrest, detainment, prosecution, sentencing and parole or probation violations — and that disparity is greatest for Black individuals.

Jurisdictions participating in the SJC were asked to develop plans for targeting resources and implementing more effective risk assessment to determine if confinement is really necessary.

In response, Multnomah County and its Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC) drafted a list of 12 strategies aimed at addressing system inefficiencies and initiating alternatives to jail.

Proposed changes include shortening the time it takes to process probation violations through the court system, decreasing jail stays for misdemeanor defendants undergoing mental health evaluations, and expanding the use of citations in lieu of jail for certain misdemeanor charges. Additionally, individuals who use the transportation system without paying will no longer face jail sanctions.

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